

Empowerment of Youth in Africa: the role of a new generation of African leaders in the economic, social, and political development of the continent.

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OPEN Publications – Empowerment of Youth in Africa: the role of a new generation of African leaders in the economic, social, and political development of the continent.

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	7
Introductory remarks: Africa and youth within the Alliance’s strategy	8
Africa’s defining challenges: an overview	10
Embracing current challenges and opportunities	18
A post-Corona outlook for Africa	20
Prospects and Takeaways – how to renew and reshape NATO’s engagement with Africa?	21
1.1 EDUCATION (Formal and non-formal)	21
1.2 EMPLOYMENT (qualified)	22
1.3 ENGAGEMENT (Political and civic)	23
Recommendations for NATO	25
Conclusions	26
Publication bibliography	27

“Young people must take it upon themselves to ensure that they receive the highest education possible so that they can represent us well in future as future leaders”

Nelson Mandela

**"If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together”**

African saying

Executive Summary

It is often said that there is not one Africa but many Africas, as the diversity of the continent is so complex and distinctive economically, socially, and politically. It is also said that African solutions must be found for African problems, and that the one model fits all are no longer a long-lasting solution for never-ending problems.

This provisional paper aims to be assessed as an academic policy-oriented contribution for further discussing the issue of youth empowerment in Africa, raising awareness on how the role of a new generation of African leaders must cope with the challenging economic, social, and political implications of the continent's development.

Consciously, the title of this provisional paper tends to focus the approach on the African youth and not on NATO's efforts towards their empowerment. However, throughout the following pages we assume that this is a reciprocal process and that all actors, both internal and external, must be identified in order to rethink the role of a new generation of African leaders in the economic, social and political development of the continent. By boosting its regional security cooperation, NATO might be a key pivotal and security provider in safeguarding stability, security, and peace in Africa.

In fact, with respect to NATO, this open paper argues that institutional divergences between eastern (namely the Baltics, more concerned with Russian hybrid actions) and southern (e.g. Portugal, France, Spain, Italy, Greece...) allies may explain the institutional shortage of clear-cut strategic focus on the south. The NATO 360-degree approach to security matters has attempted to effectively balance eastern and southern threats, but when envisaging an increased role for NATO, it is also worth exploring the role that a new generation of young African leaders can play in building the economic, social, and political resilience of the continent. For that purpose, this open paper suggests an institutional roadmap for Youth Empowerment driven by **three E's** - (Formal and non-formal) **Education**, (Qualified) **Employment**, and (Political and civic) **Engagement** - including a set of policy-oriented prospects, recommendations and take aways on how NATO can explore, renew or reshape its engagement with Africa.

In addition, as the outbreak of COVID-19 has created job losses, reduced per capita incomes, and disrupted economic growth all over the world, it is also worth mentioning its impact on Africa. Both the defining challenges and opportunities will be a recurring theme in this open paper, concluding that NATO must rethink and pay more attention to the south, contributing to Africa's economic growth and development and empowering the role of youth in leading the rapid transformation of the continent.

Introductory remarks: Africa and youth within the Alliance's strategy

NATO is a political and military Alliance that comprises thirty member countries in a position to further the principles of the 1949 Washington Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area. In addition, a wide network of international organizations and around 40 non-member countries have a close partnership based on structured dialogue and cooperation as well as practical support to NATO-led operations and missions.

Among the many examples of partnerships, the three that stand out are: 1) the **Euro-Atlantic partnership** (covering 34 Eastern and South-eastern European countries, countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia, and Western European states); 2) the **Partnership for Peace Programme** (mostly with the former republics of the Soviet Union and former republics of Yugoslavia); and 3) **EU-NATO cooperation** (the two organisations share 22 members, have common values and face similar threats and challenges that have been embodied since the 2002 NATO-EU Declaration on a European Security and Defence Policy, strengthened in the 2003 Berlin Plus arrangements, and, more recently, in the Foreign Ministers' statement endorsed in December 2016 and in a joint declaration welcomed by the allies at the Brussels Summit in July 2018).

However, among the different initiatives and partnerships and within the forty pages of the **Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security** of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization adopted by the Heads of State and Government at the Summit in Lisbon (19-20 November 2010), no single explicit mention is made to "Africa". In fact, when it comes to tackling NATO's south, the Alliance is apparently imperceptible and shows some strategic vulnerabilities when compared to the eastern flank. But if the Heads of State and Government of the NATO nations are determined that NATO will continue to play its unique and essential role in ensuring our common defence and security, why is Africa absent from the institutional narrative? If NATO wants to prevent crises, manage conflicts, stabilize post-conflict situations, and boost the political engagement with partners, taking advantage of a more effective, efficient, and flexible Alliance, where is Africa in the organization's map?

Although those questions were reasonably posed back in 2010, the last few years illustrate some important initiatives that make peace and stability in the south a priority. It is true that since 1994, the north of Africa has been part of NATO's concerns through the **Mediterranean Dialogue**, coordinating with Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia to contribute to regional security and stability. Also, the **Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan** (since 2015), the **Sea Guardian** in the Mediterranean (since 2016) and the **NATO Mission Iraq** (since 2018) clearly illustrate the commitment to training and capacity-building in outer areas in the south, but the alliance is still short on prioritising Africa as part of a more detailed southern initiative.

Bearing this shortage in mind, explicit policy measures for dealing with the south as a holistic strategic environment are clearly allocated to the **NATO Strategic Direction-South Hub (NSD-S Hub) initiative**. Conceived in September 2017, it was declared fully operational during the Brussels Summit of 11-12 July 2018, opening a window for NATO to dialogue with local and regional institutions, including universities, research centres and non-governmental organizations from North Africa, the Middle East, the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa². Located in the NATO Joint Force Command, in Naples, it aims to increase and deepen the situational awareness of the possible challenges and opportunities in the

² Early this year, on 14-15 January, during the 182nd Military Committee of the Chiefs of Defence session, the framework for the south was reaffirmed.

southern hub, through a holistic and collaborative approach involving experts, international organizations and partners. As a ground-breaking forum to *connect NATO allies and partners with subject matter experts (SME) from local and regional institutions, including universities, research centres and non-governmental organizations from North Africa, the Middle East, Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa, so that all matters pertaining to the south can be better discussed, understood and, whenever possible, remedied*, it surely amplifies the political commitment of the Atlantic Alliance towards the southern hub that the 2016 Warsaw summit kicked off. Even today, one of the main contributions of this summit is the “360-degree approach,” a comprehensive and tailored response to address and deter the threats emanating from all fronts, namely both from the east (e.g. hybrid Russia) and from the south (e.g. mass migration, violent extremism, and acts of terror from North Africa and the Middle East).

