



Wilson Center
Africa Program

Africa: Year
in Review
2017



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A Letter from the Director

The Wilson Center Africa Program asked policymakers, experts, and scholars to reflect on the most important and impactful developments on the continent and in U.S.-Africa relations in 2017. They responded with this collection of brief and insightful essays covering key developments in the political, economic, security, and social spheres.

Several issues and developments stood out, including the Trump Administration and Africa;

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A number of the contributions focus or touch on one of Africa’s biggest, best, and underutilized resources: youth. The myths surrounding African youth are dispelled, and the challenges confronting them are highlighted. More importantly, potential solutions—including concrete ways to engage with this growing and important demographic—are provided.

The final piece of the volume highlights a major milestone for the African continent—2017 marked the 10th anniversary since the African Charter for Democracy, Elections, and Governance came into force. With so much of Africa’s development hinging on good governance, the Charter is a powerful reminder of and opportunity to reflect on Africa’s governance trajectory, including progress made and continuing challenges on the road to embedding and consolidating democratic governance. As we look ahead, this Charter reminds us of the demands and aspirations of millions of ordinary Africans for more people-centered, transparent, accountable, and (peaceful) elections and governance.

We hope you enjoy this collection of essays about key developments that occurred in 2017, E that reverberated both in Africa and in the continent’s relations with rest of the world, including the United States. We express our gratitude to the authors for helping us to reflect on 2017, even as we look ahead to

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The Trump Administration and Africa

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As 2017 ends, the Trump administration is celebrating its first year in office. Those who are interested in Africa are cautiously waiting for a formal U.S. policy toward the continent. There appears to be an Africa vacuum. Among other things, the President has yet to appoint an Assistant Secretary of State for Africa. Perhaps, this is reflective of larger concerns about the role of the Department of State under the Trump administration. While we wait for clarification, the President's vision of Africa is showing in bits and pieces.

Challenging North Korea

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In his first year in office, President Trump staked out an unexpected priority for his Africa policy: sanctions against North Korea. Indeed, North Korea's ties to Africa are a weak spot in international sanctions enforcement, with 11 African states currently under UN investigation on suspicion of violations.

Though trade with Africa pales in comparison to Pyongyang's economic relationship with China, it nonetheless provides valuable hard currency that supports North Korea's weapons programs. In fact, according to the Observatory of Economic Complexity trade with some 30 African states provides approximately \$100 million to Kim Jong Un's regime each year.

Seeking to weaken these ties, President Trump hosted a lunch for African leaders at the UN and extolled them to "stand together and be accountable" in implementing sanctions.

U.S.-Sudan Relations in 2017: Against All Odds

An Important and Impactful Development in U.S.-Africa Relations in 2017

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Agriculture is powering economies across the African continent. The 2017 World Food Prize acknowledged this fact by honoring Dr. Akinwumi A. Adesina, President of the African Development Bank (AfDB), as the 2017 World Food Prize Laureate, in a celebratory ceremony in mid-October in Des Moines, Iowa. The World Food Prize award demonstrated a growing recognition of the power

Putting African Agriculture at the Apex

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Preoccupation with the troubled transitions in The Gambia, Kenya, Liberia, and Zimbabwe has overshadowed a looming crisis and potential development bonanza rolled into one: agriculture. Agriculture, the basis of most African economies, provides over 50 percent of employment. With 60 percent of the world's uncultivated arable land, the continent holds a key to global food security by 2050.

An estimated 40 million Africans are currently food insecure. The crisis comes from a basket of troubles ranging from degraded agricultural land producing drastically reduced crops, production deficits caused by conflicts (e.g., Mali), falling commodity prices, and outmoded farming practices. This crisis has been compounded by growing populations competing for a shrinking food supply. Unless the agricultural sector is given more attention, the number of people experiencing food insecurity will keep growing as Africa becomes the most populous continent by 2050.

The development bonanza could come from countries investing greater percentages of annual budgets and human resources in agriculture to transform economies and strengthen good governance. In its 2017 report, *Agriculture Powering Africa's Economic Transformation*, the African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET) links agriculture modernization and light manufacturing to increased economic growth and revitalized economies. Transforming agricultural sectors can make countries more food secure, provide employment, incentivize young people to pursue careers in agriculture, and tap the potential of women.

Robust agricultural policies are necessary for survival and growth. Since agriculture competes with other legitimate claims for limited resources, agriculture champions might note the following benefits to strengthen their case. Government should provide food security, which undergirds national security and state sovereignty. A food secure population can support robust civil society, demand good governance, and strengthen democracy.

