

# New Threats to Africa's Stability and Growth

Serge Michailof

## Africa is doing better than 15 years ago

Any productive discussion of Sub-Saharan Africa must take into account its great diversity. Africa's ecosystems are as diverse as its peoples and the legacies of its colonial past. The continent is equally diverse in terms of its countries' economic situations and income levels. The US\$20,000 average annual income of an inhabitant of Equatorial Guinea, for example, contrasts starkly with the US\$400 of a resident of Niger.

Despite this diversity and the obvious differences across countries, trends in Sub-Saharan Africa were fairly similar between 1970 and 1990. These years were marked by weak long-term economic growth, chronic productivity deficits, largely rentier-based economies, wide-ranging demographic changes, strong urbanization, stalled industrialization, and the persistence of poverty traps. It is often forgotten that these same countries, after winning independence, enjoyed rapid growth from the 1960s until the oil crisis of 1973.

Since the new millennium however, many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have experienced growth rates that stand in sharp contrast to the previous two decades of stagnation. Of the ten countries with the highest levels of growth in the world in the first decade of the new millennium, five—Angola, Ethiopia, Chad, Mozambique, and Rwanda—were in Africa, all averaging growth above 7 percent; at that rate, an economy doubles in size in ten years. In fact, almost everywhere on the continent, trade, mass distribution, construction, and services have seen spectacular growth. In 15 years, African market capitalization has almost quadrupled, private equity has boomed, and migrant remittances and foreign direct investment have far exceeded official development aid. The so-called “awakening” of Côte d'Ivoire since President Ouattara took office in 2011 is a stunning case in point.

The reasons for this widespread success are well established. They begin with the high prices of raw materials stimulated by the extraordinary growth of China until 2013, which increased revenues from exports. This

economic success was reinforced by major infrastructure projects, including the construction of highways and freeways, expansion of ports, rehabilitation of major railroads, and commissioning of numerous power stations. The growth of new information and communications technologies and of the financial sector over the past two decades has been similarly spectacular. Today, even the smallest market trader has two, three, or even four mobile phones in his or her pocket. A scene in the remarkable film Timbuktu that shows a Tuareg child trying to get a signal at the top of a sand dune underscores the importance of the mobile phone in even the poorest communities.

Africa's economic success is also grounded in the macroeconomic stability that was rediscovered following the instability of the 1980s and 1990s. Throughout the 1980s, severe structural adjustments sometimes provoked social disasters that led to collapses in the public services responsible for education and health. In some countries, they also caused breakdowns in state structures and major increases in corruption. Yet the adjustments ultimately resulted in the restoration of balanced budgets and external accounts that for more than a decade had accumulated enormous deficits. The adjustments made it possible to lower inflation and more broadly implement rigorous budgeting thanks to the rise of a new generation of technocrats accustomed to working with the Bretton Woods institutions. For the countries on this path, the cancellation of most of their external debt, which had risen to unsustainable levels, greatly facilitated these budgetary adjustments.

## What are the threats?

Today, many observers agree that the growth of the past 15 years will continue, albeit less rapidly because of the decline in commodity prices and the slowing of the Chinese economy. However, two new clouds loom on the African horizon.

The first is the contrast between successful countries and those seemingly doomed to failure. While

*Areas that have not benefited from economic growth now face long-run stagnation and the risk of entering alarming cycles of violence.*

certain countries have seen remarkable growth, others remain plagued by poverty, disastrous management of public affairs, and unresolved internal conflicts. The Central African Republic, Somalia, and South Sudan are well-known cases.

The second is that even the successful countries have not been able to prevent the emergence of deep social and geographical inequalities, which are often accompanied by rising tensions and increased insecurity. In many cases, these phenomena combine with an erosion of authority as the state loses control over peripheral regions, which become lawless zones.

The continent's extraordinary economic successes led to the development of urban infrastructure, the proliferation of skyscrapers, traffic jams of Mercedes and SUVs, and the emergence of not only an opulent class of millionaires but also an authentic middle class. But these impressive developments tend to be limited to particularly dynamic regions and to the capitals. The businesspeople who invest there often forget that the peripheries of these capitals mostly comprise miserable shantytowns and poorly integrated neighborhoods that lack public services such as roads, drainage, drinking water, and electricity. Areas that have not benefited from economic growth now face long-run stagnation and the risk of entering alarming cycles of violence.

**Without doubt, the destabilization of the North East of Nigeria is the most emblematic.**

The Nigerian economic boom has not prevented the emergence of a caliphate in the north of the country. Nigeria, whose economy largely stagnated from the late 1960s to 2000, experienced remarkable growth afterwards until the 2014 collapse in oil prices. This growth coincided with the end of military regimes and, combined with a change in statistical procedures, made it the largest economy in Africa. Nigeria is currently the seventh most populous country in the world, with 190-million inhabitants. It is on

track to become a global giant by 2050, the third most populous country (after China and India), with 400-million inhabitants, and one of the world's twenty largest economies. It recently had a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

Nigeria is a working democracy. The most recent elections, in March 2015, saw the replacement of President Goodluck Jonathan, who hailed from the south of the country, by General Muhammadu Buhari, a man from the north. The education system is fairly good, the administrative elites are for the most part highly qualified, and some institutions (though not all) function remarkably well. Nigeria was also one of only two African countries affected by Ebola that was able to rapidly and effectively contain the epidemic (the other being Senegal). Still, it suffers extraordinary inequality between the largely deprived north, where per-capita income is among the lowest in the world, and the capital city and the south, both of which have experienced an economic boom.

The troubling issue today is that despite its considerable financial resources, administrative structures, and sizeable military budget, the Nigerian government is unable to guarantee security in the Niger River Delta, where mafia gangs rule, and has allowed maritime piracy to develop to the extent that the Gulf of Guinea is now more dangerous than the Somali coast. In recent years it has also largely lost control of the North east of the country, a territory ravaged by the armed group Boko Haram.

**The destabilization threat is becoming regional.**

Naturally, the advances made by Boko Haram are of great concern to the neighboring countries of Chad, Niger, and Cameroon. Chad feared economic suffocation because Boko Haram was threatening its main access route to the sea via Douala and north Cameroon. At the end of 2014, Chad, Niger, and Cameroon decided to commit their forces to loosening this stranglehold, but with mixed success. The offensive resulted in the destruction

*While seriously weakened, Boko Haram now still poses a threat to the region.*

of Boko Haram's most visible military structure, especially its armored equipment and its ability to mount coordinated offensives. In spite of its claim of having established a caliphate, Boko Haram, unlike ISIS, is incapable of administering the regions under its control. None of its stated objectives—to 1) establish a caliphate covering all of northern Nigeria, southern Chad, southeastern Niger, and northern Cameroon, 2) impose an extreme version of Sharia law, and 3) eradicate all Western traces, in particular public education—was achieved. In fact, the nihilistic savagery apparent in the movement is reminiscent of the infamous LRA, the Lord's Resistance Army, which has long terrorized northern Uganda. It is difficult to imagine its sustainability as an organized movement, as its activities are now largely confined to looting and massacres. But it is still active around Lake Chad, and it is too early to think that the threat has been conclusively removed. Such mixed results after a coordinated offensive by the armies of four countries—supported by the UK, the US, and France—justify probing the reasons for the emergence and expansion of a movement of such magnitude in the richest and most powerful country in Africa.

Northern Nigeria was a land of jihad throughout the 19th century, and its impact was felt as far away as Mali and Senegal. The Sokoto Caliphate led by Usman dan Fodio, which emerged at the beginning of the 19th century, covered the whole of what is now northern Nigeria, southern Chad, and northern Cameroon. It even exercised nominal sovereignty over a group of emirates covering part of present-day Mali and Burkina Faso. In addition, the establishment of Pax Britannica gave rise to a series of revolts led by preachers throughout northern Nigeria, particularly in the northeastern states, where Boko Haram is currently established. This rebellion thus has historical and religious roots.