More recently, at the **2018 Brussels Summit**, a new package for the South was approved, including a strategic political and practical roadmap for the allies and other countries involved in the southern front with the aim of strengthening the defensive and deterrent capacities of NATO. In specific, three mentions must be made to:

- 1) conclusion 9 of the Declaration - *“We are strengthening NATO’s contribution to projecting stability (Enhancing Stability, considering what some of us presently in the Hub are discussing and thinking), because we know that our security is best assured if it is shared beyond our borders. We have agreed a Package on the South to deepen our political dialogue and practical cooperation with our partners in the region ”*
- 2) conclusion 10 of the Declaration - *“We are committed to NATO’s Open-Door policy because it strengthens the Alliance ...”*
- 3) and conclusion 12 - *“Our new policies on NATO’s support ... children in armed conflict, demonstrate our determination to step up NATO’s role in these areas”.*

This new package indeed aims to ensure a solid commitment to adapt the command structure both to handle crises that emerge in the region and to support regional partners in guaranteeing complementarity and efficacy of their common efforts. More relevant is the fact that it explicitly mentions strengthening deterrence and defence, international crisis management, and helping regional partners to build resilience against security threats as NATO’s main objectives for the south.

Thus, in partnership with the complimentary efforts of the United Nations and the European Union, NATO has been putting forth several efforts in the wider Middle East region and North Africa, ensuring that NATO is ready to project and enhance stability against all potential threats to the alliance.

However, the question remains: if the Alliance wants to remain an essential source of stability in an unpredictable world and be a relevant player in the security challenges it faces, what role can the alliance play in promoting the empowerment of youth in Africa?

Africa's defining challenges: an overview

When we examine in detail the facts and figures of Africa, some signs are clear: the scale of the continent shows several challenges related not only to geography and geopolitics, but also to demographics in the short and long term.

Therefore, it is no wonder that when most of the data sources aim to describe Africa, the statistical portrait converges in some increasing tendencies:

- With over 1.3 billion people as of July 2020, the United Nations estimates that Africa has the second largest population of any continent, representing 16.72% of the total world population³.
- Africa has the youngest and fastest growing population. By 2055, the continent's youth population (aged 15-24), is expected to be more than double the 2015 total of 226 million (Yahya, 2017)⁴
- By 2030, young Africans are expected to represent 42 % of the world's youth and 75% of those under age 35 in Africa (Perlotto, 2019)⁵
- Over 40% of Africans are under the age of 15, and 20% are between the ages of 15 and 24 (Arnould & Strazzari, 2017: 19)⁶
- By 2050, one third of the world's youth population will live in Africa: up from about one fifth in 2012 (Arnould & Strazzari, 2017: 19)⁷
- Africa's workforce will be the world's largest by 2040, around 1 billion people⁸

These numbers represent simultaneously a challenge and an opportunity. Africa is still perceived as a major complex hub, where illegal migration, human trafficking, terrorism, organized crime, maritime insecurity, and failed states seem to come together in a perilous Pandora's box. These factors clearly have a destabilizing effect in the security and stability of fragile countries and societies regarding their structure, undermining the ability of NATO's efforts in the continent.

With respect to **illegal immigration**, the official statistics from FRONTEX show two main access entrances from Africa (cf. map 1) – the western Africa route (with 2, 477 illegal border crossings from January to May 2020) and the western Mediterranean route (with 4,509 illegal border crossings in 2020). In terms of migrants' countries of origin, unspecified sub-Saharan nationals (1,699), Mali (290), Morocco (176), the Ivory Coast (95) and Senegal (93) top the list for the western Africa route, while Algeria (2,493), unspecified sub-Saharan nationals (1,098), Morocco (686) and Mali (54) are the most common for the western Mediterranean migratory routes (cf. map 1).

³ The updated data, figures and documentation contained in <https://population.un.org/wpp/> (last accessed on 20 July 2020) are worth viewing regularly.

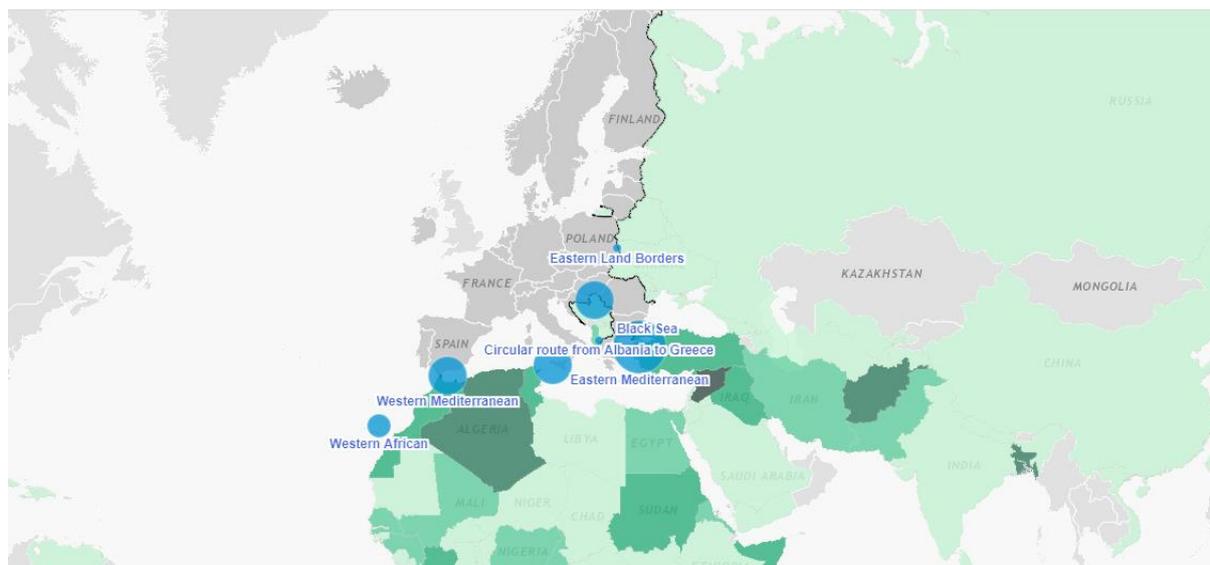
⁴ https://www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/blog/2017/8/7/africa_defining_challenge.html (last accessed on 10 July 2020)