Agriculture can address the youth bulge by introducing young people to a new profession and providing agriculture-related income-generating skills. Botswanan Nduchwa Margery, 32, who runs a successful commercial animal feed farm and models a pivotal role that women play in African agriculture, says that agriculture needs to become "cool." Providing 70 to 80 percent of farm labor, women are an under-acknowledged and under-utilized resource. School curricula should be re-designed to include agriculture-related courses relevant to current job markets. ACET's report recommends training female extension workers to maximize women's productivity.

Close attention to agriculture can promote better understanding of climate change and environmental degradation and help farmers develop new tools for adaptation and mitigation. China understands the potential of agriculture in Africa, having invested millions and sent more than 1,000 technical experts to Africa. These are contacts and opportunities for trade and relationships that the U.S. is missing out on. So despite U.S. preoccupation with political transitions, for a major investment return the U.S. should prioritize Africa's agricultural development.

The Moroccan Disruption

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One of the most consequential developments for Africa and U.S.-Africa policy in 2017 was Morocco's double whammy: re-entry into the African Union (AU) and applying to join the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Rabat's gambit threatens destabilizing Africa's regional-continental integration system. This includes the AU's institutional consolidation reform action plan put forth by President Kagame, which would strengthen regional economic communities. Whether ECOWAS indulges Morocco under pressure from Francophone members while Rabat still refuses to budge on the Western Sahara question (which prevents activating the AU's inoperative North African pillar, the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA)), may well determine the AU system's fate for years to come (although Moroccan membership in ECOWAS need not necessarily rule out the eventual operationalization of UMA)

Failure of the AU, the UN, the U.S., and Europe to persuade Rabat to follow through in implementing the UN self-determination referendum on Western Sahara has resulted in the UMA remaining inoperative. This has contributed to the security vacuum in the Maghreb and Sahel, thus allowing the crises of terrorism and trans-Mediterranean migration to fester. This has implications for U.S. counter-terrorism effectiveness. The scandalous revelations of slave auctions in a destabilized Libya, which is somehow expected to manage and contain illegal migration and human trafficking of Africans into Spain and Italy, can only be seen as the tip of the iceberg of a trans-Mediterranean 'Eurafrican' crisis metastasizing without a functioning North African regional economic community in the Maghreb.

The 5th AU/EU summit in Abidjan in November 2017 amounted to little more than an evasion from what is needed: a joint AU-EU permanent mechanism for stabilizing northern Africa and the Mediterranean—all because neither the AU nor the EU, or Washington, dare compel Morocco to accommodate Sahrawi self-determination in a manner allowing both multilateral governing institutions to devise a comprehensive and sustainable plan of action for addressing trans-Mediterranean security. The Emmanuel Macron police-military proposal for tackling linked terrorist-human trafficking networks will not solve a problem that is, at least in part, linked to Morocco's imperialist ambitions. A more UMA-focused U.S. policy could make a difference.

2017: The Year of New Foreign Military Bases in Africa

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2017 was a year of opening of new foreign military bases and facilities. The official opening of China's first overseas military base in Djibouti on August 1, 2017, the same day as the People's Liberation Army marked its 90th birthday, is historic. Officially in English, China describes the base as a logistics hub, but it is a military base, placed to resupply navy ships.

China joins other recent arrivals in Djibouti. Japan too has its only foreign military base there as do the Italians. Troops from Germany and Spain are hosted by the French, but the Russians failed to negotiate a partnership with the Chinese to share their facilities. India is also considering opening a base in Djibouti.

It is not only Djibouti that is accepting new foreign military bases. In February 2017, the United Arab Emirates secured a foreign military base in Somaliland, following its opening of a military facility in Eritrea in 2015. Saudi Arabia is also planning a military facility in Djibouti and Turkey opened a military training base in Somalia in 2017.

India also has facilities in Madagascar and the Agaléga Islands of Mauritius, although a plan to have a facility on the Seychelles' Assumption Island has been postponed. France remains the key foreign military power in Africa with 4,000 troops for Operation Burhane in the Sahel. The French have concentrated their air power and mission headquarters of this operation in Chad; its ve Reaper reconnaissance drones in Niger; its special operations troops in Burkina Faso; and its logistics hub in Côte d'Ivoire. There are also up to an additional 1,000 French military in facilities in Djibouti and a smaller presence in Gabon. Africa remains a key foreign policy priority for France under the Macron presidency.