It is surprising that the Boko Haram movement started out in 2000 as a tiny Islamic sect comprising only a few dozen followers, all strongly influenced by the Wahhabi teachings disseminated by Saudi Arabia. This marginal

sect, ridiculed by some for its isolationism and sectarianism, became progressively more radical after 2003 and adopted an ideology rejecting what it considered the remnants of colonial influence, in particular Western-style education and both national and local forms of government.

Although its aim is to establish an Islamic state “purified” of all Western influence, Boko Haram's success is largely explained by the deprivation in northern Nigeria. Poverty in the north of the country, which stems from extreme population density, the consequent environmental crisis in the countryside, and the lack of prospects and employment for young people, allowed Boko Haram to prosper. Even viewed from an airplane, the overexploitation of land in the region, with the disappearance of fallow land due to demographic pressure, is striking. As in many other countries, the struggle for access to land is often the source of violent conflict. Boko Haram has skillfully played on such tensions, as well as on inter-ethnic and inter-religious rivalries. Since 2009, it has established links with jihadist networks in Niger, Mali, Libya, Algeria, and even Somalia.

While seriously weakened, Boko Haram now still poses a threat to the region. The linguistic and ethnic proximity between Niger and Nigeria along their 1,500-kilometer shared border means that insecurity in northeastern Nigeria is gradually corrupting southeastern Niger in the Diffa region, which is of considerable concern to Niger officials, who fear it could jeopardize the unity of the country<sup>1</sup>. They are well aware that the threat cannot be addressed by military means alone but demands a rapid acceleration of economic and social development programs at the local level.

### **The example of Boko Haram shows that a new type of menace is emerging in Africa.**

A new kind of threat is now emerging that is likely to spread to the many regions in Africa that, like northeastern

1. . . In June 2016, the military base of Bosso close to Diffa was taken over by Boko Haram fighters and 32 soldiers from Niger were killed.

*These new threats are emerging in countries subject to tensions that neither national institutions nor failing political processes are able to manage.*

Nigeria, have lagged as development has left them behind<sup>2</sup>. For a long time, the power elites in Africa assumed that the main danger came from rebellious armies or from the streets of deprived neighborhoods. To deal with these dangers, they reinforced the presidential guards built on tribal loyalties and instituted populist policies ranging from low-cost cereal imports to subsidies for diesel fuel. Yet rural people in peripheral regions were largely forgotten; their political weight did not count, or their votes were bought by unscrupulous politicians. Their isolation was reinforced by populist policies and the lack of all-season highway infrastructure.

This new type of threat is arising in places where radical Islam has replaced the secular ideologies of the 20th century (Marxism, fascism), which had barely penetrated Africa. It gives the populations of these regions simplistic explanations for the misery into which they are plunged and pushes them to believe that the West is responsible for their ills.

Conflicts in Africa are not a new phenomenon—quite the contrary. There were many conflicts, some of them devastating, in the decades following independence. These included attempts at secession (Biafra) and long secessionist struggles (South Sudan, Eritrea), and some arose in the context of difficult decolonization (Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau). Many (Ethiopia, Somalia) took place in the context of the Cold War and were supported by external players. Some of these conflicts were consequences of implosions of the economy and the state apparatus (DRC) or the outcome of ethno-political crises (Rwanda). The rarest type consisted of classic conflicts between states, such as the one that once gripped Burkina Faso and Mali.

These wars and conflicts can be categorized according to various typologies, but they were essentially the result of internal political clashes and were only marginally driven by global ideologies. Even when regional coalitions

were involved, as for example in the DRC, each conflict was essentially unique in that it was linked to the specific characteristics and internal political tensions of a particular state.<sup>3</sup>

With the end of the Cold War a quarter-century ago, these countries generally felt secure against external threats, and their military budgets remained at low levels.<sup>4</sup> But for at least a decade now, new threats have developed from the depths of the forgotten countryside.

### **The nature of the threats hanging over many African countries has changed.**

These new threats are emerging in countries subject to tensions that neither national institutions nor failing political processes are able to manage. Large-scale challenges weaken state structures created too recently to have developed deep roots. One striking characteristic is the similarity of the tensions and challenges that have appeared simultaneously in many countries, sometimes regardless of highly satisfactory rates of economic growth.

The causes are very often the coincidence of strong demographic growth, a narrow economic base principally focused on fairly unproductive agricultural activities, vast territories that are difficult for a weak state apparatus to control, populations fragmented into ethnic or religious groups, and the presence of a large Muslim population subjected for several decades to strong Salafist propaganda supported by active social actions. The considerable underemployment among young men entering the labor

2. A full analysis of this issue has been recently developed in "Linking security and Development, a plea for the Sahel," FERDI Foundation, Nov 2016.

3. . Francophone Africa was for the most part spared large-scale conflicts, if we omit the particular case of Chad as well as that of the former Belgian colonies of the DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi. The reasons probably lie in a relatively well-managed decolonization process, a concern on the part of the elites in power for appeasement of ethno-political tensions through diverse redistributions, and by the role played at the regional level by structured organizations such as WAEMU or the CFA franc zone. One final factor was the existence of defense agreements with France, which constituted de facto protection against external aggression but which until recently were perceived by local elites as insurance against internal uprisings.

4. . To some extent, the situation is comparable to Western Europe, where the US shield and membership of NATO have led to a steady decline in military contributions.

*These countries or regions...are currently subjected to destabilization attempts conducted on their poorly governed peripheries by jihadist groups.*

market<sup>5</sup> has also sometimes been heightened by marginalization or by economic or political discrimination.

These countries or regions, often described as “fragile,” are currently subjected to destabilization attempts conducted on their poorly governed peripheries by jihadist groups. These groups control specific economic circuits dealing with illicit trafficking, including weapons, cigarettes, drugs, and migrants. Apart from the northeast of Nigeria, as described above, these threats at present mostly concern the countries of the Francophone Sahel—Mali, Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Mauritania—which have grouped together to confront them as the G5, but also countries located near these at-risk areas, including Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire, and Cameroon, as well as those close to the “failed” states of Somalia and South Sudan, including the border regions of Kenya and Ethiopia. Thus, the entire Sahel-Saharan belt and its neighboring areas to the south, from Senegal to Kenya, are affected.

A series of events in 2012 and 2013 brought to light the severity of these threats. First, with the collapse of the Malian army, the whole north of Mali was taken over by jihadist groups. Emboldened by their victory, they soon attempted to take control of the south of the country but were stopped by the intervention of the French army. At the same time, the well-funded Nigerian Army was unable to regain control of the area where Boko Haram was active. In short order, the ideological, financial, technical, and sometimes military links among these groups became apparent, particularly Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar Dine and Mujao in Mali, and Boko Haram in Nigeria. The symbolic attachment of jihadist groups in the Sahel and Nigeria to Al-Qaeda or ISIS signaled a connection to similar centers of jihad in the Middle East and sometimes even Afghanistan.

These new threats are evidenced by the presence of armed groups, often of foreign origin, linked to

fundamentalist Islam that take advantage of local tensions to slip into lawless, peripheral areas of fragile states. They result in a rising incidence of illicit roadblocks and taxation of road users, cattle rustling, assaults and kidnappings of traders, followed by targeted assassinations of hostile local authorities and punitive attacks on recalcitrant villages. These actions clearly demonstrate the breakdown of the local state apparatus.

This first phase is frequently followed by terrorist acts carried out by young suicide bombers in local markets or capital cities. Less spectacular but even more serious is the everyday insecurity that is becoming widespread<sup>6</sup>, which paralyzes travel and can lead to the collapse of the local economy. At the same time, in some cases such as in Mali, attempts are made to set up parallel “proto-state” structures that provide justice and security but impose religious and social norms on the population.