⁵ <https://www.prb.org/africas-future-youth-and-the-data-defining-their-lives/> (last accessed on 10 July 2020)

⁶ https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Report_37_African%20futures_0.pdf (last accessed on 10 July 2020)

⁷ Idem

⁸ <https://www.futureagenda.org/foresights/africa-growth/> (last accessed on 10 July 2020)



MAP 1: Migratory routes (<https://frontex.europa.eu/along-eu-borders/migratory-map/> - last accessed on 21 July 2020).

The IOM distinguishes four different regions within Africa and the Middle East region (East Africa and the horn of Africa, Southern Africa, West and Central Africa, Middle East and North Africa) and highlights the voluntary and forced migratory movements throughout Africa's history and its long-term implications on national, regional and international security. The most relevant is probably the tendency for internal, regional, and out-of-Africa migration to occur on a scale larger than in any other region. In fact, by 2000, 42 per cent of migrants lived in West African countries; 28 per cent in Eastern Africa; 12 per cent in Northern Africa; and 9 per cent in Middle and Southern Africa⁹.

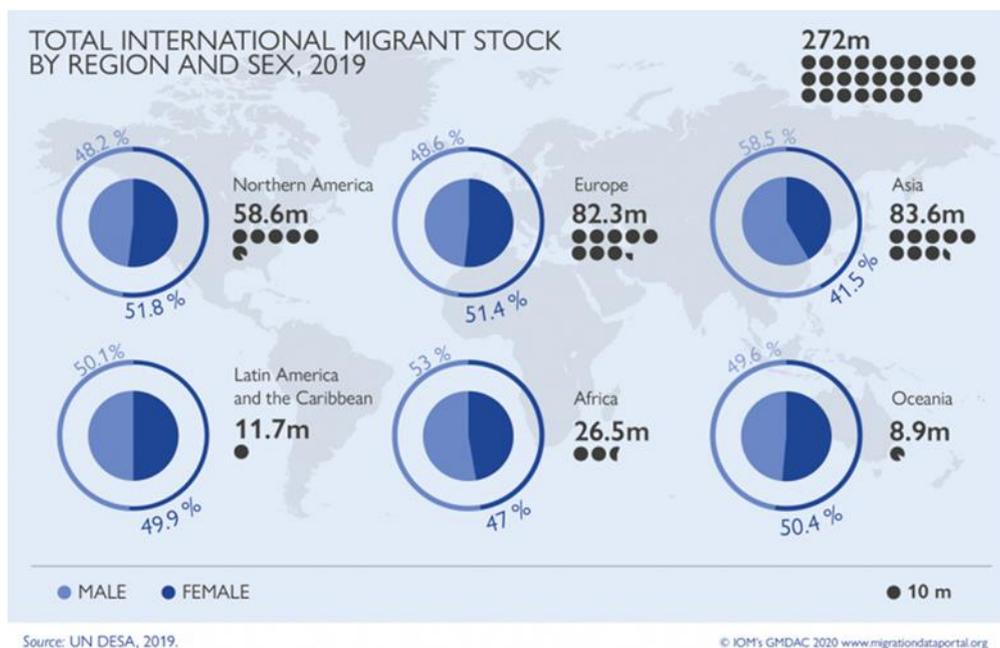
Also, according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population reports, Africa is experiencing more growth among male migrants (41.8 per cent during 2000-2017) than among female migrants (37.1 per cent) (UN DESA, 2017: 15¹⁰). In 2019, the share of female migrants in Africa grew to 47.0 per cent (UN DESA, 2019: 8)¹¹. To assess the real impact of the loss of human capital, the age distribution is also important: according to the FAO's Statistics Division and Social Policies and Rural Institutions Division, migrants in Africa are predominantly male, aged between 15 and 34, and households with migrants show relatively higher levels of education. The same source also indicates that while employment is the main driver of male migration, women migrate mainly for education and family-related reasons. These data help us to connect with the main purpose of the paper - the role of

⁹ According to the website <https://www.iom.int/africa-and-middle-east> (last accessed on 12 July 2020)

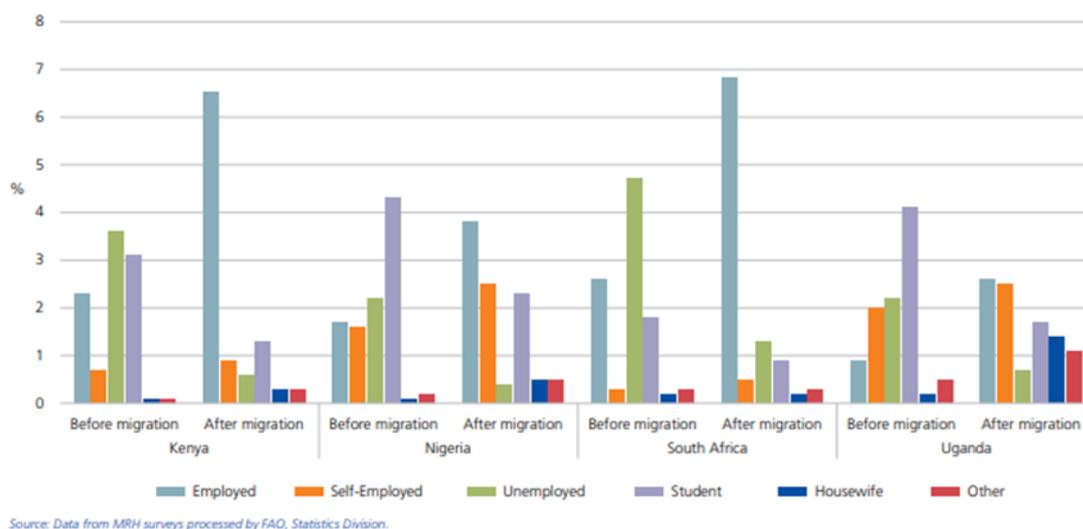
¹⁰ Available at https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2017_Highlights.pdf (last accessed on 12 July 2020)

¹¹ Available at https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2019_Highlights.pdf (last accessed on 12 July 2020)

a new generation of African leaders in economic, social, and political development and how both age and gender shape education and opportunities. (cf. graphs 1 & 2).



