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## "The Future of Homeland Security: Addressing the Rise of Terrorism in Africa"

Chairman Pfluger, Ranking Member Magaziner, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important topic.

My name is Joshua Meservey, and I am a Senior Fellow at Hudson Institute. The views I express in this testimony are my own and should not be construed as representing an official position of Hudson Institute.

### The Rise and Rise of African Terrorism

African terrorism is amid an extraordinary expansion. According to the Institute for Economics & Peace's latest Global Terrorism Index, in 2022 the Sahel was the site of 43 percent of all terrorism deaths worldwide, up from 1 percent in 2007. Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole accounted for 60 percent of all terrorism deaths last year.<sup>1</sup> The Africa Center for Strategic Studies documented a nearly 50 percent increase in 2022 in the number of deaths due to Islamist terrorism in Africa, a growth rate around 2.5 times what it was 10 years ago.<sup>2</sup> The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project recorded increases in political violence of 77 percent and 150 percent from 2021 to 2022 in Burkina Faso and Mali, respectively, though those rates include more than just terrorist violence.<sup>3</sup>

There are also now effective and committed Islamist terrorists operating in parts of Africa with little history of Islamist terrorism. In northern Mozambique, for instance, a group known as Ansar al-Sunna Wa Jamma (ASWJ) in 2017 began rapidly expanding in Cabo Delgado province, eventually rooting

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<sup>1</sup> Institute for Economics & Peace, *Global Terrorism Index 2023*, March 2023, <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/GTI-2023-web-170423.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> The Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *African Militant Islamist Group-Linked Fatalities at All-Time High*, July 31, 2023, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/africa-militant-islamist-group-linked-fatalities-at-all-time-high/>.

<sup>3</sup> ACLED, *The Sahel: Geopolitical Transition at the Center of an Ever-Worsening Crisis*, February 8, 2023, <https://acleddata.com/conflict-watchlist-2023/sahel/>.



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itself in six districts, killing thousands of Mozambicans, and displacing many more. It became an affiliate of the so-called Islamic State in 2021, which marked its peak when it may have had as many as 5,000 fighters and associates. A Rwandan military intervention that year finally pushed the group back and stabilized much of the province. ASWJ is not defeated, however, as it took refuge in the dense Catupa Forest from where it continues to launch attacks that increasingly feature improvised explosive devices and suicide bombers.

A group with a longer history than the ASWJ, called the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), is another example of the recent, rapid growth of African terrorism. The ADF has existed for decades, but was such a relatively minor player in the welter of eastern DRC's armed groups that it was nearly defunct by 2017.<sup>4</sup> However, around that time it began receiving funding from the Islamic State that eventually propelled it to its status today as one of eastern DRC's most potent armed groups that recruits foreign fighters and performs operations in multiple countries.<sup>5</sup> A Ugandan military operation against the ADF—officially known as Islamic State Central Africa Province following its affiliation with the Islamic State—that began in 2021 has degraded the group, but it continues to launch costly and brutal attacks, and maintains ties to other terrorist organizations.

The spread of Islamist terrorism in Africa challenges the U.S.'s ability to protect the American homeland as hatred of the U.S. is baked into Islamist terrorists' beliefs and operations.<sup>6</sup> Every significant African terrorist group subscribes to Salafi-jihadism, a sub-sect of the Salafi wing of Sunni Islam. Salafis believe that the only authentic practice of Islam is to live as did the *Salaf*—the initial

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<sup>4</sup> The ADF formed in northern Uganda but was driven from there in the 1990s. It has primarily operated in eastern DRC ever since.

<sup>5</sup> These include a November 2021 triple suicide bombing in Kampala, Uganda, and an increased tempo of attacks that killed nearly triple the number of people in 2021 than they did in 2019. See Caleb Weiss, Ryan O'Farrell, Tara Candland, and Laren Poole, "Fatal Transaction: The Funding Behind the Islamic State's Central Africa Province," Program on Extremism at George Washington, June 2023, [https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs5746/files/2023-06/fatal-transaction-final\\_0.pdf](https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs5746/files/2023-06/fatal-transaction-final_0.pdf) and Tara Candland, Ryan O'Farrell, Laren Poole, and Caleb Weiss, "The Rising Threat to Central Africa: The Transformation of the Islamic State's Congolese Branch." *CTC Sentinel* 15, no. 6 (June 2022) <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/the-rising-threat-to-central-africa-the-2021-transformation-of-the-islamic-states-congolese-branch/>.

<sup>6</sup> Anti-Western, and specifically anti-American, screeds are staples of Salafi-jihadi propaganda. For instance, in 1998, Osama bin Laden issued a ruling declaring that it was the individual duty of Muslims to kill Americans and Jews wherever they were found. One of the Islamic State's online publications, the now-defunct *Dabiq*, is replete with diatribes against the U.S., while al-Shabaab's most recent major propaganda release rails against America as well. For an excerpt of the al-Shabaab video, see Live From Somalia (@Live\_F\_Somalia), "UPDATE: Al Shabab group's deputy leader Mahad Karate said in a new video that they have seized vehicles, weapons, munitions and other military gears worth \$23 million following the group's recent suicide and gun attack on SNA camp in Osweine area of Galgadud region, X, September 15, 2023, 11:07 AM, [https://twitter.com/Live\\_F\\_Somalia/status/1702700694459851171](https://twitter.com/Live_F_Somalia/status/1702700694459851171). For bin Laden's *fatwa*, see Federation of American Scientists, *Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders: World Islamic Front Statement*, February 23, 2008, <https://irp.fas.org/world/para/docs/980223-fatwa.htm>.