The United States is also scaling up, and 2017 marked the tenth anniversary of U.S. Africa Command. There are roughly 4,000 troops currently in Djibouti at its Camp Lemonnier—the only permanent U.S. military installation in Africa—and approximately 800 in Niger. Washington has doubled its military presence in Somalia to 500 over the last six months. The UK also maintains military training facilities in Kenya and Nigeria.

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U.S. Army Africa: Promoting Security Cooperation and Strengthening Africa's Defense Institutions

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Insecurity and instability in parts of Africa are a matter of the concern to Africa, the United States, and other international partners. Successfully addressing these challenges requires long-term integrated efforts involving various U.S. agencies, and the development of strong African institutions to address the drivers of instability. The threat of Violent Extremism posed by organizations such as ISIS, al Qaeda, Boko Haram, and al Shabaab, combined with other drivers of instability, will continue to destabilize various parts of Africa if the root causes of insecurity are not confronted. The U.S. Army Africa (USARAF) w

Mali: Negotiating with Jihadists?

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In April, Mali concluded its Conference of National Understanding. The conference sought to advance the 2015 Algiers Accord, a peace agreement meant to end conflicts that began in 2012. The conflict and violence in Mali involves many actors, including jihadists, who have been excluded from the Algiers process. The conference recommended that the

The G5 Sahel: A Homegrown Response to Terrorism in the Sahara

by Thomas L. Bruneau

In October 2017, the deaths of four U.S. soldiers in Niger alongside Nigerian soldiers triggered many questions about the Sahel region and its strategic importance to the United States. Where is it on a map? Why are we there in the first place? As a rapid response to the longstanding security challenges of the Sahel, on October 30, 2017 the U.S. government pledged \$60 million to a nascent regional counter terrorism force called “G5 Sahel.” The 5,000-strong battalion of troops includes soldiers from Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mauritania.

Formed in 2014, two years after Mali’s state collapse and subsequent invasion by radical groups, the G5 Sahel has received the strong backing of France, the European Union and the United Nations throughout 2017. Those will provide financial, logistical, and operational support to the force. Last December, the force received an additional \$100 million from Saudi Arabia. This was a major boost to the cash-strapped military initiative, which aims to foster intelligence sharing between and among the countries to combat terrorist activity, arms smuggling, and illicit trafficking along borders.

Why should the Sahel and its G5 matter to the United States? What seemed to have been of remote importance to the U.S. 10 years ago now presents major threats to its interests in Africa and beyond. Terrorist groups allied with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and the Islamic State have demonstrated, through highly sophisticated methods, how African and international interests as well as officials and citizens—including those from the U.S.—can become easy targets in the region. For example, the 2015-2016 terrorist attacks in the capital cities of Mali and Burkina Faso resulted in the death of two American citizens, including one USAID worker. In addition, the morphing of State Department designated terrorist organizations such as ISIS, which lost almost the entire territory it controlled in Iraq and Syria and is now eyeing the Sahel as its next haven, make organizations such as al-Qaeda even more threatening to the United States.

Through the G5, countries of the Sahel have demonstrated a willingness to take ownership of their own security challenges. Promoting stability through security and prosperity are major priorities in the Sahel. Support to the G5, a homegrown response to terrorism and insecurity in the Sahel, should be a step in the right direction, and a win-win situation for Africa and its international partners.

The Paradox of South Sudan

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On a recent visit to Juba, South Sudan's capital, I was seized by dissonance. Pothole-pocked dirt roads create an obstacle course for drivers, yet tall buildings pierce the skyline just blocks away. The new airport partially obscures the old new airport, yet the arrival hall remains a tent. The origins of inbound passengers have shifted since my first visit in 2005, with blonde-haired Europeans and Americans replaced by Somalis, Eritreans, and Chinese. Money exchangers heft bales of newly printed bills in exchange for the treasure of a US dollar. Huge billboards laud peace marches and public service messages and provide shade for daylight robberies. Fuel shortages prevent traffic jams, yet the occasional Hummer hulks around town. "Security" forces roam the streets and presidential guards lounge under the palace trees, waiting for the signal to move. Tigers guard key intersections in their hideous striped camouflage, trucks with mounted weapons and a half dozen rag-tag youth patrol like sharks, and yes, well-padded UN peacekeepers make the rounds yet insecurity abounds. Solar-paneled stoplights lend an air of order, despite the joke that green lights are for the people while red is for the army (since they don't stop anyway). Restaurants ration their wifi while customers wash down cosmopolitan cuisine with cold Tuskers, and a high-end grocery store sells Christmas decorations while street children beg outside.