#### **These new threats are troubling for many reasons.**

These threats emerge in regions facing the serious problems previously described. The threats primarily affect low-income countries with limited tax revenues. These countries have so far not faced major threats and have largely neglected their military structures as well as their overall security and state structures. Most disturbing are the links between demography and natural resources, weaknesses and sometimes serious dysfunctions in the state apparatus, the lack of agricultural modernization and associated environmental degradation, and the lack of jobs and opportunities for young people who, lacking alternatives, easily become involved in illegal trafficking or armed actions.

The main victims of these threats are civilians, who are often unaccounted for because of an absence of local administration and records. In practice, clashes between armed groups and local armed forces are limited because

5. . Beyond the obvious cultural, historical, and geographical differences, the astonishing similarity of these characteristics has led me to compare the conflicts that now affect much of the Sahel with the case of the Afghan conflicts.

6. . We may recall here the transfer of the Paris-Dakar Rally to Latin America in 2009 for security reasons.

*These zones of insecurity behave like metastasizing cancers...taking advantage of local ethno-political tensions and problems to insert themselves and grow in fragile neighboring countries.*

they are asymmetric; control of entire territories and the populations residing in them is often achieved through a process that does not become visible for many years.<sup>7</sup> For jihadist groups, controlling territories and evicting state structures so as to conduct their trafficking, and undermining the morale of local armed forces through harassment, are more important than defeating them, which often is not within their capabilities.

Many armed groups that threaten these fragile countries have support networks and logistical bases in neighboring countries that are subject to even greater insecurity and are virtually inaccessible, as is the case of Fezzan in Libya and in parts of Somalia. Finally these threats have a very strong ideological dimension based on a radical Islamism supported by foundations and networks in the Persian Gulf and promoted by skilled jihadist propaganda backed by considerable financial resources and expertise. They are part of an arc of crisis that runs from Afghanistan to Mauritania through Iraq, Syria, the Sinai, and Libya, where failed democratic efforts, external interventions such as in Iraq and Libya, religious conflicts, misgovernment, economic failure, and mass unemployment or underemployment have accumulated in multi-ethnic or multi-confessional contexts.

These zones of insecurity behave like metastasizing cancers—exporting terrorism, arms trafficking, and jihadist propaganda, and taking advantage of local ethno-political tensions and problems to insert themselves and grow in fragile neighboring countries. If they are not swiftly controlled, these threats risk spilling over from their areas of origin and causing regional destabilization, which can spread terrorism and give rise to widespread insecurity in neighboring countries, even those with relatively well-structured state systems.

The ongoing decline in security in the north and now in the center of Mali clearly threatens the Malian state. But it also threatens western Niger, as evidenced by the October

2016 attack on the Tassalit camp in which the Niger army lost 22 soldiers. The spreading insecurity in Mali also threatens Mauritania and potentially Senegal as well as Burkina Faso and northern Côte d'Ivoire. Boko Haram is likely to survive as a serious regional threat if the economic and social roots of the insurgency are not eradicated. The situation around Lake Chad is similar to the threat created in East Africa by the Shebabs, which are based in Somalia and promote insecurity in northeastern Kenya and along the entire coast of the Indian Ocean as far as Tanzania.<sup>8</sup>

**The ideological, religious, social, and ethnic dimensions of these conflicts make them difficult to defeat.**

In the Sahel, as General Clément Bollée recently pointed out,<sup>9</sup> “the deterioration of the situation has accelerated exponentially when the various threats have combined their interests. Thus, when traffickers, highway bandits, autonomists, jihadists, et cetera, could reconcile their interests, the scale of the threat dramatically increased, whereas the previous compartmentalization that existed between the threats helped to keep them at low intensity.” Just as a series of small waves, through the resonance phenomenon, can create a monster wave, this overlapping of formerly isolated threats now causes a greater threat of unexpected magnitude and reach.

A significant part of the African continent now faces a variety of threats whose determinants are not only linked to local politics or specific to the continent but are also found in other multi-ethnic or multi-religious countries in the Middle East, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. These threats reflect the messianic ideology of jihadism, with its hatred of the West and its values, and are fostered by

7. . To take the Afghan example, the calmest areas are those that are well controlled by the Taliban. As the Afghan state no longer has the means to challenge the Taliban in these areas, the Taliban has no interest in fomenting disorder.

8. . The Ethiopian army, which is essential to the maintenance of minimum order in Somalia, is currently withdrawing many of its troops from the country to deal with rural uprisings in Ethiopia itself.

9. . Former commander of the French Unicorn force in Côte d'Ivoire in an exchange with the author.



*Facing up to these new threats entails both extinguishing the flashpoints and also—and above all—neutralizing the powder kegs.*

poverty, mass underemployment, a loss of bearings and hope for young people, the absence of the state, and missing or inept local government.

The collapse of the great secular ideologies of the 20th century was thus succeeded—and in spectacular fashion since September 11, 2001—by a new religious ideology that clearly identified its enemies: apostates, the West and its education system and culture, and local elites corrupted by Western culture. This ideological phenomenon has an ethnic dimension and is heightened by tensions linked to conflicts over land and access to water. Conflicts among individuals (such as the one illustrated in the film *Timbuktu*, mentioned above, in which a farmer bumps heads with a breeder whose cow had eaten the farmer's lettuce) now easily take on an ethnic dimension—for example, setting Fulani and Bambaras against each other in central Mali.

Throughout the Sahel, this new situation gives rise to multiple flashpoints in regions that are basically powder kegs—places ripe for conflict as a result of poverty, despair on the part of young people, and proliferating economic and social problems in a context of increased circulation of information. The question facing the countries directly affected by this phenomenon and their neighbors is how to deal with these new threats.

#### **How should the new threats be confronted?**

Facing up to these new threats entails both extinguishing the flashpoints and also—and above all—neutralizing the powder kegs. Essentially, extinguishing the flashpoints requires military means. Dismantling the powder kegs requires the implementation of complex strategies combining security measures, political action, social actions, ambitious development programs, and a vigorous

ideological struggle. Let us first consider the problem of how to deal with flashpoints.

#### **Existing flashpoints must be extinguished as quickly as possible.**

Flashpoints threatening to spread very swiftly may require external military intervention, as was the case when French forces conducted high-impact operations to stop a military offensive led by jihadist groups in Mali in 2013. This case is probably exceptional, as the fighting took place in a semi-desert environment where air support and heavy weaponry could be used without the risk of collateral damage. The involvement of foreign military forces in densely populated areas as presently in the center of Mali raises more complex issues. Clearly this type of conflict can neither be settled by foreign armies nor solved by military means alone. “Winning the war is not enough to win the peace,” the chief of staff of the French armed forces, General de Villiers, wrote recently.<sup>10</sup> Clearly, the destruction of the main rebel armed forces alone does not resolve the conflict. On the contrary, the cancer is likely to spread and expand if the underlying problems—the powder keg—are not addressed. Moreover, experience shows that these conflicts are rarely resolved in a few months but rather require decades. And it is illusory to expect that foreign forces should remain involved in a conflict of this kind for decades.

What can be expected for these countries is similar to what is taking place in central Mali and around Lake Chad. In these regions, various small armed groups take advantage of the local weakness of the state to exploit economic, social, and political difficulties to establish a foothold in densely populated areas; if foreign armies were to intervene, they would be perceived as occupying forces. Clearly, action limited to extinguishing flashpoints by “neutralizing” jihadists (to use the official wording), though necessary, is insufficient; a powder keg that is not defused will produce

10. . leMonde.fr, January 20, 2016.

## *Defusing the powder kegs cannot wait for political consensus.*

more jihadists than the armed forces will be able to eliminate. This is what occurred in Afghanistan.

### **Defusing the powder kegs cannot wait for political consensus.**

Defusing these powder kegs involves the implementation of complex strategies that combine political action, security measures, social actions, ambitious development programs, and ultimately an ideological struggle.