Graph 2: Total international migrant stock by region and sex, 2019 (<https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/gender-and-migration> - last accessed on 12 July 2020).



Graph 2: Comparative data before/after migration in Africa (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7468e.pdf> - last accessed on 12 July 2020).

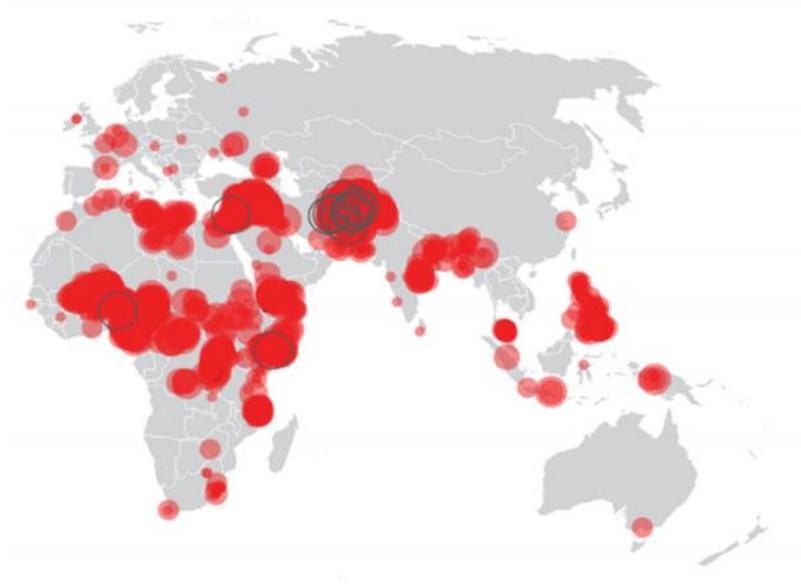
The fact is that there are 13 African countries currently involved in major armed conflicts and they account for almost 90% of the 25 million people who have been displaced due to conflict and persecution on the continent (NSD-S HUB, 2020a: 5). That necessarily will lead to more migration within and from the continent, as well as increased human trafficking, which is becoming both a domestic and intra-regional problem (NSD-S HUB, 2020b:4).

Indeed, along with migration, **human smuggling and trafficking** must be mentioned, as Africa is a major region of origin of victims who are trafficked into other parts of the world, such as Western Europe and the Middle East (NSD-S HUB, 2020b: 5). According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), this involves the acts of recruiting, transporting, transferring, or receiving a person using force, deception, or other means for the purpose of exploiting them¹². The UNODC 2016 report mentions that a total of 69 countries detected human trafficking victims from Sub-Saharan Africa between 2012 and 2014. However, although this is an endemic threat in Africa, regional differences exist: as of 2016, the main form of exploitation in North Africa is begging, while in west, east and southern Africa, it is forced labour. While in West Africa the detected victims are mainly children, in southern and east Africa they are mainly adults. In western and southern Africa, most of the trafficking victims detected in this sub region are women (52 per cent) and trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation continues to be the most detected form in this sub region (66 per cent of total detected victims) (UNODC, 2016). In addition, while most girls work as domestic servants in wealthy homes, most boys serve as street vendors, waiters, beggars on the roads, street urchins, labourers on farmlands and plantations, and carry out other criminal activities. Also, virtually all countries in this region of Africa are source, transit, and destination countries for people trafficking (Bello & Olutola, 2020). In Africa, as in every poor context around the world, children (often as young as six years old) are often considered as a means of support for the household (NSD-S HUB, 2020a:14).

Terrorism is even more tricky, as currently not only has Al Shabab in Somalia remained a growing threat but Boko Haram in Nigeria has stepped up attacks in west Africa (Cameroon, Chad), while fighters affiliated with the so-called Islamic State and Al Qaeda have been coordinating attacks and carving out mutually agreed-upon areas in the Sahel or in new territory in Mozambique, in order to expand their ideology and influence and take control of territory across a vast stretch of West Africa. Religious extremism as a vector of violent mobilization (Arnould & Strazzari, 2017) is rapidly reaching a domino effect due to several geostrategic rivalries and sectarian tensions, both structural and cyclical. In fact, Africa is particularly targeted by the threat of major terrorist attacks (cf. Map 2)¹³.

¹² Definition available at the leaflet <https://www.unodc.org/documents/endht/Leaflet/WorldTiPday2019-leaflet.pdf> (last accessed on 12 July 2020).

¹³ See also <https://thesouthernhub.org/publications/external-publications/weekly-security-readings>, <https://mo-s3.ibrahim.foundation/u/2019/03/15121250/2019-Forum-Report.pdf>, and https://www.nato.int/cps/ie/natohq/topics_52060.htm as additional resources (last accessed on 12 July 2020)



MAP 2: Terrorism in Africa (<http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2019/11/GTI-2019web.pdf> - last accessed on 12 July 2020).

In turn, **organized crime and criminal networks** remain a major problem in Africa, where weak systems of state reach and governance combined with criminal or mafia actors seeking to accumulate resources by control or taxation of criminal markets clearly undermine effective state-building (Shaw & Reitano, 2019).

Also, the fact that Africa tops the list as the most unstable region in the sample of almost 200 countries around the world (cf. table 1) illustrates how the nature of most African states plays an important role in shaping and structuring **failed states**.

