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When President Obama hosted the Africa Leaders Summit last August, his biggest challenge was to navigate adroitly between the continent's aspiring hopes and enduring hardships. And future historians, I'd predict, will conclude he succeeded. The Administration effectively (and fairly) trumpeted Africa as a venue for expanding economic growth, social development and rising democratic governance while also spotlighting the grueling realities of transnational terrorism, illicit trafficking and intra-state conflict that still grip parts of the continent. So here's an obvious question: how can we best assist our African partners in turning a corner on these security hardships, thereby helping to usher in a more hopeful, hospitable environment for greater stability, prosperity and democracy? For the past two decades, our answer has been very mission-centric: specifically, to help African countries build their peacekeeping and counter-terrorism capacities. That's very understandable, given the challenges they and we face, and the Obama Administration has pressed forward on these priorities. But at the Summit meeting, the White House added a third element to the US's partnering repertoire – the so-called Security Governance Initiative (SGI) – which aims to work jointly with partners on ways to help strengthen institutional capacity to manage their security forces with greater integrity and accountability.

long-awaited incentives for reform? Or might it tend to aggravate fault lines within a recipient institution by creating self-perceived winners and losers? Those charged with crafting joint action plans for each pilot country will need to think through the impact issue and how various reactions might be enhanced or mitigated.

Putting Key "Building Blocks" in Place

Next, it's really important for SGI orchestrators to hone in on the foundational elements of governance reform – namely, human capital and financial resources. Each of these domains has its own life-cycle attributes that capacity-building efforts must address. For example, the tasks of personnel recruitment, vetting and training are always key functionalities for any human resource (HR) management system, but is it wise to make those investments if, say, personnel retention or merit
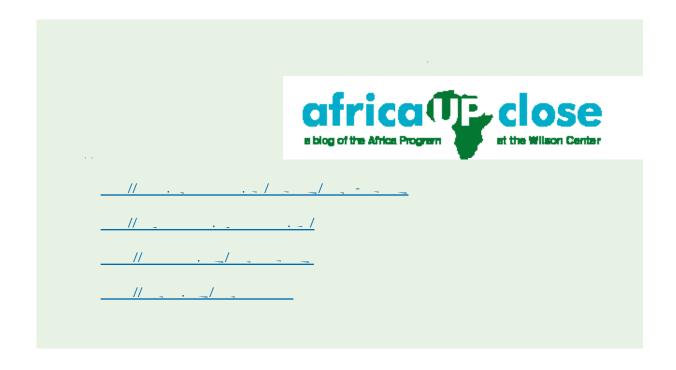
Perhaps the most significant stakeholder here is the public at large. At all levels – national, subnational and local – security governance is fundamentally about the provision of public services. So what the consumers think matters hugely. If local communities tend to view their police or soldiers more as predators than protectors, governance reform isn't going to succeed until it cycles back to causation and finds ways of changing that optic through concrete remedial efforts.

Tackling Corruption

Finally, here's the 64,000 dollar question: how will SGI's implementers tackle the issue of corruption? For sure, it's a pervasive problem that they're going

Dr. James A. Schear
Global Fellow

Dr. James A. Schear is currently a Global Fellow with the Africa Program at the Woodrow Wilson Center, and was previously a Public Policy Scholar with the Africa Program. Prior to this, he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations from 2009-2013. From 1989-94 he served as an advisor at the United Nations where he assisted senior officials in shaping implementation of 1991 Gulf War cease-fire resolutions and providing analytic support to the leadership of UN missions in Cambodia and Former Yugoslavia. As a deputy assistant secretary of defense, 1997-2001, he and his peacekeeping & humanitarian affairs team played key roles in supporting U.S. efforts to end the Eritrean-Ethiopian war, to stabilize East Timor following its separation from Indonesia, to counter predatory violence in war-torn regions, and to strengthen international standards against the use of child soldiers. Finally, as Director of Research at the National Defense University's Institute for National Strategic Studies, 2001-2008, he supervised seven project teams conducting studies on regional security affairs, strategic concept development and terrorism/transnational challenges. Dr. Schear obtained his B.A. from American University, his M.A. from Johns Hopkins' School of Advanced International Studies and his Ph.D. from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

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THE AFRICA PROGRAM

The Africa Program's mission is to analyze and offer practical, actionable options for addressing some of Africa's most critical, current and over-the-horizon issues; to foster policy-focused dialogue about and options for stronger and mutually-beneficial US-Africa relations; and to challenge the dominant narrative about Africa by enhancing knowledge and understanding about Africa in the United States. The Africa Program has four programmatic pillars: i) governance and leadership; ii) conflict management and peacebuilding; iii) trade, investment, sustainable development and human security; and iv) Africa's evolving role in the global arena. The roles of youth, women, and technology are critical to Africa's future - to good governance, securing peace, mitigating poverty and assuring sustainable development. As such, these issues are addressed across all four thematic areas.

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