Politically, it will be necessary sooner or later to reach balanced political agreements designed to reduce the tensions that have accompanied or contributed to the conflict. These tensions are very often linked to perceptions of marginalization and, in some cases, to severe discrimination. This was the case of some Tuareg revolts in both Mali and Niger, and it seems clear that this sense of political and economic marginalization is behind the recent formation of the Macina Liberation Front by Fula groups in central Mali.

The sooner political agreements can be reached, the easier it will be to resolve the conflict. But if these political negotiations drag on, as is currently the case in Mali, the conflicts have every chance of becoming entrenched, especially if, as is often the case, certain actors benefit from them. It is generally very difficult to reach a political consensus at the outset of or during a conflict, as hoped by many observers and by impatient public opinion in the international community, which underestimates the depth of the political tensions affecting these countries.

Unfortunately, it is often necessary to wait until the conflict unfolds like a Greek tragedy before a political agreement can be reached. This also means that political agreements cannot be a prerequisite for launching security, social, and development actions. This is very important because reaching political agreement or relative

consensus is always difficult, if not impossible, in acute conflicts, but a stabilization strategy cannot wait.<sup>11</sup>

Beyond political agreements, defusing these powder kegs also requires addressing the multiple challenges faced by the regions concerned. This can sometimes be difficult or even impossible in the absence of security. Combined civilian and military actions, the execution of which is entrusted to specialized military teams or mixed civilian and military teams, can then be envisaged, as was the case in Afghanistan with the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT). However, the lesson to be drawn from this inconclusive experience is that this type of action can only be carried out on a temporary basis until normal development programs can be implemented. The two main lessons are: 1) that these civilian-military programs must secure the strengthening of local governance structures and not replace them; and 2) that the financial resources made available to them must be significant without being excessive.<sup>12</sup> The objective must always be to hand over social and development programs to development agencies and local civilian authorities as soon as possible.

In addition, while insecurity constitutes a major obstacle to development agencies in the field, it is important to address the key problems in regions close to the areas of greatest insecurity to halt the spread of the conflagration. We will return to these issues, which involve major changes to the objectives and working methods of the principal aid

11. . In Côte d'Ivoire, in 2011, when the tensions and disagreements among the parties to the conflict were still extreme, priority was given to disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs as well as an ambitious reform of the security sector even as politicians were still involved in discussions. Where the external partners strive to obtain the agreement of all parties before acting (as in the case of Mali and the CAR), the situation solidifies, then degrades.

12. . The resources were insufficient in the early years in Afghanistan and subsequently excessive, resulting in a great deal of waste and in marginalization of local authorities. Today they are ridiculously low for the Barkhane operation, at €300,000 for 2016.



*On the security front, it is important to first regain control of regions and populations that are outside the authority of the central state.*

donors, but first we should specify the actions that must be taken in terms of security.

### **Are United Nations peacekeeping forces the solution to restoring security?**

Assessment of the performance of UN peacekeeping forces in the face of these new threats is critical. These forces can help maintain a minimum level of security in a region if the situation has not become too degraded, but their operational capacities are low. For example, the main concern of the MINUSMA force in Mali today is the protection of its own bases and of key roads to ensure their supply chain<sup>13</sup>. One reason for the weak capabilities of these forces stems in part from their heterogeneity (29 countries were represented in MINUSMA in Mali in 2016—many of them with a merely symbolic force). But the main reason for their weak capability is the poor quality of troops sent by the countries providing the forces. These countries receive good income from the United Nations while sending untrained and unmotivated personnel who are sometimes not fully equipped. As a result, providing troops to the UN has become a profitable business for some countries.

It is thus reasonable to question the cost-effectiveness of these forces, whose cost in Mali exceeds US\$1 billion per year, especially if their maintenance over 15 years proves necessary, as is the case, for instance, in the DRC. In addition, the mandate of these forces is often inadequate to the situation and may give rise to varying interpretations on the ground resulting in culpable inaction.<sup>14</sup> These constraints

do not allow the forces to carry out pre-emptive actions or even engage in aggressive responses if they are attacked.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, as General Lamine Cissé<sup>16</sup> pointed out to the author, if this type of force is made up exclusively of regional African contingents, they are able to equip and train themselves while incorporating rules concerning respect for fundamental rights as well as in operations involving forces of diverse origins. These assets would give them greater efficiency both on the spot, where they are easier to motivate than when they return to the armies of their countries of origin, and in future African regional permanent forces.

### **The rapid strengthening of all local sovereign institutions of the threatened countries is essential.**

On the security front, it is important to first regain control of regions and populations that are partially or completely outside the authority of the central state. Beyond any external military intervention, this requires responding to the state's shortcomings and not only strengthening the national armed forces, but also consolidating—or in some difficult cases entirely rebuilding—the other state sovereign institutions. This type of consolidation can be part of an ambitious program of security-sector reform, the scope of which must be expanded beyond current practice.<sup>17</sup>

It is very often the weakness, the absence, sometimes even the decay and irresponsible behavior of these state institutions that led to the insecurity in the first place and, in some cases, to the establishment of parallel authorities. The objective of strengthening the state apparatus is easy

13. . A country that sends a battalion as part of a United Nations peacekeeping operation receives about US\$50 million per year. The salaries it pays its soldiers must be between US\$2 million and US\$4 million, or sometimes less if expatriation and risk premiums are not paid, as has been known to happen. This demonstrates the profitability of what for some countries becomes a business. Note that the discrepancies between billed and actual costs mean that private security companies (which are also interested) could offer a much better service for less.

14. . It is for this reason that the head of UNMISS in South Sudan has recently been relieved of his duties after allowing a massacre of civilians to take place before his eyes.

15. . In these conditions, what can the level of motivation be, for example, for the Bangladeshi soldiers locked up in their bastion in Kidal in northern Mali or traveling in the desert on impossible roads without ever coming across the enemy but who witness the death of their brothers-in-arms who step on improvised mines or are subjected to incoming mortar shells at night? In any case, the MINUSMA force has suffered significant losses in Mali, with more than 100 deaths since it was set up in 2013, revealing the inadequacy of its mandate and of the structure of forces relative to the enemy they are expected to fight and its modes of action.

16. . Former chief of staff of the Senegalese army and former commander of the United Nations office in West Africa.

17. . Often, this type of reform covers only the army and sometimes the police.

*A true reform of the security sector requires a profound reform of the human resources management practices in the pillars of security.*

to identify, but the implementation of such programs poses difficult technical, political, and financial problems.

At the technical level, rehabilitating the relevant institutions generally requires much more than training and equipment programs.<sup>18</sup> The process requires reintroduction of the principles on which the effectiveness of institutions has always been based: rigorous selection of management at all levels on the basis of merit; promotion based on performance; and the introduction of modern human-resource management methods. These are based on results-oriented management requiring clear job definitions, skills reviews to eliminate unfit personnel and organizational structures with clear lines of responsibility. These steps often require targeted salary increases to attract and retain specialized or managerial staff.

The greatest obstacle is political in nature because this type of reform requires abandoning practices that are common in these sensitive institutions, where loyalty and clientelism often take precedence over capability. A true reform of the security sector for instance requires a profound reform of the human-resources management practices in the pillars of security (armed forces, police forces, local government). No lasting results can be expected where clientelism, ethnicism, and corruption reign supreme.<sup>19</sup> The quality of every institution—and the institutions responsible for security are no exception—depends above all on their personnel and especially on the quality of those who lead them.

A final difficulty is the financing of such programs, which are anathema to international aid. The statutes of some multilateral aid organizations prohibit them from funding anything connected to military and security matters, and their internal rules sometimes even prohibit them from

funding the local civil administration. These multilateral organizations have long funded such institutional restructuring programs in their usual areas of intervention, and ministries of finance, ministries of education, and energy companies have been made operational again thanks to these major aid institutions. The paradox is that these aid institutions recognize that there can be no development without security and no security without development. Yet they apply rules and practices that clearly contradict their own observations.

