



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

POLITICAL COMMITTEE (PC)

SECURITY AND STABILITY  
IN AFRICA –  
CHALLENGES AND  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR  
NATO

Draft General Report

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*Until this document has been adopted by the Political Committee,  
it only represents the views of the Rapporteur.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. Recent General Reports of the Political Committee have focused on the security challenges that the Alliance faces on its southern flank. Following up on the Committee's earlier work on the issue, this draft report evaluates the nexus between the continuing instability of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and the security developments further south on the African continent.

2. The paper suggests that the security situation in the MENA region remains volatile, primarily due to economic, social, and environmental issues and the fact that governance in the area remains generally poor. Moreover, the problems facing the countries in the Sahel zone and the regions south of it are considerable, while state capacities to manage these are very limited. Although NATO as an organisation does not focus on the African continent, several Allies are engaged in mitigating the risks of low security. This draft report argues that the developments in Africa should be on the radar screen of the Alliance. The establishment of the "Hub for the South" in Naples is a step in the right direction as it has the potential to increase awareness of the security not only in the MENA region but also in the areas south of it. Moreover, NATO's fledgling relationship with African actors, particularly the African Union (AU), should be developed further. The annex to this draft report also provides an update of the security situation in Yemen, which remains of considerable concern for stability in the Gulf and beyond. This draft report will be updated for the Assembly's Annual Session.

## II. INSTABILITY IN THE MENA REGION AND EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY – AN UPDATE

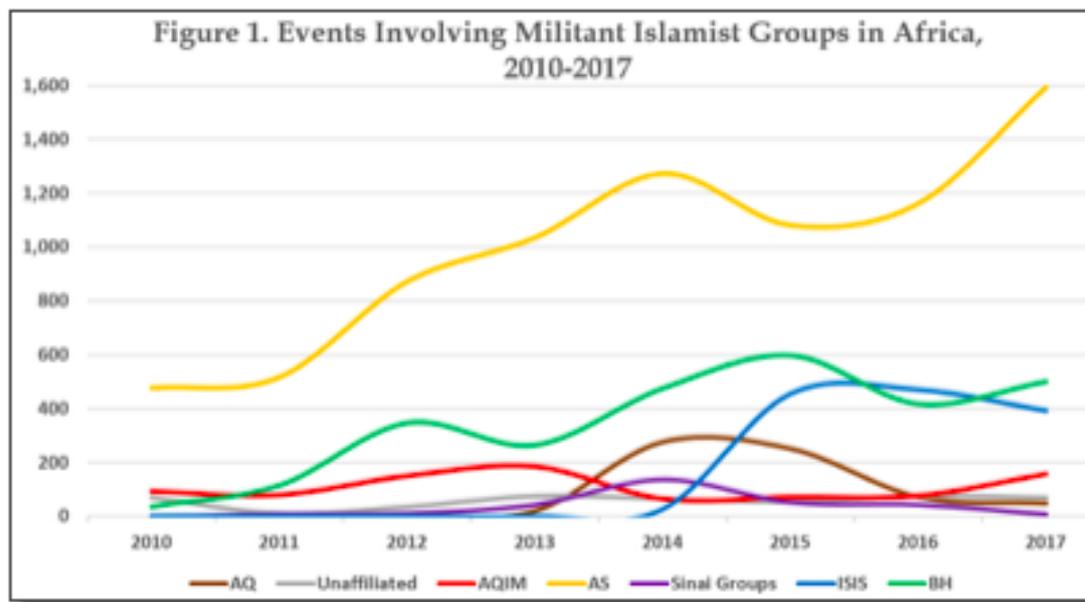
### A. TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

3. The number of terrorist attacks in the Middle East and North Africa fell to 3,780 in 2017, from over 6,110 in the previous year (Romero, 2018). This decrease is linked to Daesh's recent retreat from Iraq and Syria, as well as the reduced impact of its local affiliates in Libya and Egypt. However, the collapse of Daesh has created a potential new terrorist threat in the form of returning North African Daesh fighters. Although it is difficult to predict how many will return to their home countries, the danger they could pose should not be underestimated: they have gained military experience, ideological training and connections with fellow jihadists from around the world. The threat is particularly latent if they decide to go to Libya, where continued chaos, insecurity and militant presence provide an opportunity for the continuation of jihadist activities.

4. Following Libya's civil war and ensuing fragmentation, Daesh was able to gain a foothold in the country in 2015. The group was ousted from its coastal stronghold in Sirte in December 2016 and no longer controls territory in Libya. However, it is widely believed to have sleeper cells in the north and to be seeking to regroup in the south. Daesh continues to claim responsibility for attacks, including on Libya's electoral commission and on the headquarters of the Libyan oil corporation, both in Tripoli in 2018. Another terrorist group operating in parts of southern Libya is al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). These groups are a threat not just for Libya but also for neighbouring countries and indeed for Europe. The perpetrators of the three big attacks that struck Tunisia in 2015 attended a Daesh training camp near Sabratha in Libya, whereas the al-Qaeda-linked militants who besieged Algeria's In Amenas gas plant in 2013 are believed to have crossed into the country from Libya. The attack at the Ariana Grande concert in Manchester in 2017 has been associated with the Libyan affiliate of Daesh, which underlines the relevance of developments in Libya for NATO's European Allies.

5. In Egypt, Daesh in the Sinai Province (formerly known as ABM) continues to be the most active terrorist group, operating in the northern Sinai Peninsula. Although it initially targeted the Egyptian army, this Daesh affiliate has increasingly focused its operations on Coptic Christians, Sufi Muslims and foreign tourists. There is also a growing militant threat in the Western Desert in the form of Ansar al-Islam, a new group composed mostly of former Egyptian army officers and soldiers that has pledged allegiance to AQIM. In addition, smaller extremist cells stage attacks on security forces in urban areas. The government has reacted to these terrorist activities with a harsh military

crackdown and repressive legal measures, including repeated extensions of the nationwide state of emergency since April 2017. However, this approach also fuels further radicalisation, with Ansar al-Islam, for example, declaring a “holy war” against the Egyptian state.