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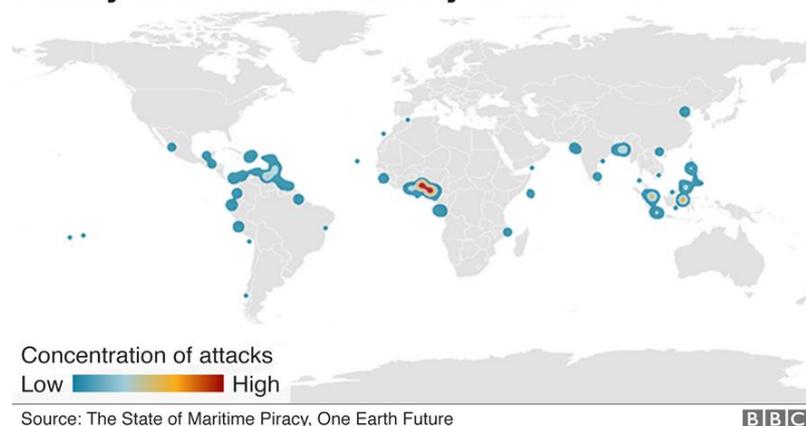
Countries	Rank	Total	SA	FE	GG	EC	UD	HF	SL	PS	HR	DP	RD	EX
Yemen	1st	112,4	9,7	10,0	9,7	7,8	7,0	9,9	9,5	10,0	9,8	9,7	10,0	9,4
Somalia	2nd	110,9	9,8	10,0	8,6	9,4	8,9	8,9	9,1	9,0	10,0	9,1	9,0	9,1
South Sudan	3rd	110,8	9,4	9,7	9,1	9,2	6,8	9,9	9,5	9,0	9,5	9,7	9,5	9,5
Syria	4th	110,7	9,9	9,9	10,0	7,2	8,4	10,0	9,1	10,0	7,6	10,0	10,0	8,7
Congo, D.R.	5th	109,4	8,5	9,8	9,7	8,6	6,9	9,7	9,5	9,5	9,8	10,0	9,4	8,0
Central African Republic	6th	107,5	8,3	9,7	8,0	9,9	6,8	8,9	10,0	9,2	8,8	10,0	9,5	8,4
Chad	7th	106,4	9,2	9,5	8,3	8,9	8,4	9,3	9,4	8,5	9,6	9,2	7,7	8,5
Sudan	8th	104,8	8,4	9,4	9,4	8,0	8,0	9,3	8,3	8,9	9,1	9,3	8,6	8,1
Afghanistan	9th	102,9	9,9	8,9	7,5	7,7	7,5	9,0	9,5	7,6	9,0	9,3	8,6	8,3
Zimbabwe	10th	99,2	8,5	10,0	6,4	7,6	7,0	9,1	8,7	8,3	9,3	8,5	7,2	8,6
Cameroon	11th	97,9	8,2	9,3	8,6	7,7	7,6	8,9	8,3	7,8	8,8	8,6	7,3	6,8
Burundi	11th	97,9	8,3	7,9	7,6	7,3	5,9	9,1	7,9	9,1	9,2	8,5	8,5	8,5
Haiti	13th	97,7	6,9	9,6	5,6	9,1	8,1	9,1	9,3	6,9	8,2	7,1	9,3	8,5
Nigeria	14th	97,3	8,7	9,9	9,1	7,8	6,6	8,1	8,9	8,4	9,3	6,9	5,7	7,9
Guinea	15th	97,2	8,3	9,6	9,2	7,0	6,8	9,9	9,2	6,8	8,3	7,3	6,5	8,3
Mali	16th	96,0	9,5	5,7	8,4	7,0	8,0	7,0	8,8	7,7	8,6	8,4	9,6	7,3
Iraq	17th	95,9	8,2	9,6	8,5	6,4	6,8	9,1	8,4	7,8	8,1	8,6	8,8	5,6
Eritrea	18th	95,8	6,5	8,1	8,0	8,6	8,8	9,4	7,5	8,7	8,2	7,7	7,0	7,4
Niger	19th	95,3	8,8	8,9	7,8	7,7	7,3	7,0	9,2	6,9	8,7	8,4	7,8	6,8
Libya	20th	95,2	9,5	9,7	7,8	5,3	5,7	9,8	6,9	9,4	5,3	8,0	9,8	8,0
Ethiopia	21st	94,6	7,9	8,9	9,0	6,2	6,3	8,5	8,3	7,9	9,1	8,8	7,6	6,1
Myanmar	22nd	94,0	8,8	8,0	9,8	7,0	6,8	8,0	8,4	9,4	6,3	9,1	7,4	5,0
Guinea Bissau	23rd	92,9	8,0	9,6	4,6	9,4	7,2	8,6	8,6	6,9	8,4	6,4	7,7	7,4
Uganda	24th	92,8	7,2	8,9	8,0	6,8	7,0	8,3	7,3	7,7	9,2	8,8	7,6	6,0
Pakistan	25th	92,1	8,2	9,0	9,1	5,6	6,5	7,6	7,7	7,1	7,9	7,8	8,5	7,1
Congo Republic	25th	92,1	7,3	6,7	8,1	8,4	7,1	9,1	8,6	8,1	8,0	6,7	6,2	7,8

TABLE 1: Fragile states index (<https://fragilestatesindex.org/data/> - last accessed on 12 July 2020).

In terms of governance abilities, failed states lack several functions that assure both effectiveness and legitimacy, such as authority to make collective decisions or the ability to provide public services or control the spread of corruption and criminality. Instead, increased involuntary movement of populations is one clear result.

Finally, **maritime insecurity** is an issue, especially in the seas off West Africa's oil-rich coastline, which was considered in 2018 the most dangerous in the world for shipping (cf. map 3).

Piracy and armed robbery at sea 2018



MAP 3: Piracy and armed robbery at sea 2018 (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48581197> - last accessed on 12 July 2020).

The horn of Africa and Somali coastline have been notorious for hijackings and robberies during 2018, but in the last few months, hijacking for ransom increased and hostage and security forces people have been killed (cf. map 4)¹⁴.

¹⁴ According to the IMB Piracy Reporting Centre, a 24-hour and free service for shipmasters to report any piracy, armed robbery, or stowaway incidents, established in 1992.



MAP 4: IMB Piracy & Armed Robbery live Map 2020 (<https://www.icc-ccs.org/index.php/piracy-reporting-centre/live-piracy-map> - last accessed on 12 July 2020).

Multi-national efforts to patrol these waters and take firm action against acts of piracy were clearly illustrated in NATO's Operation Ocean Shield (ended on 15 December 2016) in the Gulf of Aden up to the Strait of Hormuz.