Among multilateral bodies, only the European Union (EU) is beginning to get involved in these issues and, in particular, to fund training programs for security forces such as the EUTM program in Mali. However, if funding is confined to this type of expenditure or, as is currently envisaged, to non-lethal equipment without providing for proper military equipment, soldiers' pay, construction of satisfactory barracks, and, above all, the means of maintaining civilian control over military forces, such funding remains inadequate. For now, the EU remains hesitant, and its expertise in this field is very limited.<sup>20</sup>

#### **The poorest countries lack the resources to carry out this strengthening of their state apparatus.**

A major difficulty is that Least Developed Countries (LDCs), which include the Sahelian countries, cannot finance both their development<sup>21</sup> and state apparatus able to meet the threats they now confront, aware that state apparatus must be deployed throughout their territories. In the characteristic case of Niger,<sup>22</sup> the country was forced

18. . The limits of such programs have been seen in the case of the Afghan police, which after 15 years of programs of training and provision of equipment remains the mafia it was in early 2002.

19. . For example, the vehicles bought at great expense are plundered (as was the case in Iraq) or their tires found for sale in the market (as is still the case in Mali), arms and ammunition are resold, and the units that on paper are ready to fight are in fact ghost troops, like those that fled before the jihadists in Mosul in 2014.

20. Through the mobilization of the human resources of their own state institutions, bilateral donors (US, UK, France, and Germany) have the best expertise in this field. But with the exception of the US, which is far less concerned than Europe with security in Africa, and of Great Britain, which has little interest in Francophone countries, these countries have limited resources with which to finance support for capacity-building and institutional restructuring.

21. . Social expenditures are currently exploding because of demographics: 40 percent to 50 percent of the population is under 15 years of age.

22. . This is the first country in the world to have benefited from a detailed analysis by the World Bank of the sustainability of its security spending based on various assumptions about its pace of growth. The analysis, carried out in 2015 based on data from 2013, showed that if security expen-

*International responsibility for the security expenditures of the poorest countries is essential but currently impossible.*

to multiply its military spending by a factor of 3.7 between 2009 and 2015. Neither Niger nor Mali nor the other countries of the Sahelian sub-region possess economies or tax bases that would enable them to meet their immense social and economic needs as well as the emergencies they are forced to face in terms of security.

These countries have a fiscal capacity that rarely exceeds 17 to 18 percent of their GDPs. Faced with these threats, they are forced to reduce development spending to finance overall security spending, which is now approaching 6 to 7 percent of GDP in many places and as much as 9 percent in Chad. Even this level of security expenditure is insufficient to cope with the new threats they face. These exceptional costs tend to reduce the resources allocated to economic and social development, thus increasing future risks without guaranteeing security. These countries are therefore caught in a double impasse that is both budgetary and security-related.<sup>23</sup> As a result, they risk falling into conflict traps. Only countries with significant oil or mining revenues—as was the case of Chad prior to the collapse of oil prices, which largely explains its army's capabilities—or dynamic economies can finance the security costs to meet these threats.

**International responsibility for the security expenditures of the poorest countries is essential but currently impossible.**

Responsibility by the European Union or a group of donor countries for at least part of the security costs of these countries is the most urgent measure needed to prevent further deterioration of security from paralyzing

the massive development effort that lies ahead, especially in the rural sector. This support should not be limited, as it is now, to training personnel and supplying miscellaneous equipment. Instead, it should include paying wages, reforming human-resources management, fully equipping units with appropriate equipment, and reforming governance of the security forces.

The problem for the international community is not financial. With sound management, equipping, training, and funding a Sahel battalion for one year costs about US\$15 million.<sup>24</sup> Instead of setting up high-cost peacekeeping forces, the United Nations would be better off funding local security forces—on the condition that it oversee their complete reorganization. The rehabilitation and reconstruction of the Malian army, for example, certainly would not cost the billion dollars a year mobilized for the UN peacekeeping force. Moreover, the conditions likely to accompany funding from aid institutions—on the order of one quarter of this amount—intended for such reconstruction could be very helpful in reordering the governance of these forces, an outcome the provision of training courses and the donation of a few armored personnel carriers can never hope to achieve.

The international community's responsibility for a large part of the security costs of these countries can be justified for three reasons: 1) financially, it would be far less expensive than a foreign military intervention,<sup>25</sup> (moreover, the political cost would be much lower because the international community does not take kindly to the return of its children in coffins); 2) the security of these vast regions constitutes a regional or even global public good and therefore justifies a cost sharing approach; and 3) this is the only

ditures were to increase over the period 2013–2016 at the same rate as 2009–2012 (154 percent), the budget deficit would become intolerable. However, the country's security spending in 2016 has already exceeded the World Bank's most pessimistic expectations.

23. . Recall that it was the American refusal until the arrival of General Petraeus in 2008/2009 to accept financial responsibility for the Afghan army or to seriously attempt to reform the police that now make the latter a mafia enterprise. It is, therefore, the entire state apparatus of these Sahelian countries—including the army, police, local administration, justice, and customs—that urgently needs consolidating and funding.

24. . Recall that the cost of MINUSMA for Mali alone is on the order of US\$1 billion per year, that the cost of the Barkhane operation is more than US\$650 million, and that the budget of the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) covering the 2014–2020 period is €30 billion.

25. . A Western military intervention would in any case lead to an impasse in view of the available forces, the size of the territories in question, their populations, and the inevitable friction between the population and armed forces from very different cultures, sometimes representing the former colonial power. The Sahel represents about 7 million square kilometers and will have a population of 150 million in 10 years. The Barkhane force consists of 4,000 men.

*Funding the security needs of low-income countries can be carried out without the direct funding of military expenditures by aid partners.*

credible way to ensure the security of these areas and to avoid a process of what might be termed “Afghanization.”

Opposition to this reasoning is considerable: Within multilateral aid organizations, legal experts rely on 70-year-old statutes that challenge any involvement of donors in the security sector; Officials at these agencies also fear that resources devoted to security will reduce those devoted to traditional development activities and take a dim view of new demands on limited budgetary resources; Finally public opinion and representatives of civil society argue that aid is not meant to fund security, security budgets have a reputation for being particularly opaque, and funding them under these circumstances represents a gift to corruption. Given these conditions, it will clearly take time and considerable lobbying if there is to be any hope of altering the practices of the principal donors.

In spite of this pessimistic observation with regard to the short term, it is important that the governments of the countries concerned, especially the Sahelian countries, exert pressure on the multilateral aid institutions via the international community to demonstrate the obvious contradiction between their analyses, which show that there can be no development without security, and their practice of ignoring this question. The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is already well aware of this contradiction and is conducting work on the subject,<sup>26</sup> which makes it possible to anticipate some progress, even if it remains very timid for the time being.

In the World Bank study of the sustainability of security spending in Niger, the first of its kind in a country facing particularly serious threats, the goal was to achieve agreement among the major multilateral partners within three to five years to fund at least non-military security spending, focusing primarily on local administration and justice,

followed by equipping police and similar forces such as the “garde nomade.”

### **Provision of international funding for local security costs implies their rationalization and transparency.**

Funding the military and security needs of low-income countries subject to these new threats can be carried out without the direct funding of military expenditures by aid partners. The solution would be to show the actual amounts of these costs and to fund the increased deficits as budget support, whether unallocated (ideally) or even allocated to social or development expenditure, which would create room for maneuver in the budget. In this case, the fungibility of budgetary resources allows for the indirect funding of security spending.<sup>27</sup> However, this mechanism involves finding solutions to various problems.