Source: Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, 2018

6. In Tunisia, the enhanced capacity of security forces has contributed to a safer environment than that which prevailed in 2015, when a series of high-level terrorist attacks unsettled the country. October 2018 saw the first major attack in Tunis since then. However, here too there is a thin line between police effectiveness and abuse. A study conducted by the Tunisian Institute for Strategic Studies interviewed 83 terrorists in Tunisian prisons and found that, in 90% of cases, radicalisation had occurred as a result of state repression (Gallien and Herbert, 2018).

## B. ILLEGAL MIGRATION, HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND BORDER SECURITY

7. North Africa continues to be an “area of origin, transit and final destination” for migrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East (European Commission, 2019). However, the number of people crossing the Mediterranean from North Africa to Europe has fallen dramatically, from a peak of over one million in 2015 to 172,324 in 2017 and 139,300 in 2018. Furthermore, the geography of migratory flows has changed, with the majority of crossings in 2018 occurring via the so-called West Mediterranean route from Morocco to Spain, rather than via the central Africa-to-Italy or Turkey-to-Greece routes. This is due to a variety of political arrangements and border closures that have made it more difficult to access Europe in the same manner as before. Firstly, the European Union and Greece signed an agreement in March 2016 to stem the flow of irregular migrants to Greece. In early 2017 another agreement was signed by Italy and Libya’s internationally recognised interim Government of National Accord (GNA) which extends aid and training to the Libyan Coast Guard in exchange for a crackdown on illegal migration from Libya’s shores. This has largely had the intended effect, as demonstrated by the fact that the Libyan Coast Guard intercepted and returned around 20,000 migrants in 2017 alone. The EU has also contributed financially to this initiative.

8. On the other hand, these agreements have not curbed the desire to migrate and have therefore exacerbated insecurity in North Africa in some ways. There continues to be a lucrative people smuggling business in Libya’s southern deserts and there is “increased evidence of connections between organised criminal networks and terrorist groups” (European Commission, 2017). Moreover, migrants who are intercepted by the Libyan Coast Guard are often brought back to “overcrowded and poorly-monitored” detention camps in Libya, which as a country is not bound by the European Court of Human Rights’ jurisdiction. Some of these camps are run by the GNA, but many others are held unofficially by militias, and numerous documented reports of torture, rape,

severe abuse and slavery have emerged. Outside the camps, many migrants have been sold on by their traffickers to kidnappers who demand large sums of money from their relatives for their release (Thomson, 2019). Overall, as mentioned previously in the Political Committee's 2018 General Report, a European focus on limiting the migration flow from the MENA and sub-Saharan regions risks strengthening the power and influence of militias and other groups whose main concern is resource predation (Miranda Calha, 2018).

9. The illicit flow of militants and migrants as well as of weapons, fuel and drugs across Libya's borders is related to the fragmentation and low professionalism of the country's security forces, its outdated border-security infrastructure and the disintegration of its justice system (US Department of State, 2018; European Commission, 2019). Neighbouring states have come to perceive their borders with Libya as a security threat. In 2013, Tunisia created closed military zones in these border areas, and, in 2018, Algeria announced that it had deployed 80,000 troops on its southern and eastern borders (with Mali, Niger, and Libya). Both countries as well as Morocco have built "hundreds of kilometres of walls" on their frontiers (Gallien and Herbert, 2018). However, analysts point out that this creates new security challenges, with border communities facing potential abuse of power by border-security services, coming under increased economic stress as they are cut off from smuggling revenues, and therefore becoming increasingly susceptible to radicalisation.

### **C. YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DISCONTENT**

10. Economic and social challenges are key underlying causes of instability in North Africa. Unemployment rates, particularly among the youth generation, are high in all countries in the region. In Tunisia, 36% of those aged 15-24 were out of work in 2018. This figure stood at 34% in Egypt and 42% in Libya (ILO, 2019). In comparison, the average youth unemployment rate in middle-income countries was 14% that year (ILO, 2019). Furthermore, many of those who do find work are in the informal sector, facing poor working conditions and low salaries (ILO, 2015). The paucity of employment opportunities derives from demographic pressures in the form of a youth bulge, and the inability of labour markets to cope with the associated rapid influx of new job seekers. Widespread youth unemployment is concerning from a security point of view because of the links between economic hardship, criminality, and radicalisation. Economically disenfranchised young people are more susceptible to extremist influence.