In brief, illegal migration, human trafficking, terrorism, organized crime, failed states, and maritime insecurity can be perceived as, simultaneously, causes/roots & consequences/results of push and pull factors that largely contribute to social and political instability as well as economic disparities, where legitimate and sustainable employment opportunities are indeed compromised for the youngest generations. Therefore, African countries that are origin and transit countries of major threats that the transatlantic allies are facing must be encouraged in their efforts towards stability and security. Enhancing security and safety in Africa is indeed crucial as transnational threats require international cooperation and partnerships to address them efficiently.

Embracing current challenges and opportunities

Even though most of our first thoughts on Africa are related to defining challenges that Africa, NATO and the allies need to face to create a more stable strategic environment, the truth is that Africa has also undergone significant political and economic changes in the last few years, showing that the continent is evolving and embracing new opportunities and challenges. In fact, with a collective GDP of \$2.6 trillion by 2020 and \$1.4 trillion of consumer spending, many see the impact of around 500 million new middle-class consumers¹⁵. Also, it should be noted that a third of the planet's mineral resources, 10% of the world's oil reserves and nearly 70% of the global diamond trade¹⁶ are clustered in African lands but are not owned or exploited exclusively by Africans.

Both challenges and opportunities clearly impact the nature and extent of the current role played by a new generation of African leaders in the socio-economic and socio-political dynamics in decision-making processes in Africa. For that purpose, the potential of the virtuous triangle **security-education-development** is the key to empower African youth. Indeed, priority must be given to building opportunities for a sustainable society, supporting the development of a truly sustainable and inclusive workforce through education, skills training, and entrepreneurship. Therefore, the focus must be placed on empowering youth, through job creation for young people, territorial development, local agriculture value chains, multi-sector cooperation in energy, and promoting infrastructure development in a renewed security partnership. Without security, everything is compromised or will be as educated workers will leave the country, exacerbating the problems that the African youth is dealing with.

Two landmark documents must be raised in this socioeconomic and socio-political context as important links between development and security. At a multilateral level, the **UN Sustainable Development Goals** are the 2015-2030 blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future, leaving no one behind. Within the 17 interconnected global goals, at least two are crucial for Africa: Goal 4 – Quality education¹⁷ - as education enables upward socioeconomic mobility and is a key to escaping poverty, and Goal 8 - Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all¹⁸ - as sustained and inclusive economic growth can drive progress, create decent jobs for all and improve living standards.

However, it should be noted that, as the United Nations highlighted in 2015 (right before launching the new agenda), 70% of Africans still suffer from lack of access to improved sanitation facilities; 41% of the continent's inhabitants still live on less than \$1.25 a day, and of the 57 million of global out-of-school children of primary school age in 2015, 33 million are in Sub-Saharan Africa¹⁹.

At a regional level, a reference to “**Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want**”²⁰ must be included as it is defined as a master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future in close

¹⁵ <https://www.futureagenda.org/foresights/africa-growth/> (last accessed on 12 July 2020)

¹⁶ <https://www.futureagenda.org/foresights/africa-growth/> (last accessed on 12 July 2020)

¹⁷ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/> (last accessed on 12 July 2020)

¹⁸ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/economic-growth/> (last accessed on 12 July 2020)

¹⁹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/africa> (last accessed on 12 July 2020)

²⁰ <https://au.int/agenda2063> (last accessed on 12 July 2020)

coordination with the Sustainable Development Goals. This agenda highlights important hints for our study: the need to refocus and reprioritize Africa's agenda on delivering inclusive and sustainable social and economic development, continental and regional integration, democratic governance, and peace and security, amongst other issues aimed at repositioning Africa to becoming a dominant player in the global arena. This long-term 50-year development trajectory for Africa aims at an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful continent. African people represent a dynamic force in the international arena where education, driven by technology and innovation, is a key factor, along with economic growth and resilience.

In fact, African governments are increasingly under pressure to create employment, offer economic opportunities to African youth and stimulate a development process that addresses the ever more pressing constraints in the management of natural resources. The transatlantic allies are Africa's closest neighbours and important trading partners, massive foreign investors in the continent and its largest source of remittances and official development assistance.

As the security environment in Africa is interconnected and the command and control in multidimensional activities might be tricky, a **global/integrated approach across the geographical expanse and full civilian and military spectrum** is needed. Efforts must be coordinated on the ground between the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union and, of course, NATO. Sustainability must be enhanced through more cooperation, more integration, and more incentives, even if democracy, rule of law and good governance standards do not meet all NATO 's criteria or expectations.

A post-Corona outlook for Africa

As of 21 June, Africa registered 298 370 cases, 7 944 deaths and 143 440 recoveries. On 21 July, the updated numbers increased to 737 867 total cases, 15 443 deaths and 393 686 recoveries²¹.

In terms of countries, the five worst affected are: 1) South Africa (373 628 on 21 July compared with 92 681 on 21 June); 2) Egypt (88 405 on 21 July compared with 53 758 on 21 June); 3) Nigeria (37 225 on 21 July compared with 19 808 on 21 June); 4) Ghana (28 430 on 21 July); and 5) Algeria (23 691 on 21 July)²².

Aware of the increasing magnitude of these numbers, on 28 April 2020, the NATO Strategic Direction South Hub and Three Stones International (TSI) conducted a live online webinar (NSD-S Hub, 2020c) on Africa's response to COVID-19 and NATO's potential contribution. It has been evident that NATO's role is mainly crisis management and providing collective security as key pillars, and also coordinating all the instruments at its disposal to assist allied countries and partners in several areas such as: transporting medicines and supplies, deploying military medics to assist overrun civilian facilities, building field hospitals, airlifting essential medical and protective supplies, evacuating patients and repatriating citizens, and also distributing food, disinfecting public spaces and providing psychological support to people in distress or through scientific programmes to study the virus.

Although public health is not at the traditional core of NATO's mission, NATO's Foreign and Defence Ministers as well as Chiefs of Defence in the NATO Military Committee did not hesitate to acknowledge in April and May that the alliance should explore its political dimension to reinforce unity between NATO Allies and play an active role in helping allies and partners to fight COVID.

Specifically, NATO activated the **Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre** (EADRCC) to coordinate responses with partners, the **Rapid Air Mobility initiative** to simplify air traffic control procedures for military relief flights, and the **NATO Support and Procurement Agency** to organise deliveries of key supplies and equipment to Allies, partners, and international organisations.