First, to reassure donors, these countries should abandon the purely reactive approach to emergencies that currently holds sway and introduce mechanisms for the rational programming of security expenditure based on accurate threat analyses. Second, a satisfactory level of transparency must be introduced into the security sector by preparing security analyses or white papers that accurately identify threats and ways to deal with them.

This effort should result in multi-year military programming that sets out requirements for both the military and the other state security institutions.<sup>28</sup> Subsequently, it is important to move away from an accounting approach that leads most of the countries concerned, all of which are under IMF supervision, to scale their security budgets in line with their available resources and not in accord

26. . See Annex 2 of the declaration issued by the high-level DAC meeting of February 19, 2016, entitled “ODA boundaries in the field of peace and security.”

27. . For example, the Algerian government met the budgetary cost of a large part of its security expenditure linked to the outbreak of the civil war in 1993–1994 with indirect financing through the IMF.

28. . It is desirable that the countries concerned validate the importance of this work by the partners who support their military efforts, in particular France, the US, Germany, and the UK, depending on the case. However, this approach requires still greater transparency in security budgets—including the military budget—which must be capable of being audited by the financial partners, as is commonly the case with the education and health budgets that receive funding.

*Properly addressing these challenges will require a kind of “Marshall Plan” aimed at the social and economic upgrading of these countries.*

with the nature and extent of actual threats.<sup>29</sup> They tend to respond to security emergencies with supplementary budgets that widen deficits and lower development spending. This highly constrained and unplanned budgetary approach does not provide an effective response to real security needs.

Implementation of these principles requires a high level of awareness among bilateral partners—in particular France, Germany, the UK, the Nordic countries, and the US—as well as EU bodies. They must recognize the crucial problem of security in these regions, the inevitability of increased budget deficits linked to the military and security efforts required, and the need for external funding of these deficits on a multi-annual basis in order to avoid financial gaps and security impasses each year.

Once such an agreement has been reached in principle in the Sahelian countries’ negotiations with the leading European governments, it is also desirable that these countries raise awareness among the governments with influence in both the IMF and the World Bank, in particular the US, Canadian, Japanese, and Chinese governments. It would then be easier, in negotiations with the Bretton Woods institutions, to integrate the real costs of security expenditure into budgets and anticipated financial operations with greater transparency. If the corresponding financial gaps can be covered by bilateral aid or by the European Union, the agreement of the IMF and the World Bank should be easy to obtain.

**The restoration of security is impossible without seriously addressing the full range of social and development challenges.**

The cases of Boko Haram and Mali show security cannot be ensured solely by reinforcing security measures

29. . Following this accounting reasoning, the Afghan army was sized to very insufficient levels (about 30,000 men until 2006 and 50,000 until 2007/2008), leaving foreign forces with the responsibility of fighting the rebellion. Given the extent of the rebellion, in 2008 General Petraeus estimated the need to urgently build a local force of 350,000 men.

and that it is essential to respond at the same time to the immense social and development challenges. In the case of Nigeria, the rapid expansion of Boko Haram was linked first of all to poverty, the lack of employment prospects and social integration for the vast numbers of young men who, lacking any alternative, may become involved in illegal trafficking or enlist in armed groups. Even a superficial examination of the social and economic situations in most of the rural areas of the Sahel reveals the magnitude of the challenge confronting the region.

Properly addressing these challenges will require a kind of “Marshall Plan” aimed at the social and economic upgrading of these countries and especially of their deprived rural areas. Such an effort implies the simultaneous launching of vigorous sets of development programs, in particular for rural and municipal development, education and basic technical training, infrastructure development, and access to drinking water and electricity. Most of these initiatives will have to be financed by international aid, at least in the poorest countries. Yet their implementation will require that local politicians pay them much greater attention than in the past and focus on effectiveness and results on the ground rather than on the fanfare associated with project launches.

Donors are beginning to respond to this need: Development aid to the Sahel now reaches about US\$4 billion per year. Does this increased development aid represent a magic weapon for lowering insecurity? There is a tendency to mock aid and to minimize its importance, and most African leaders would like to do without it. At the global level—about US\$130 billion a year—development aid has become almost marginal compared to private-investment flows to developing countries or remittances from migrants. Yet these figures mask the important role it still plays in LDCs and all very poor countries; as in the case of the Sahel, apart from the mining and oil sectors, private investment has been notably absent.

For the very poor countries of the Sahel, international aid easily represents 8 to 10 percent of their GDP, about 60

*Donors follow their own logic, and their actions rarely respond to the priorities arising from the security situation.*

to 90 percent of their investment budgets, 60 to 70 percent of their net foreign revenues, and close to 40 percent of their tax revenues. Well-targeted and well-managed, these transfers should significantly contribute to the economic development of beneficiary countries, where it is important to engage young people as quickly as possible and thus reduce the temptation to join the ranks of traffickers linked to jihadist groups.

The example of aid in Afghanistan is inconclusive, however. The evolution of insecurity in that country is instructive, as it has been linked to factors similar to those found in the Sahel. The total volume of aid to Afghanistan has been colossal, in some years exceeding the GDP of the whole country; aid strictly reserved for development between 2009 and 2012 exceeded 50 percent of GDP. Despite levels of development aid that in some years exceeded the amounts disbursed by the World Bank for all of Sub-Saharan Africa, the results are disturbing: After 15 years of sometimes massive aid efforts, Afghanistan still ranks 171st out of 190 on the Human Development Index. Insecurity reigns even in the embassy district at the heart of Kabul. Kunduz, an important provincial capital, has been occupied twice by the Taliban. No road can be traveled safely, and the government truly controls little more than the key cities. Given its instability, what lessons can Africa learn from this clear failure of aid in Afghanistan?

**Donors follow their own logic, and their actions rarely respond to the priorities arising from the security situation.**

In Afghanistan, the need to combine the four most urgent tasks—establishing security, maintaining it, simultaneously building a state apparatus, and promoting rural development to create jobs—had, at the time of the US intervention in 2001, not been conceptualized at all. The aid needs were immense, and donors largely did as they pleased. Until the arrival of General Petraeus, there were no clear common objectives between military and

development institutions. It now seems clear that aid to the country has suffered from a serious lack of coherence linked to a total lack of strategic direction in the allocation of resources at both the sectoral and the geographic levels. As in many Sahelian countries, the Afghan population was 75 percent rural, yet of the US\$15 billion disbursed by donors between 2002 and the end of 2007, only about US\$500 million—roughly 3.3 percent of the total—was spent on agriculture. At a press conference in Paris at the end of 2010, General Petraeus openly acknowledged this problem and assured the meeting that civilian aid spending in rural Afghan areas now exceeded US\$800 million a year.

Yet how much time was wasted! In Afghanistan, as in the Sahel, the inadequacy of efforts in agriculture, the only sector in which massive job creation is possible in the short term, has been notable, despite the efforts of some donors.<sup>30</sup> Just as in the Sahel, young people cannot find employment where they live. They stream into the cities, where they join the masses of the urban unemployed. Following the departure of the international forces and the jobs that were linked to their presence, their main options are to participate in the networks of the opium economy<sup>31</sup> or to enlist with the Taliban, which offers attractive wages. As noted as early as 2009 by an Afghan tribal chief quoted in the *New York Times*: “The vast majority of the Taliban in my area are young men who need jobs. We just have

30. . These include the World Bank, which financed a remarkable small-scale irrigation-development program over a period of 12 years as well as a successful community-development program. However despite the sometimes astonishing efforts of villagers, many Afghan valleys are still faced with a Malthusian tragedy heightened by the return of many of the 5 million refugees in Pakistan and Iran.

31. . The drug economy is now deeply rooted in the Afghan countryside and is a source of funding for the rebellion and the local power structure. Drug networks have also penetrated the upper levels of the political hierarchy. This represents a turnover of between US\$3 billion and US\$5 billion depending on the year, employing more than 400,000 farmers. The phenomenon is similar to that in the Sahel, where unemployed young men in the rural sector are increasingly attracted to illicit trafficking in cigarettes, cars stolen in Europe, cocaine imported from Latin America and destined for Europe, and the transportation of migrants attracted by the European mirage.