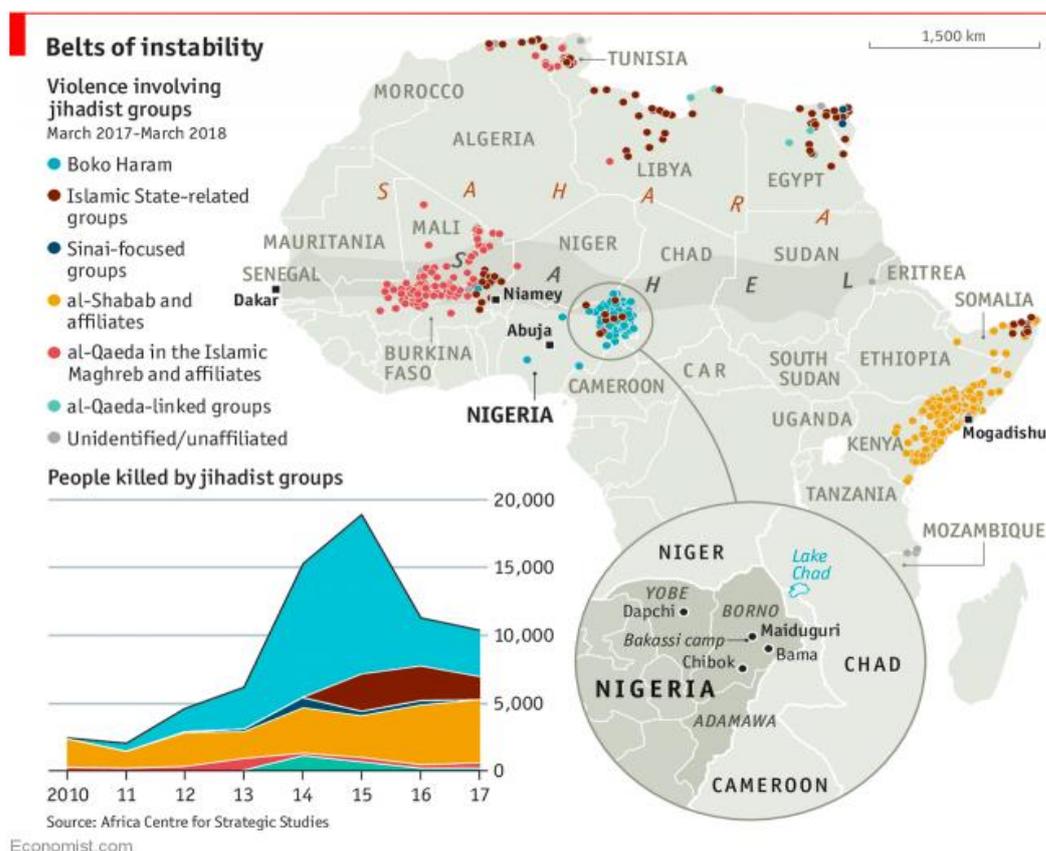
11. The uprisings that occurred across the MENA region in 2011 were rooted in socio-economic discontent. This discontent has not been adequately addressed by the region's post-revolutionary governments, as evidenced by the high incidence of economically-rooted protest in North Africa over the past few years. In Morocco's Rif Valley, frustration about corruption and stalled economic development led to unrest in late 2016 and early 2017. In Egypt, protests also erupted in late 2016 in response to subsidy cuts and other painful austerity measures associated with a USD 12 billion IMF loan. There have been sporadic displays of public outrage since then as the prices of fuel, public transportation, electricity, and other goods and services have been increased. Although recent Egyptian economic growth projections have been positive, they "could provoke a backlash on the basis of public expectations". In Tunisia, 2017 saw protestors in the southern city of Tataouine stage weeks of sit-ins to demand jobs in the local oil industry, whereas 2018 heralded mass marches against new austerity policies, as well as public-sector strikes demanding pay hikes and job-cut freezes. This occurred against a backdrop of the aforementioned high unemployment and an inflation rate which rose to 7.8% in June 2018 - its highest level in almost thirty years. Given that economic hardship fuels instability, the failure of governments across the MENA region to meaningfully tackle their populations' grievances in this respect represents a latent security issue.

12. On a more positive note, the tourism industry – which is particularly important for Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt - has been recovering following a difficult period. As a result of the terrorist attacks in Tunisia, tourist arrivals had plummeted to 5.3 million in 2015. In 2018, the total number reached 8.3 million, surpassing pre-attack levels for the first time (Reuters, 7 January 2019). Similarly, tourism in Egypt suffered after the revolution, with revenues at the country's top tourist sites dropping by 95% between 2011 and 2014. A sharp rebound in visitors meant that the number

of tourists was due to reach 10 million for the first time since 2012 (Jones, 2018). This will have a positive impact on the economy and therefore on security.

### III. THE MENA – AFRICA SECURITY NEXUS

#### A. BELT OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM: FROM SOMALIA TO SENEGAL



Source: The Economist, 2018

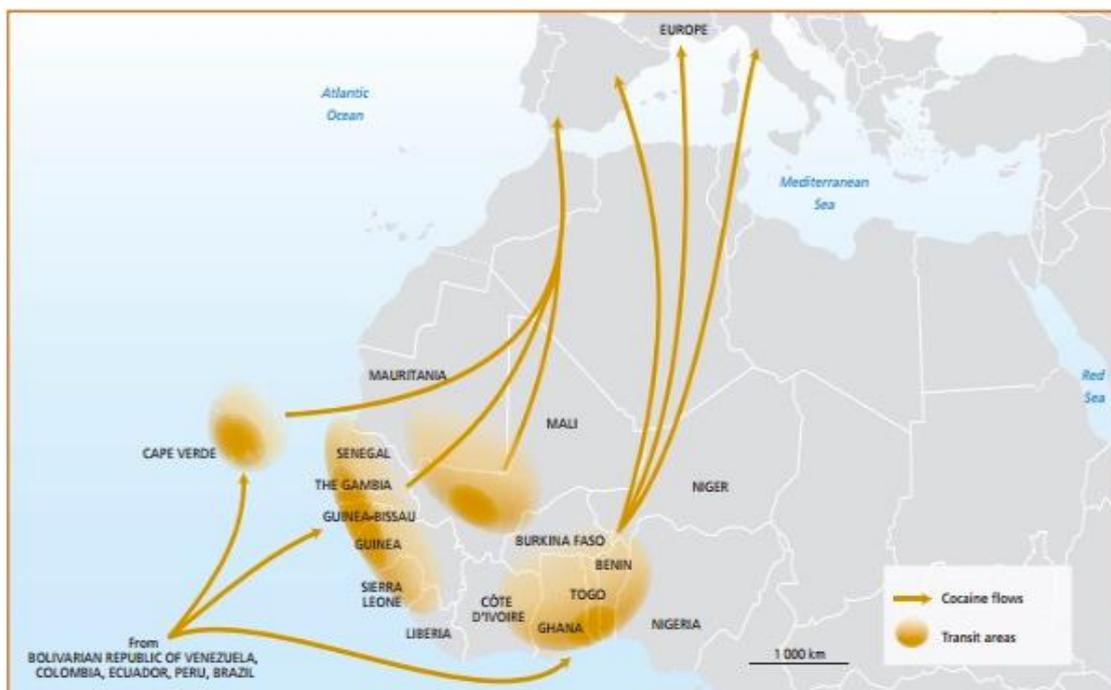
13. Jihadism in Africa has long been concentrated on the Sahel, the region just south of the Sahara Desert. In recent years, however, the geographical scope of violent operations has expanded and the range of perpetrators increased, with new attacks striking Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso in 2016, and terrorism-related arrests taking place in Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Senegal. The number of African countries experiencing "sustained militant Islamist activity" increased from 5 to 12 between 2010 and 2017, whereas the number of violent attacks conducted by jihadist militants on the continent rose by over 300% in this period (Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, 2018). In 2010, AQIM and al-Shabaab were the most prominent of the five recognised militant Islamist groups active in Africa. By 2017, Boko Haram and Daesh had emerged as the other key players, and the overall number of recognised groups had surpassed 20 (Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, 2018). A "broad belt of jihadist campaigns" now connects Kenya and Somalia in the east with Burkina Faso and Senegal in the west, as well as Niger, Nigeria, and Mali in between (The Economist, 2018).