To ensure that this "health crisis does not turn into a security crisis" (in the words of Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg), resilience must be at the core of the alliance's effective deterrence and defence, in order to help allies and partners to resist and rapidly recover. In that context, also to ensure that a health crisis does not turn into a governance crisis, special attention must be paid to young people²³, as COVID-19 may dramatically affect health structures (failure of existing very limited resources), increase unemployment (long lockdowns and homestays in vulnerable economies), intensification of gender based violence within communities, as well as growth of migration and brain drain (due to lack of perspectives of development and stability as a result of the reduction of per capita incomes and the disruption of the economic growth).

²¹ Please check the information updated on a daily basis in <https://africacdc.org/covid-19> (last accessed on 21 July 2020)

²² Please see <https://www.africanews.com/2020/06/21/coronavirus-in-africa-breakdown-of-infected-virus-free-countries/> (last accessed on 12 July 2020)

²³ For further information about this topic, check the series of interviews with young Africans both in the continent and in the diaspora who share their views on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, sponsored by Mo Ibrahim foundation: <https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/news/2020/covid-19-africa-youth-perspectives-richard-kweitsu>; <https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/news/2020/covid-19-africa-youth-perspectives-adeelah-kodabux>; <https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/news/2020/covid-19-africa-youth-perspectives-rama-salla-dieng>; and <https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/news/2020/covid-19-africa-youth-perspectives-tariro-bure> (last accessed on 10 July 2020)

Prospects and Takeaways – how to renew and reshape NATO’s engagement with Africa?

In this provisional paper, we also want to explore a policy-oriented institutional roadmap to overcome structural constraints and engage with innovative, multisectoral and holistic approaches. We argue that **empowerment means active engagement and effective leadership**. But social and political prosperity are always context driven. In practice, access to education, employment, health, or housing is sustainable depending on the extent of emancipation and participation of the African Youth. Therefore, three main dimensions must be taken into consideration – our three E’s: **Education, Employment and Engagement** – to empower African youth towards social and political prosperity.

1.1 EDUCATION (Formal and non-formal)

First, emphasis needs to be placed on **formal and non-formal education** that empowers Youth to effectively participate, lead and transform communities for governance, stability, and democracy. Through a proper education, a safe environment and comfort zone can be built for youth to thrive and expand their vision for the future. In addition, the challenge of educating an ever-growing number of people should be addressed both in terms of quantity and quality requirements, prioritising a learning for the job strategy. Therefore, in close cooperation with local entities, NATO can contribute to strengthening an **educational framework** that includes:

- Strengthen **innovative formats of non-formal education and training** (workshops, focus groups, etc.), focused on leadership within their communities, including coaching, conciliation and mentoring skills for entrepreneurship and employment, planning, decision-making, and power sharing.
- Improve **formal curricula** in school with opportunities for youth to learn and build their capacity in a context of responsibility and decision-making, starting with the concept and implementation of small improvements in their path in school or in their community.
- Disseminate **access to education**, especially to youth from disadvantaged communities, empowering them to become eager to engage in action to improve their sense of belonging in their communities and be a game changer in the roles they can play in changing their reality.
- Promote formal programmes of **intergenerational volunteering** in the community.
- Foster the creation of **participatory community budgets**, starting in schools with small pilot projects to benefit rural communities sustainably²⁴.

²⁴ Worth reviewing is "Youth Empowerment and the Promotion of Rural Communities Sustainability" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apqwondXilA>) with the participation of HE Sarah Agbor, AU Commissioner on HR, Science and Technology, Mr. Carl Watson, from FAO and Mr. Issa Sanogo, from WFP.

- Sponsor **student exchanges** within Africa and with Europe and the United States and promote a specific **fellowship programme** for advanced African Studies.
- Foster **educational programmes** specifically oriented to the participation and empowering of **young females** regarding leadership, bringing together the resolutions “women, peace and security” and “youth, peace and security” (UNSCR 1325 with 2250 & 2491) into an integrated approach that takes into account the African cultural and religious backgrounds that tend to give a strong role to women in households.
- Allocate specific funding to support **practical toolkits and capacity-building** activities oriented towards disadvantaged young people and explore innovative online approaches to address governance, corruption, abuse of power and authoritarianism that affect the new generation of leadership.

1.2 EMPLOYMENT (qualified)

Secondly, emphasis needs to be placed on **qualified employment** that empowers Youth to effectively be leaders in Africa and contribute to the continent’s governance, stability, and economic growth. If we want to foster the role of young adults in the socio-economic fabric of Africa, the opportunities for socio-economic development coming from the **optimal use of the new generation’s potential** must be clearly prioritised. For that purpose, the following proposals could be taken in consideration:

- Fund **exchange and traineeship programmes** for African students within the alliance’s countries, with a clear focus on entrepreneurship and active leadership skills for young adults aged 25-35 years old.
- In cooperation with local universities, contribute to creating **professional support services**, targeting job fairs and symposiums with small and medium sized enterprises, providing recovery support/grants to those who host senior students or junior researchers.
- Introduce into the missions and operations, a **Youth Adviser** responsible for identifying the potential investments and improvements in social protection, food security and agriculture, health systems and infrastructures to clearly benefit young adults aged 25-35 years old.
- Support **local and regional markets** to invest in and produce personal protective equipment, hand-sanitizers, and ventilators during the pandemic, as well as allocate specific funding for research and scientific development.

1.3 ENGAGEMENT (Political and civic)

Third, emphasis needs to be placed on **political and civic engagement** that empowers Youth to effectively stand for Africa's future! In Europe, more than half of young people (53%) are involved in organized activities, with participation in a sports club (29%), a youth or leisure-time club (20%), or a cultural organization (15%) being the most common²⁵. We know very little on the role of sports and culture in African's childhood and youth.

Therefore, a **Youth Strategy for Africa** that addresses the needs of African youth and considers a cross cutting perspective for Youth Empowerment is very much needed.