*African leaders need to learn to discipline donors and to guide funding toward their own priorities.*

to give them work; if we can put them to work, we will weaken the Taliban.”<sup>32</sup>

The lesson to be learned is that in a country where agriculture is the main source of employment, any security-stabilization process must be accompanied by massive investments of international aid in rural development, including small-scale irrigation projects, roads, soil protection and restoration, rural electrification, and the like. Community-driven development approaches have produced effective results in many places, but steering international aid in these countries toward this sector and multiplying such investments in the rural sphere requires the capacity to strategically guide and direct international aid resources.

### **African leaders need to learn to discipline donors and to guide funding toward their own priorities.**

Those responsible for delivering aid in the Sahel clearly have not drawn conclusions from the consequences of donors’ forgetting agriculture and rural development in Afghanistan. Nor have they perfected methods for strategically steering flows of aid so they respond to the urgent needs in the countryside. According to Professor Brunet-Jailly’s analysis of the aid that was promised at the donor meeting for Mali (Paris, October 2015), of the euros 3.4 billion pledged, only 3.7 percent was allocated to the development of agriculture and livestock,<sup>33</sup> this in a country that is 80 percent rural—a repeat of what happened in Afghanistan.

This example (among others) shows that donor coordination does not work in fragile countries that may prefer to receive aid they know is useless over conducting frank negotiations with donors to impose their own priorities. These countries are often in situations of such dependency

regarding aid that they do not dare to challenge donor choices. Whole forests have been pulped to print reports on the problem of aid coordination, and myriad experts have been mobilized on this subject at major international conferences (Paris in 2005, Accra in 2008, Busan in 2011). These conferences defined a set of best practices, but the practices rarely have been followed in fragile countries with weak and largely disorganized governments.

Some countries are very well structured administratively and politically—for example Côte d’Ivoire, Morocco, and Vietnam—and local authorities take a dim view of any attempt at coordination on the part of the donors that support them. They see this as a donor syndicate trying to dictate their policies. These countries are coordinating the donors themselves, and this is a very good thing.

In fragile countries with little administrative structure, and especially in “failed” states, the situation is clearly very different. There, coordination is supposed to take place first among donors to avoid duplication, errors, and the omission of specific sectors, and above all to place their actions within the framework of an overall strategy. But experience shows<sup>34</sup> that this coordination is limited mostly to exchanges of superficial information and is only rarely reflected in real strategic direction designed to guide resources to where they will be most useful. In countries where budget-planning mechanisms are failing, the laudable principles developed at the above-mentioned international conferences are ineffective, especially as the problem of aid coordination is difficult to solve without serious involvement by local political authorities at the highest level.

### **The dispersal of local centers of responsibility seriously undermines the effectiveness of aid.**

In fragile countries, the first difficulty arises as a result of the dispersal of decision-making centers concerned with

32. . Hajji Fazul Rahim, quoted by the *New York Times*, November 28, 2009.

33. . Joseph Brunet-Jailly, blog dated January 18, 2016: <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/joseph-brunet-jailly/blog/180116/3,4-milliards-d-euros-pour-quoi-faire?>

34. . And the recent case of Mali, where only 3.7 percent of resources is devoted to agricultural development, provides further proof.

*African governments must organize the strategic planning of aid resources.*

international aid. These consist of central actors, where the responsibilities are already divided among the ministries of finance, budget, planning, and foreign affairs. There are also at least a dozen peripheral actors, namely the sectoral ministries. Each of these actors interacts with certain donors from among the dozens of major donors and the thousands of small NGOs, ignoring others, while each of the sectoral ministries tries to attract donors to finance what it sees as its own priority operations. The result is extraordinary disorder.

As might be expected, the international conferences recommended that a senior national official be put in charge of directing aid, but this very rarely occurs. Solving the problem requires the involvement of African leaders. One option is for the Prime Minister to take responsibility for coordinating aid. In many countries, however, this is a key position and the Prime Minister is already overwhelmed; in others, the position does not exist or is purely political, filled by a major figure not inclined to get involved in mere stewardship. Sometimes this position is even entrusted to an opponent and endowed with a merely symbolic power.

In these common situations, finance ministers often try to impose some order. But unless their role in the aid area is clearly defined in the framework that sets out the functions and responsibilities of members of the government, they can expect trouble. This was precisely the case of Afghanistan's Ashraf Ghani, Minister of Finance in 2002–2004,<sup>35</sup> who, thanks to his background at the World Bank, had the experience required for the task. A book written by Ashraf Ghani (with Clare Lockhart) after his departure from the Ministry of Finance and published in 2008 devotes an extraordinary chapter to the role of aid. In it he wrote:

“From the user’s perspective, the fragmented system is costly. Ministers who are responsible for coordinating policy must create consensus not only with other cabinet ministers but also with dozens of donors and hundreds of NGOs, each with their own budgets, priorities, rules, and preferences. In Afghanistan, the Minister of Finance in the

post-Taliban period spent more than 60 percent of his time on coordination. Had the aid system united around a single flow of financing and rules, the number of reforms carried out within the government’s core systems would have risen exponentially. Moreover, each donor agency tends to build alliances with different ministries, further fragmenting cabinet unity. Instead of becoming catalysts for orderly policy management, donors become instruments of division and chaos.”<sup>36</sup>

What he did not say is that any Minister of Finance who attempts this coordination risks attracting the wrath of his colleagues, who find it difficult to accept that one among them would grant himself the considerable power arising from control of flows of international aid. This happened to Ashraf Ghani, who had to leave the government in December 2004 after a serious falling-out with his colleagues. In the absence of a prime minister truly concerned about the coordination of aid policy—such as Kablan Duncan in Côte d’Ivoire, whose teams followed these issues week after week and provided him with updates—institutional and political problems impede the management of aid according to the precepts from the international conferences. Instead, aid is dispersed according to the donors’ preferences rather than addressing the critical problems.

**African governments must organize the strategic planning of aid resources.**

The current, widespread solution—which does not work satisfactorily, either—consists of the preparation of a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper to which the actions of the various donors must conform. In countries lacking the capacity to carry out the process, this work is often entrusted to teams of foreign consultants. These efforts most often result in formal actions aimed at donor conferences, which throw up so many priorities that there is

35. . Currently President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

36. . Ghani, A. & Lockhart, C. (2008). *Fixing Failed States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

*The availability of significant resources is necessary but not sufficient; the resources must be put to good use.*

no priority. Moreover, establishing the fight against poverty as the sole objective does little to solve security problems.

This approach leaves donors free to hunt around for projects, choosing from the long list presented to them one that best corresponds to the preferences of their backers and pressure groups. As a result, their institutional and political constraints—instead of the most obviously urgent needs of the country—decide their programs of action. Typically, they focus on social sectors that are rarely controversial, usually forgetting the urgency of rural employment and the importance of rural infrastructure and services. Ultimately, each donor acts as it pleases. In the words of an ambassador I met in Kabul in 2007, “Managing international aid is like herding cats.” Sometimes a donor representative assumes the role of aid coordinator—in practice, it is often the UNDP representative—and holds coordination meetings to which the aid agencies often send their most junior staff.

Given donors’ distrust of national financial circuits, a good short term alternative would be for donors to pool their resources into a fund under a specific governance structure. This pooling could take the form of what is commonly referred to as a “trust fund” that corresponds to one or more parallel budgets jointly managed by a group of donors and the ministries directly concerned. Donors contribute to the financing of this parallel budget pending the strengthening of local capacities. The government’s objectives could then be clearly defined and the use of aid brought under control. This formula, which responds to Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart’s<sup>37</sup> desire to see a unified flow of resources and common rules, was used very effectively in Afghanistan with the creation of the Afghanistan

Reconstruction Trust Fund. Unfortunately, it involved only a very small fraction of international aid.