14. Many of the jihadist groups in the Sahel have been bolstered by the outflow of weapons and the development of smuggling networks following the collapse of the Libyan state. Furthermore, influences from extremist organisations originating in the Middle East, specifically from al-Qaeda and Daesh, have given ideological impetus to similar African movements. For example, the Somalia-based al-Shabaab "pledged obedience" to al-Qaeda in 2012, whereas the Nigeria-based Boko Haram split into two factions in 2016, one of which allied itself to Daesh under the name Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). However, the appeal of Daesh affiliation has waned as the

terror organisation has lost territorial control as well as ideological power in the Arab world. Moreover, violent extremist movements in Africa are primarily borne out of local grievances and remain fundamentally grounded in local communities. A study conducted by the UN Development Programme found that 71% of those recruited by African jihadist organisations were motivated to join as a result of “government action”, including the killing or arrest of a family member or friend (UNDP, 2017). Desperate poverty, social exclusion, institutional collapse, and lack of public services are other prevailing causes of radicalisation on the continent. Overall, there is a clear link between state fragility and terrorism, with fragile states breeding disaffection amongst citizens, providing refuge for perpetrators, and lacking the capacity to combat extremist threats.

15. Jihadism in sub-Saharan Africa must be taken seriously by NATO and its member states for a number of reasons. Crucially, many African extremist groups espouse a clear anti-Western ideology and focus certain attacks on Western-affiliated targets. For example, Boko Haram, whose name translates to “Western education is a sin” (Signé, 2018), bombed the United Nations headquarters in Abuja in 2011. In East Africa, al-Shabaab has targeted many establishments popular with Westerners, including the Westgate Mall in 2013 and a hotel complex in 2019, both in Nairobi. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Al-Mourabitoun have claimed joint responsibility for attacks on upscale hotels in Mali (2015), Burkina Faso (2016), and Côte d’Ivoire (2016). Although these African jihadist movements have not themselves been able to carry out attacks on Western soil in recent years, their messages have the potential to reach and inspire people worldwide. It is, therefore, important to tackle regional terrorist movements early, so as to prevent them from radicalising individuals based in the West or merging with other similar groups to create a transnational threat. Given the presence of violent extremist activity both north and south of the Sahara, the formation of a “corridor between North Africa and the Sahel” along which revenues, weapons, and militants flow easily is a particularly plausible risk. Lack of Allied interest now may enable current threats to expand until Western forces are obliged to intervene in a more direct and costly way (The Economist, 2018). The expansion of jihadist activity should be of particular concern to southern European Allies, given their geographical proximity to Africa and, especially in the case of France, post-colonial links with many of the countries discussed in this section.

## B. CRIMINALITY: DRUG TRAFFICKING AND PIRACY



Source: Wilson Center, 2013

16. A number of African countries are serving as increasingly important hubs for global drug trafficking. The UN World Drug Report 2018 notes that 87% of total global seizures of pharmaceutical opioids in 2016 came from northern, western, and central Africa (UNODC, 2018). The main opioid implicated is tramadol, which is smuggled to markets in these African regions either for local consumption or further trafficking upwards to the Middle East (UNODC, 2018). Heroin and methamphetamine seizures at African airports are also increasing, particularly in Lagos, Accra, and Cotonou. One of the African countries at the epicentre of the drug trade is Guinea-Bissau, to which cocaine is transported by South American cartels from Brazil in particular. A mutually reinforcing relationship exists between drug trafficking and violence on the continent, with extremist groups frequently relying on the drug trade for revenue. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Boko Haram have both been implicated in smuggling, the former of cannabis and cocaine across the Sahel, the latter of cocaine and heroin across West Africa.

17. NATO member countries are very much affected by this illicit African drug trade, with an estimated two-thirds of the cocaine that is smuggled from Latin America to Europe traveling via West Africa, especially Benin, Cape Verde, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Nigeria, and Togo (UNODC, 2017). Cocaine is now mostly transported into Africa on second-hand cargo planes, and it then typically continues on to Europe in convoys across the Sahara Desert (Badri-Maharaj, 2016). West Africa's role in drug trafficking has been fuelled by the increase in demand for cocaine in Europe and facilitated by the region's porous borders, weak institutions, and relative lack of successful interdiction efforts.

18. Piracy represents another source of instability in Africa. Although it has been on the decline in the Gulf of Aden since its peak in 2011, it has grown in magnitude in the Gulf of Guinea. In 2018, the Gulf "accounted for all 6 hijackings, 13 of the 18 ships fired upon, 130 of the 141 hostages held, and 78 of 83 seafarers kidnapped for ransom worldwide" (The Maritime Executive, 2019). There is something of a resurgence of petro-piracy in the region, with several attacks in 2018 targeting oil tankers for oil theft. However, "due to its favourable risk-reward ratio and the relative ease with which it can be conducted", kidnapping for ransom continues to be the prevailing type of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Nigerian waters have been particularly affected by attacks although ships in neighbouring countries, including Benin and Ghana, were also targeted in 2018.

19. Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea is of high relevance to NATO given the region's status as an important maritime transit hub, notably for petroleum products. The Gulf's waters hold an estimated 4.5% of world oil reserves and, in 2016, 8% of the EU's crude-oil imports came from Nigeria, the largest crude oil producer in the region. Oil theft has the potential to both destabilise the region and affect the global supply of petroleum products. Furthermore, insurance costs for vessels passing through the region have increased. The total economic cost of piracy (a measure that takes into account contracted maritime security, counter-piracy organisations, insurance, and other costs) in West Africa was estimated at USD 818.1 million in 2017, up from USD 719.6 million in 2015 (Oceans Beyond Piracy, 2018).

### **C. ILLEGAL MIGRATION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

20. Conflict and persecution, lack of economic opportunities and climate-change-induced crop losses provoke large migration flows in sub-Saharan Africa. An estimated 75% of these flows are within Africa but much of the remainder is targeted at Europe, via North Africa (FAO, 2017). Despite these northward aspirations, the number of irregular migrants actually attempting to cross the Mediterranean towards Europe has decreased sharply since its 2015 peak, mainly as a result of trafficking bans introduced on migrant routes and cash-for-migration arrangements struck between the EU and several North African countries. However, human trafficking continues to be a major issue across the Sahel and North Africa, and the crackdown has actually exacerbated some of its negative effects. Northward migration has become more dangerous and more expensive, so traffickers in key crossroad countries like Niger and Libya charge higher prices, officials demand larger bribes, and riskier back routes through the desert are taken to avoid arrest. Furthermore, human rights groups have criticised the "arbitrary arrest, banishment to remote sections of the

country and, lately, outright expulsion” of sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco, as well as the squalid conditions of the Libyan detention camps in which many migrants are trapped (Alami, 2018).

21. Illegal migration and human trafficking across the Mediterranean closely implicate NATO’s southern flank. The large-scale influx of migrants and refugees in 2015-2016 created difficulties for Allies that were unprepared to host the new arrivals and, in the case of irregular migrants, highlighted the vulnerability of the Alliance’s southern borders (Miranda Calha, 2017). Moreover, the situation incited populist, anti-immigrant sentiment across Europe. Given the presence of large Muslim communities in Europe, this polarisation increased tension on the security front for many European Allies (Miranda Calha, 2017). At the same time, it is important not to exaggerate the security dimension of what is predominantly a humanitarian emergency. The securitisation of migration justifies “greater surveillance, detention, deportation, and more restrictive policies”, negatively affecting human rights. In sum, it is important to guarantee national border security by managing irregular migration whilst at the same time protecting legitimate asylum seekers and acting to disband human trafficking networks.

#### **D. EBOLA AND OTHER HEALTH THREATS**

22. During the 2014-2016 West Africa Ebola epidemic, over 28,600 cases and 11,325 deaths were reported in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone (CDC, 2017). This represented the most widespread outbreak of the virus in history, prompting the UN Security Council to declare it a “threat to international peace and security”. Since August 2018, the world’s second largest Ebola outbreak is ravaging the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (UNICEF, 2019). More generally speaking, the likelihood of a disease becoming a pandemic is considerably above average in much of sub-Saharan Africa, given the weakness of many national health systems, the rapid pace of urbanisation, and very uneven access to sanitation on the continent.

23. Health threats emanating from Africa should be of concern to NATO and its member states for several reasons. Firstly, in an interconnected world, infectious diseases spread rapidly and effortlessly. Widespread air travel makes it difficult to isolate outbreaks where they emerge. Secondly, epidemics can have very destabilising local effects, particularly in Africa’s more fragile countries. They can be destructive both economically and institutionally, leading to a proliferation of criminality and violence, including to the trafficking and terrorism issues discussed above. Recognising the global security implications of the Ebola epidemic, the UN Security Council established the first-ever UN emergency health mission to combat the crisis and called on all member states to contribute funds. Thirdly, there is some risk that future diseases emanating from Africa could be weaponised for bioterrorism purposes. Three of the six diseases that the Center for Disease Control (CDC) classifies as “category A” bioterrorism agents due to their highly contagious and lethal qualities are already present in Africa (David, 2017). Experts judge that it would have been too financially and logistically challenging for even the more sophisticated groups to exploit Ebola as a weapon [Maron, 2014; David, 2017] but the threat of future Africa-related bioterrorism cannot be entirely dismissed.

#### **E. ENDEMIC INSECURITY AND REBEL INSURGENCIES AT STATE PERIPHERIES**

24. Since the 1990s, low-intensity, protracted violence that is perpetrated by a wide range of competing armed factions has been considerably more common in Africa than “big wars fought for state control” that implicate well-structured, territorially powerful rebel armies. These decentralised forms of violence in state peripheries have embroiled certain countries in conflict-and-fragility traps, whereby periods of localised instability are separated by short phases of relative peace (Von Soest and de Juan, 2018). Persistent insecurity in eastern DRC or in many rural areas of the Central African Republic (CAR) are cases in point. Organised violence in these countries “fuses legitimate political grievances with naked economic opportunism” and stems largely from weak state capacity and poor governance (Muggah, 2018). Rebels are particularly able to thrive in remote areas where the authority of the central state is tenuous. Indeed, seven of the top ten countries in the Fragile States Index 2018 are in Africa (Fund For Peace, 2019).