It seems bizarrely functional until I'm reminded that this is a war zone, but you wouldn't know it from Juba. My calendar also reminds of another tragic anniversary. A visit to the Protection of Civilians site (PoC) reminds that people are still targeted by ethnicity and are still raising families in "temporary" shelters. A friend's robbery reminds that soldiers haven't been paid and face a bleak Christmas. A news site reminds that exhausted diplomats try to jumpstart a dead peace process while warriors rearm. Bullet holes remind that Juba itself was also a war zone.

Still, I am reminded of a smiling child in a peaceful village where I watched a young man form the base of a tukul, shaping mud bricks with his hands. It reminds me that South Sudanese are incredibly resilient and resourceful, yet they are caught in the paradox of war and peace—a sad and strange paradox.

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The African Migration Crisis in Libya: The Challenge of Human Trafficking and Slavery in the 21st Century

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The fall of the Qaddafi regime in Libya in 2011 slid the country into chaos and civil war. Amid this chaotic situation Libya has also become enmeshed in a migrant crisis as it serves as a transit point for hundreds of thousands of migrants from Africa and the Middle East who are desperate to reach Europe by crossing the Mediterranean. Most of the migrants in Libya are fleeing armed conflict, persecution, or severe economic problems. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that there are about 700,000 migrants in dozens of detention camps across Libya. Italy, the closest point to North Africa, has been a major entry point into Europe. According to the IOM, in 2016 and 2017, it is estimated that nearly 300,000 migrants and refugees were rescued to Italy, while nearly 6,300 migrants drowned in the Mediterranean.

The migrant crisis in Libya gained international attention following a CNN report and video

Effective Engagement with Africa's Youth Challenge

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Sub-Saharan Africa has the most youthful human population on the planet. Despite this, 2017 marked another year of ineffectual efforts to address the region's unprecedented youth challenge. Media outlets frequently highlight the negative, depicting Africa's youth as dangerous males—such as Burundi's Imbonerakure militia members or Kenya's street demonstrators—who instigate violence and promote instability. ⁹ US 1% Yf;Ñ=®êA@Ú3á-iÑ Î¥sand promote instability 2017

Tenure Trouble in Togo

Dr. Sophia Moestrup

Ongoing tension around presidential term limits in Togo is one illustration of how far democracy has progressed in West Africa. Togo has become an anomaly in the sub

Whither Zimbabwe?

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Zimbabwe has changed. Its brutal dictator of 37 years is gone, rejected by his party and replaced by former Vice President, Emmerson Mnangagwa. Stepping aside only after the military placed him under house arrest and parliament started impeachment proceedings, Robert Mugabe is now relegated to history.

The question now is which path will Zimbabwe follow and what will it mean for the watching world? Certainly, the change in leadership seems to be an opportunity for Zimbabwe to rejoin the community of nations and to emerge as a democratic society. The local press seems suddenly free and unencumbered, protest and assembly are allowed, and President Mnangagwa, in his inaugural address, promised a new democratic era for Zimbabwe. He is on record that elections scheduled for 2018 will be held and be free and fair. Opposition leaders have welcomed this. He has focused on fighting corruption—giving Zimbabweans who have stashed funds overseas a three month amnesty to return them without penalty—and said a priority will be creating jobs in an economy that has an estimated 95 percent unemployment rate. He is quoted as saying, “I am required to serve our country as the president of all citizens regardless of color, creed, religion, tribe, totem or political affiliation.”

If this sounds too good to be true, it may be. Mnangagwa is no democrat and has his own brutal past. He was the Minister for National Security and led the Central Intelligence Organization during the 1980s crackdown in Matabeleland which killed an estimated 20,000 civilians. He was close to Mugabe, shared a prison cell with him prior to independence, and was his personal aide at one point. Allegedly, he also orchestrated the campaigns of electoral repression and violence that occurred between 2000 and 2008. Mnangagwa could continue in this corrupt and dictatorial vein, still exacerbating Ndebele/Shona tensions.

The question is which Mnangagwa will emerge, the past shadowy figure complicit with all of Mugabe's wrongdoings, or the new self-declared enlightened democratic leader?

The U.S. and all international observers, including financial institutions, want Zimbabwe to come right. Even debt reduction or forgiveness (currently Zimbabwe owes over \$9 billion) is possible should the government be seen to move in the right directions. Reform around ownership and profit repatriation would encourage investors, who still see Zimbabwe as a land of great opportunity, with untapped mineral and agricultural wealth, and manufacturing and industrial potentials. A stable and peaceful Zimbabwe is in the world's interest.