Led by the African Union and framed by the Agenda 2063, priority areas must be identified, specific targets must be set, strategies must be defined, and policies focused on African Youth (aged 15-35 years) must be measured. A youth strategy for Africa²⁶ must build upon a twofold assumption: **youth empowerment means both civic participation** (within local communities) **and political participation in the decision-making processes**. For that purpose, the dissemination of the Collaboration Support Office One (CSO) to support collaborative business models in Africa is crucial, as for the moment they remain insufficient in serving as a management interface between the international, regional, and local levels. The outcome will be emancipation and autonomy as instruments/skills for empowering and disseminating the public youth policies in Africa, focused both on education and skills, and on employment (the two main drivers of African youth empowerment).

Specifically, a Youth Strategy for Africa could include the following building blocks:

- Recognition of **volunteering** in communities as part of the formal education settings (voluntary engagement benefits intercultural understanding).
- Support the creation of **Youth coordinators** who take part in the national governments and act as the official contact and visible reference point for young people, becoming the main officials responsible to channel the voices of young people through dialogue portals or platforms on a regular basis.
- Boost different **levels of civic and democratic decision making processes** (local, national and regional) through the creation of different structures such as: **youth councils** (gathering youth associations, political parties and other local groups focused on youth empowerment, supporting the creation and development of a true network of organizations); **youth parliaments** (where a specific topic is selected and discussed every year in schools and where student representatives are elected to represent their communities in national and regional sessions); **youth regional platforms** (federations, national councils gathering different steering groups with a practical impact on advising on participatory budgets and structured dialogues,

²⁵ Flash Eurobarometer 455 European Youth Report, January 2018

²⁶ This paper is aware of the existence and acknowledges the importance of the African Youth Charter (<https://auyouthenvoy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/7789-treaty-0033-african-youth-charter-e-2.pdf>) and the initiative launched last 26th March by the African Union Office of the Youth Envoy (<https://auyouthenvoy.org/>) to empower a movement of Pan-African youth advocates (the hustlers). However, in this open paper, we endorse a broader proposal, embracing an overall strategy that can also bear in mind the virtuous triangle security-education-development previously mentioned.

allowing young people to contribute to shaping youth policies); and a **youth African parliament** (forum discussion at regional level that gathers those responsible for youth policies at a national level on a regular basis to discuss a joint approach to the topics and deliver joint statements that represent the voice of African youth, held on an annual basis, even if in different formal/informal high-level formats and side events).

Recommendations for NATO

As NATO is currently undergoing a reflection process about its future in the next 10 years, its Secretary-General stated it must “stay strong militarily, be more united politically, and take a broader approach globally”, and home grown solutions are needed if the role of a new generation of African leaders in the economic, social and political development of the continent is to be taken seriously into consideration for the next decades.

Therefore, a **NATO Flagship partnership** must be renewed with Africa, bearing in mind the following:

- **Security – Development – Education** are key pillars for regional and international security. Leveraging NATO’s credibility in Africa must prospect a close cooperation both with state and non-state actors, both military and civilian, to align common security interests through a concerted action.
- Cooperation with the **African Union** must be strengthened, expanding the areas of operational support, capacity-building support and assistance in developing and sustaining the African Standby Force in the areas of counter-terrorism, countering improvised explosive devices, the Women, Peace and Security agenda, building integrity, and support African Union peace-support operations as the allies committed to at the 2016 Summit in Warsaw.
- Deployment of a **Multinational Joint Taskforce** to fight against structural resurgences related to the spread of terrorism and radicalization, if specifically requested to do so by the United Nations, the African Union or specific countries, but not having boots on the ground without being asked.
- Under the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), cooperate to implement a **DDR (Disarm, Demobilize, Reintegrate) framework**, streamlining mediation and reconciliation as operational pillars of a human security driver. NATO’s Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) platform should be considered to counter instability.
- Invest in a true **lesson learned process** to avoid “our model fits all” assumptions and balance the regional domino effect and other ongoing NATO operations in Africa or its neighbourhood.

Conclusions

Committed to the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the **political and military bonds between NATO and Africa** must be forged under a common umbrella of indivisibility, not of invisibility. Empowering the youth in Africa and boosting a new generation of African leaders in the economic, social, and political development of the continent must be perceived as a shared responsibility.

In this context, within this provisional paper, we have tried to examine the role of a new generation of African leaders in the economic, social, and political development of the continent, setting an **institutional roadmap for Youth Empowerment** driven by three E's: (Formal and non-formal) **Education**, (Qualified) **Employment** and (Political and civic) **Engagement**. Through a set of prospects and take aways, we have concluded that African Youth must indeed be more engaged in discussing African problems, finding long lasting solutions for never-ending problems. In fact, along with terrorism, migration, or maritime insecurity, an additional challenge has arisen around the world in early February and dramatically in Africa. The outbreak of COVID-19 will have a major impact not in the rate of deaths *per se* but especially in the escalation of job losses, decline of *per capita* incomes and disruption in economic growth. The domino effect will inevitably lead both to more poverty and inequality in Africa, and more migration and brain drain from Africa.

Although its core remains collective defence, NATO is **changing, adjusting, and evolving**. In fact, the long-term **commitment**, the solid **experience**, and **credibility** of NATO is an added value in supporting youth empowerment in Africa. Should NATO rethink its regional approach to Africa with a view to more flexible actions directly oriented towards young people? How can NATO partnerships deployed in Africa be readjusted towards this new priority? How can those missions and operations evolve in the upcoming years and how can civilian and military synergies be framed within the EU crisis management and state building efforts?

We can easily argue that NATO is not supposed to, because geography matters. But there is little to suggest that the cultivation of this relationship will slow down in the years ahead. In fact, NATO must rethink and pay more attention to the south and to the youngest, boosting Africa's economic growth and development and leading to the rapid transformation of the continent and the empowerment of youth.

Renewing or reshaping NATO's engagement with Africa must then build upon a **strategic, long-term footing** to develop a shared vision for Africa, supporting African countries' efforts to embark on a path of economic growth and sustainable development. NATO does not have any mechanism to boost the economy of any country in Africa. However, NATO can contribute to enhance the security aspects of any strategy that will have an impact on the economic sector. Security is indeed a particularly important baseline for development as without it there will be no sustainable development. A more positive and proactive partnership does not necessarily mean more funding. It is about **ownership, vision, overall coherence, commitment, and mutual benefits**. It is about implementing **multilateralism and resilience** through a **comprehensive toolbox**. It is about NATO!

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