#### IV. SECURITY AND STABILITY IN AFRICA – CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR NATO

26. NATO has been putting greater emphasis on challenges emanating from Africa since the Warsaw Summit in 2016. In Warsaw, the Allies adopted a Framework for the South, which seeks to “integrate and streamline” NATO’s approach to its southern neighbours. The Allies also agreed to cooperate more closely with the African Union in the face of common threats. Finally, they launched an agenda for action known as *Projecting Stability*, which delineates measures to help the Alliance predict, tackle, and overcome instability in its neighbourhood (Díaz-Plaja, 2018). At the 2018 Brussels Summit, the Allies defined three explicit objectives for NATO in the South, namely: strengthening NATO’s deterrence and defence against threats from the South, contributing to international crisis management efforts in the region, and helping regional partners build resilience against security threats such as terrorism. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg summarised NATO’s approach to the South in the following manner: “To protect our territory, we must be willing to project stability beyond our borders. If our neighbours are more stable, we are more secure”.

27. Different threat perceptions and priorities for the allocation of scarce resources among Allies have made it difficult for NATO to develop a more robust southern strategy. Many of the Allies on NATO’s eastern flank understandably advocate for a focus on the Russian threat. A number of southern Allies are more concerned with Mediterranean security. In addition to these divergent geographical needs and interests, there is the question of what type of threat to prioritise: balancing a “relatively straightforward but highly demanding problem of defense against Russian aggression in the east, versus a diffuse set of lower intensity, but arguably more likely, risks in the south” (Lesser et al., 2018). It is only recently that NATO has begun to address the latter risks in a more coherent fashion, although others argue that its institutional response is still insufficient (Ülgen, 2017).

28. One of the main manifestations of the Alliance’s increased recent focus on the South is the creation of a NATO Strategic Direction-South Hub at the Joint Force Command centre in Naples. This hub was inaugurated in September 2017 and declared fully operationally capable at the Brussels Summit in July 2018. It represents a “single, centralised forum” for NATO’s engagement with its southern partners, NGOs and academic institutions on issues such as destabilisation, terrorism, radicalisation, migration and environmental concerns (Wall, 2018). However, the project is in its early stages, with staffing and funding arrangements not yet fully developed and the hub’s geographical mandate still unclear as of August 2018 (Wall, 2018). It is still too early to assess the hub’s effectiveness, especially with regard to sub-Saharan African issues.

29. NATO engages with the MENA region more extensively than it does with sub-Saharan Africa. Its main channel of cooperation with the former is the Mediterranean Dialogue, which is composed of individualised partnership programmes with seven non-NATO countries in the Mediterranean region: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. NATO’s cooperation with Tunisia has centred around counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency training and, since 2018, cyber defence assistance. In Mauritania, NATO has been helping to destroy weapon stockpiles, construct safe munitions depots, and enhance defence education. The major recent focus of the Moroccan partnership has been the incorporation of the Royal Moroccan Armed Forces into NATO’s Interoperability Platform. Moreover, the NATO School Oberammergau (NSO) concluded a Cyber Security Professional Programme in Rabat in December 2018. In Egypt, NATO has provided assistance with the detection of unexploded ordnance. Algeria has participated in scientific exchange with the Alliance and expressed interest in the development of a new Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme. Libya, although not an official NATO partner, requested Allied help with security-sector reform. As a result, NATO is currently assessing how it can help Libya establish national security services and defence institutions.

30. However, NATO’s engagement with its Mediterranean Dialogue partners has not always produced tangible results. Cooperation with Algeria has been least pronounced due to Algeria’s long-standing non-interventionist foreign policy and military links to Russia. Other North African countries are cautious when it comes to Western involvement in their national security concerns. For example, in February 2018, Tunisia rejected a NATO grant of EUR 3 million for the establishment of

a joint command centre on its territory, citing the need to preserve national sovereignty with regard to security. Furthermore, in 2016, NATO announced the creation of an intelligence fusion centre in Tunisia, but this was soon denied by Tunisian authorities. Analysts link this denial to the long-avowed but often-neglected principle of Arab solidarity, which makes it difficult for Tunisian authorities to convince the public to support the use of national military bases by a Western Alliance for intelligence and operations in neighbouring countries. The ambivalence of public opinion towards NATO in many of the Mediterranean Dialogue countries is also related to their colonial and post-colonial experiences with NATO member states, the residue of Cold War perceptions of the Alliance, and the close association that is made between NATO and the United States (Lesser et al., 2018). Finally, NATO's public image in North Africa was weakened by the regional consequences of the Alliance's intervention in Libya (Lesser et al., 2018).

31. NATO's involvement in North African security issues also has a strong maritime dimension. As mentioned previously in the Political Committee's 2018 General Report, the Alliance has been conducting *Operation Sea Guardian* in the Mediterranean since November 2016. Given that information-sharing and logistical coordination with the EU's *Operation Sophia* have been central to this naval initiative, *Operation Sea Guardian* represents an example of successful EU-NATO cooperation with regard to the South. The capabilities supplied by NATO in the Mediterranean, notably special forces, submarines, maritime patrol aircraft and airborne early-warning aircraft, have helped bolster regional maritime security. However, following the recent increase in drownings in the Mediterranean, NATO and EU maritime efforts have come under criticism for being insufficient (Marcuzzi, 2019). According to the UNHCR, the migrant death toll on the crossing from Libya to Europe rose from one death per 38 arrivals in 2017 to one death per 14 arrivals in 2018. It has been argued that "smaller and cheaper vessels" would be more capable of preventing further deaths (Marcuzzi, 2019). On a broader note, *Operation Sea Guardian* and *Operation Sophia* are first and foremost interim, short-term, military solutions which do not address the root causes of mass migration and security threats emanating from the South. It is important to embed NATO and EU naval operations in wider, non-maritime efforts, and to ensure that military approaches do not crowd out political ones.