**African governments must rebuild their failing administrations so they can drive ambitious social and development programs.**

The availability of significant resources is necessary but not sufficient—the resources must be put to good use. We must not be deluded: Governments in insecure countries will also have to rebuild their failing public administrations if they are to make effective use of both international aid and their own budgetary resources. The transformation of weak Sahelian governments into genuine administrations for development on the Singapore model is a difficult undertaking, which often fails as a result of being riven by clientelist practices.

It is indeed necessary to resolve such cross-cutting issues as the status of civil servants, salary scales, or the possibility of using contractors or local consultants for highly specialized tasks. Above all, it is necessary to make profound changes in the rules and practices of personnel management relating to recruitment, promotion, and remuneration and to align them with principles of merit and performance. Such reforms inevitably upset existing hierarchies but also ultimately determine the effectiveness of any public or private institution.

One easy alternative is to rapidly reinforce within an administration such key functions as administrative and financial departments, information technology, and certain technical departments. Experience shows, however, that this approach produces mixed results, and it is infinitely more efficient to transform some essential administrations into institutions of excellence, addressing them one after another. This type of transformation is possible within a reasonable time frame if the political will is clear and significant technical and financial resources are mobilized. Such steps should be limited to a few key institutions whose functioning will be critical to the implementation of reforms

37. . Ghani & Lockhart (2008)

*African governments will have to consolidate or rebuild their state apparatus and negotiate support from the international community for this purpose.*

and development programs. These are usually the financial ministries (finance, planning, and budget), the ministries of agriculture and rural development, energy, infrastructure, and education and technical training. The sovereign institutions should of course also be part of the process.

**The agenda for facing these new threats is ambitious and hard to implement**

**African governments will have to consolidate or rebuild their state apparatus and negotiate exceptional financial, technical, and political support from the international community for this purpose.**

To ensure the security of their territories, they will have to extinguish the flashpoints to the extent possible through their own strengthened military means without expecting to rely on foreign or United Nations forces. They will also have to complement this military approach by considerably reinforcing their entire state apparatus. They must overcome the double fiscal and security impasse that forces them to choose between security and development spending. They must not only rebuild their failing state institutions but they must also reconstitute a strong nucleus of institutions with economic and social mandates if these are revealed, as is likely, to be largely failing. Absent the reorganization of key administrations, countries may find themselves unable to launch the necessary investment programs and impose the necessary reforms.

**They will have to regain control of international-aid spending in order to reorient it, to the extent possible, toward the factors that fuel insecurity, particularly rural poverty.**

Given that the vast majority of those with the lowest incomes live in rural areas and make a living from agriculture or raising livestock, any effort to generate massive employment and reduce poverty in these countries will

require the stimulation and modernization of agro-pastoral systems and the rural world. This goal must be both long-term and ambitious, as these countries also suffer the effects of global warming. They urgently need to revitalize and intensify their traditional rain-dependent cereal crops. This requires significant public investment in soil defense, protection, and restoration, rural roads, market organization, agronomic research, adapted farming practices, more widespread use of animal-drawn cultivation, and more ecological agricultural practices. They will also need to pursue and accelerate investments in irrigation, especially small-scale systems, and restructure their transhumant and sedentary livestock systems.

The aim should be twofold: to ensure food security in the medium term and to increase the number of jobs in more intensive agriculture and livestock farming and associated support functions both upstream and down. Achieving these goals will require enormous efforts in many areas, including literacy, targeted training, legal and regulatory measures, and investment in rural areas in parallel with sustained efforts to expand drinking-water infrastructures and rural electrification. These actions will require innovative, decentralized approaches that have been successfully implemented in other countries.

**These countries will have to undertake wide-ranging reforms of their education systems and vocational and technical training programs.**

The aim must be to facilitate the job integration of young people in their own countries, in the sub-region and, where appropriate, in migration outside the continent. It is also to provide these countries with the necessary human capital to secure an economic upswing. They will most likely need to focus on primary education, reorient secondary and tertiary education toward vocational, technical, and scientific subjects, launch ambitious adult-literacy programs associated with basic-skills training programs for artisans in the informal sector, and revitalize post-primary

*The creation of jobs demanded by their level of demographic dynamism also means facilitating the development of a dynamic private sector.*

education. Such programs constitute huge challenges for the countries concerned; they will not be able to fund them alone. It will therefore be necessary to remobilize development partners in this area.

**The massive creation of jobs demanded by their exceptional demographic dynamism also means facilitating the development of a dynamic private sector.**

This objective will require a radical rethinking of the generally restrictive business environments and rapidly enhancing the availability, quality, and cost of using basic infrastructure. These cross-cutting measures will have to be supplemented by various programs that may give rise to ripple effects such as the implementation of support programs for training and equipment in the informal services sector and urban and rural handicrafts.

**These multiple efforts will remain insufficient if the rate of population growth is not brought down to a level compatible with countries' economic capacities.**

Population growth is so high in all these regions, and natural resources so limited, that these countries cannot expect economic growth, urbanization, income growth, and girls' education to spontaneously reduce the birth rate. They have no choice but to implement population policies.

The implementation of such policies will require major changes in current norms and values in the sub-region, which in turn will require exceptional communication and pedagogical efforts. Programs aiming to control demography in the Sahel have been prepared and adopted in the past, but have never really been implemented. Yet other poor countries with rural majorities and of Muslim faith, such as Bangladesh, have found ways to achieve this. The countries of the Maghreb, and also Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, have all succeeded. As in these countries,

several levers that are immediate determinants of fertility are available to authorities. These principally include access to modern contraceptive techniques, dissuading the practice of early marriage, and lengthening the period of breastfeeding. They should be used simultaneously.

**Finally, it is imperative that governments engage in a courageous struggle against Islamic fundamentalism and jihadist ideology.**

The restoration of security throughout the region implies an important ideological dimension that cannot be underestimated. For more than 30 years, Salafist preachers returning from the Haj have traveled across the rural Sahel. Throughout that period, funding from Saudi Arabia has enabled the proliferation of mosques and Koranic schools, which thanks to the building of major works and prestige investments, has bought the support—or at least the neutrality—of the political elites, for the expansion of a conception of Islam that does not reflect the tolerant tradition of local Sufism.<sup>38</sup> African leaders must regain control of this phenomenon and halt the process of radicalization and intolerance that prepares young people for jihadism. This task may well be the most difficult of all because political leaders with the courage to engage in this ideological battle will have to confront the hatred of the preachers of intolerance in the mosques, the markets and the poll booths. They may even have to fear for their lives. However, this struggle, which must necessarily accompany

38. . Classic reference works such as *L'Islam Noir* by Vincent Monteil or *L'Islam au Sénégal* by Moriba Magassouba are no longer representative of the reality of today's Islam in the Sahel.

*The success of such a comprehensive response to the security challenge presupposes that these programs constitute an interdependent and indivisible whole.*

any demographic reduction-and-control program, cannot be avoided.

**The success of such a comprehensive response to the security challenge presupposes that these programs constitute an interdependent and indivisible whole.**

These ambitious programs must be implemented almost simultaneously and cannot be approached in a selective manner. In fact, the interconnections among the programs constitute the key to initiating a chain of virtuous circles. This type of comprehensive response to the security challenge is inevitably a lengthy undertaking that will require significant additional resources from financial partners over the long term. But such a mobilization does not require excessive amounts and is perfectly possible and realistic. Yet it is necessary that government officials demonstrate the political will to act simultaneously on the various axes by building political coalitions adapted to the scale of the challenges they face. These challenges are considerable, and the agenda for action is extraordinarily difficult. But this program of action is essential.