32. NATO's opportunities in Africa derive largely from its partnerships with actors who are more active there. These are primarily the Mediterranean Dialogue countries and the European Union, but also the African Union and the United Nations. NATO has strengthened its cooperation with the AU in recent years and this now revolves around three key tenets: operational support, capacity-building support and help with the development and sustainment of the African Standby Force (ASF), the AU's planned "continental, on-call security apparatus". More concretely, NATO has provided strategic air- and sea-lift support for the AU Mission in Somalia since 2007; invited AU officers to attend NATO training courses; supported the first ASF field training exercise in 2015; and, in 2005-2007, helped the AU with its peacekeeping mission in Darfur. NATO now has a liaison office at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa and also established a NATO contact embassy. Moreover, senior officials, as well as military staff from both organisations, meet annually to discuss areas for further cooperation.

33. NATO works closely with the UN in some areas related to African security, notably with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime on counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics, and with the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations on issues related to women, children, and civilians during conflict. At the request of the UN Secretary General, NATO deployed ships in the Gulf of Aden in 2008 to deter piracy and escort merchant ships. Another example of UN-NATO cooperation is that NATO took responsibility for all the military aspects of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 regarding Libya in 2011. There are, however, political constraints which undermine efforts to strengthen the UN-NATO relationship. Most importantly, a number of UN member-states, including Russia, China, and many non-aligned countries, are "skeptical, if not outright suspicious" of NATO (NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 2018).

34. Although NATO itself does not play a major direct role in African security, many of the Allies do, either bilaterally or multilaterally. The United Kingdom and the United States provide training and support to a number of African militaries, and conduct a range of missions, ranging from

counter-terrorism to anti-piracy. France's *Operation Barkhane*, a broad counter-terrorism campaign focusing on Islamist groups in the Sahel Region, is now in its fifth year. France also supports the G5 Sahel, a regional counter-terrorism force made up of troops from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. Moreover, many Allies are significant contributors to UN and EU missions in Africa. The EU currently has Common Security and Defence missions in five African countries – Niger, Mali, Central African Republic, Libya and Somalia. These focus on capacity building, border assistance or military training. The UN, for its part, has seven peacekeeping operations in Africa, some of which NATO Allies are involved in. For example, the United Kingdom contributes troops to the UN mission in South Sudan, while German troops play a key role in the UN mission in Mali. In the Gulf of Guinea, the French, British, and Portuguese navies operate the Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade (MDAT-GoG), a reporting centre for piracy which provides updates and guidance to vessels in the region (Safety4Sea, 2016).



Source: Foy et al., 2019

35. The influence both of the Allies and of NATO as a grouping on African security issues may be affected by the increasing role that China and Russia are playing on the continent. In recent years, China has demonstrated a growing willingness to participate in regional security provision in Africa. It disbursed USD 100 million in military aid to enhance the AU's combat readiness in 2015; built a large military base in Djibouti in 2017; organised the first China-Africa Defence and Security Forum in 2018; and now provides more troops than any other permanent member of the Security Council to UN peacekeeping operations. Russia, too, is tightening its military cooperation with multiple African countries. Its security forces are training troops in the Central African Republic, whereas Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, and Angola are all major importers of Russian arms. In the 2013-2017 period, Russia supplied 39% of Africa's imported military equipment (Foy et al., 2019). China and Russia's approach to African security differs from that of the Allies in that these two countries have fewer qualms about the democratic credentials of the governments they engage with. "By virtue of its founding principles", NATO has to be more discerning (Moens, 2016). Furthermore, the presence of China, Russia, and NATO Allies in Africa is, to some extent, motivated by the same goals, including securing their energy supply and projecting a global role. This means that some competition between these countries is inevitable. At the same time there is more scope for cooperation with regard to

security, as all external actors have an interest in ensuring regional stability and stemming transnational terrorism, maritime piracy, and illicit trafficking on the continent (Moens, 2016).



Source: Foy et al., 2019

## V. PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

36. NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue focuses on the MENA region, but NATO as an organisation is not engaged in Africa apart from its fledgling contacts with the AU and the UN. However, several developments should give rise to concern as a deterioration of the security on the African continent would impact the MENA region and thus also the southern flank of the Alliance. Environmental, economic, and social issues in a number of African states are challenging the capacities of their respective governments to the limit. Militant extremism in the region is rising while extremist political and social entities are becoming increasingly linked.

37. The security challenges which have emerged in the Maghreb, the Sahel, and other parts of Africa can therefore not be seen in isolation; it is important to prevent a deterioration of the already volatile security in Africa. This is particularly relevant for European Allies, as instability will, sooner

rather than later, have a tangible negative impact on their security. While NATO's resources are limited, there are some "low-hanging fruits" where engagement of the Alliance could, in the view of your Rapporteur, make a positive impact on regional security. First and foremost, NATO must improve its awareness of security developments on the continent. This could be done by enhanced intelligence sharing among Allies and with NATO partner countries. The "Hub for the South" based in Naples, Italy, should obviously play an important role in this regard and the Allies need to provide sufficient resources. Moreover, NATO member countries should consider further developing NATO partnerships further by expanding and deepening cooperation with relevant security actors in Africa. This would primarily focus on the African Union, but also on the G5.

38. This draft report will serve as a basis for discussion among the members of the Committee at the 2018 Spring Session in Slovakia. It will be updated and expanded for the Assembly's Annual Session later in the year and will also include the conclusions of the visit of the Sub-Committee on NATO Partnerships to US AFRICOM.

## ANNEX: THE WAR IN YEMEN – AN UPDATE

For the past four years, Yemen has been embroiled in conflict. This conflict is rooted in long-standing north-south and Sunni-Zaidi divisions, but was sparked by the failure of political transition following Arab Spring pro-democracy protests. Originally, it pitted a Houthi rebel movement, championing the rights of Yemen's Zaidi Shia minority, against pro-government forces led by President Hadi. In March 2015, Saudi Arabia and eight other mostly Sunni Arab states intervened in the conflict via an air campaign aimed at restoring Mr Hadi's government. The coalition was concerned about alleged Iranian backing of the Houthi rebels and justified its campaign as a means to stem growing Iranian influence in the region (Costa Neves, 2018). The United States, the United Kingdom, and France have supplied the coalition with logistical and intelligence help. Since 2015, the war has, however, fragmented into multiple conflicts, bolstering a southern separatist movement, strengthening the hand of militant groups, and even producing splits within the coalition, most notably between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

International calls for a cessation of hostilities in Yemen have grown louder. This was precipitated by the coalition's attempted offensive on the rebel-held city of Hodeidah in June 2018. The United Nations warned against the offensive on humanitarian grounds, conscious that Hodeidah's port is the entry point for imported goods and foreign aid for almost two-thirds of Yemen's population. The coalition ended the ground assault under a month later as it proved difficult to make progress in the tough realities of urban warfare. Instead, the Saudis and Emiratis vowed to support UN efforts to reach a political solution. The assassination of Saudi dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October 2018 further increased international pressure for a resumption of political talks and a ceasefire. In November 2018, the CIA concluded that Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman had authorised the assassination. This led to the halting of American air-to-air refuelling of coalition warplanes and hardened resolve in the US Congress to legislate a complete end to US military support for the coalition (Walsh and Schmitt, 2018).

In December 2018, representatives of Yemen's internationally recognised government and of the Houthi rebel movement agreed to meet in Sweden for UN-mediated talks. The talks produced one of the most promising signs of progress towards ending Yemen's conflict – a tangible deal known as the Stockholm Agreement. This agreement had three key components: a prisoner exchange, mutual redeployments from Hodeidah, and a commitment to discuss de-escalation in Taiz, another front-line city. Although vague and imprecise in many respects, the Stockholm Agreement helped to mitigate the threat of all-out famine and to prevent further escalation of the humanitarian crisis in Hodeidah. However, the two sides soon exchanged recriminations and the implementation of provisions of the agreement stalled. While there has been some progress since then, prospects for peace now very much hinge on whether the warring parties will prove committed to making the sacrifices required by the agreement instead of seeking a military solution. That said, even if the Stockholm Agreement is upheld, the complexity of the conflict and its multitude of protagonists will make it challenging to reach a peace agreement and to end local violence perpetuated by armed rebel offshoots. Western governments must maintain pressure on all sides to abide by the deal and refrain from provoking their opponents.

The humanitarian cost of the war in Yemen has reached catastrophic levels, with the UN now calling it the "world's worst man-made humanitarian disaster". According to UN estimates, over 6,800 civilians have been killed and at least 10,700 injured as a result of the conflict as of March 2019. Many more civilians have died from preventable causes, most notably cholera and famine. In 2018, 15.9 million Yemenis – over half of the population-faced "severe acute food insecurity" (Reuters, 15 January 2019). As of November 2018, the cholera epidemic which began in April 2017 had resulted in over 1.3 million suspected cases and 2,641 deaths, making it the worst such outbreak in recorded history. Furthermore, 2.3 million people are still displaced as a result of the war. A report released by UN human rights experts in August 2018 detailed possible war crimes committed by all sides, although noted that "coalition air strikes have caused most direct civilian casualties". Naval blockages and import restrictions have limited deliveries of humanitarian aid to millions of civilians facing starvation. The scale of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen has helped prompt the aforementioned international pressure to bring the war to an end.

NATO as an Alliance is not involved in Yemen, and NATO Allies have been somewhat divided in their responses to the conflict. The United States has supported the Saudi-led coalition with intelligence, targeting assistance and aerial-refuelling support. The US is also Saudi Arabia's largest weapons supplier, accounting for 61% of major arms sales to the country over the past five years. Furthermore, the United States has conducted counterterrorism airstrikes in Yemen, targeting al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Daesh fighters. In March 2019, the Senate voted to end US support for the coalition, producing a resolution that President Trump has pledged to veto. The administration opposes this move on the grounds that it would damage relationships in the region; undermine counterterrorism operations; empower Iran; shift coalition weapons purchases to Russia and China; and reduce US influence on Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter. The United Kingdom, too, has been supporting the coalition and is currently Saudi Arabia's second largest arms supplier. In contrast, several other NATO Allies – Norway, Denmark, and Germany - suspended their arms deals with Saudi Arabia in November 2018, following the assassination of Mr Kashoggi. The European Union has maintained contact with all sides throughout the conflict and continues to emphasise the need for a political solution (ICG, 2019). It is important that NATO Allies help maintain the political momentum and support the UN's efforts to enforce the Stockholm Agreement with a unified voice.

Although it does not play a direct role in the conflict, NATO has a clear interest in the de-escalation of hostilities in Yemen. This is primarily because militant groups have flourished in the midst of fragmentation and lawlessness. AQAP, al-Qaeda's strongest franchise, grew in strength in 2015 and, despite being targeted by the United States, coalition, and especially Emirati forces, still has between 4,000 and 7,000 fighters in the country. Currently, AQAP is more concentrated on controlling parts of Yemen than on mounting international attacks, but it must be recalled that, historically, this al-Qaeda branch was perhaps the one most focused on targeting the West. As long as there is no settlement to the conflict and AQAP is able to present an image of local stability, it could stage a comeback. The threat associated with Daesh in Yemen has, in contrast, decreased substantially, reflecting Daesh's decline in Syria and Iraq, the local unpopularity of the Yemeni Daesh branch, and the success of Emirati and US counterterrorism campaigns (ACLED, 2018). Besides terrorism, NATO should be concerned about Yemen because of its strategic geographical position. Yemen lies on a strait that joins the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden, through which a large proportion of the world's oil passes en route to Europe and the United States. Throughout the conflict, commercial shipping has been periodically threatened as the Houthis have deployed anti-ship cruise missiles and waterborne improvised explosive devices. Another reason why NATO has a stake in pushing for peace in Yemen is related to the regional tensions the conflict risks further exacerbating. Finally, given that the security of NATO Allies is threatened by the spread of infectious diseases, acting to stem the current cholera epidemic in Yemen is very much in the Alliance's interest.

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