# Hudson Institute

generations of Muslims, including the prophet Mohammed and his companions—and according to a literal interpretation of certain Islamic holy texts. Salafi-jihadis go further by claiming that authentic Islamic practice requires Muslims to violently impose “pure” Islamic living on everyone, including on fellow Muslims who do not interpret their faith in the precise way that Salafi-jihadis do. Salafi-jihadis, then, believe that they are *required* to fight the West, especially its leader, the U.S. Salafi-jihadis especially revile the West because of its tolerance of various religions, its secular laws, its supposed subjugation and humiliation of Muslim lands, and its societies that they believe are decadent and immoral.<sup>7</sup>

African Islamic State and al-Qaeda affiliates are largely autonomous from their core organizations, and not all members of terrorist organizations subscribe to the Salafi-jihadi theology. People join such groups for a wide variety of reasons, including for money, power, protection, or because of political beliefs. Yet the core leadership of Salafi-jihadi organizations behave as if they have a sincere commitment to the ideology, even if there are some esoteric theological or tactical differences among and within the groups. American policymakers should assume that, if given the chance, an African terrorist organization would attack the U.S.

Furthermore, there are now vast spaces in places like Mali and Burkina Faso controlled or influenced by terrorist groups. These are the types of safe havens where terrorists, if left unpressured, have the time and space to plot more ambitious attacks, including against the United States. America has painful experience of this reality after Osama bin Laden spent undisturbed years in Sudan where he planned the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The relatively good news is that the direct threat of African terrorism to the American homeland is, for now, limited. African terrorists are today focused on fighting their local governments or other rivals, and they generally lack many of the advanced capabilities necessary to strike within the U.S. The requisite coordination and planning for such an attack are especially difficult in the African context, and the agencies tasked with protecting the U.S. now have had decades of experience detecting and disrupting terror plots.

The risk of complacency and distraction is real, however, and the increased flow of illegal immigration across the southern border has heightened the risk of an attack. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) recently reported an increase in the number of people on the FBI’s terror watchlist trying to illegally cross the border.<sup>8</sup> As the number of illegal immigrants from the Eastern Hemisphere has already more than doubled this fiscal year from last, Africa likely accounts for part of the increase in individuals on the FBI’s watchlist that CBP has encountered at the border.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, see “The Fitrah of Mankind and the Near Extinction of the Western Woman,” *Dabiq*, Vol. 15, <https://web.archive.org/web/20170421153001/https://clarionproject.org/wp-content/uploads/islamic-state-magazine-dabiq-fifteen-breaking-the-cross.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Julia Ainsley, “Number of People on Terrorist Watchlist Stopped at Southern U.S. Border has Risen,” *NBC News*, September 14, 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/number-people-terror-watchlist-stopped-mexico-us-border-risen-rcna105095>.

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Nonetheless, lone wolf attacks—attacks conducted by terrorists inspired by but with no formal connection to an established terrorist group—likely remains the most direct danger from African terrorist groups to the U.S. homeland. Fortunately, there does not appear to be any African terrorist organization with significant appeal within the U.S. Al-Shabaab once attracted support from dozens of Americans and U.S. permanent residents, including by inspiring them to travel to Somalia to fight,<sup>9</sup> but that support has either largely dried up or sympathizers no longer dare to act.

## The Threat to the U.S.

While African terrorism's most potent threats to the U.S. are more indirect than an attack on the homeland, they are still worrisome. They include:

- 1) Attacking Americans and American interests on the continent.** African Islamist terrorist groups have attacked American targets on the continent for decades. The deadliest such attack was the 1998 bombing of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania; one of the most recent was the 2020 strike on a joint U.S.-Kenya military base in Manda Bay that killed three Americans.<sup>10</sup> In the Sahel, al-Qaeda in 2015 and twice in 2016 attacked targets frequented by foreigners in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Cote d'Ivoire, respectively, killing dozens, including Americans.<sup>11</sup> African terrorist groups will continue looking for those types of opportunities.
- 2) Providing military leaders with a pretext for launching coups.** Putschists in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger invoked their country's worsening insecurity as justification for taking power. When a junta takes over, the U.S.'s ability to work with the affected government is circumscribed, both by American law and because of the mismatch in governing systems that promotes distrust and friction. Achieving U.S. national interests in the country and its surrounding region becomes more difficult in those scenarios.

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<sup>9</sup> Joshua Meservey, "Travelling for an Idea: The Appeal of Al-Shabaab to Diaspora in the West," in *War and Peace in Somalia: National Grievances, Local Conflict and Al-Shabaab*, edited by Michael Keating and Matt Waldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> Joshua Meservey, "A Growing Challenge for America's Somalia Policy," *The Daily Signal*, January 9, 2020, <https://www.dailysignal.com/2020/01/09/a-growing-challenge-for-americas-somalia-policy/>.

<sup>11</sup> "Mali Hotel Attack: US Citizen Among 21 Dead, American Govt. Looking for Others," *ABC News*, November 21, 2015, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/americans-hostages-rescued-mali-hotel/story?id=35319879>; "Burkina Faso Attack: Foreigners Killed at Luxury Hotel," *BBC*, January 16, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-35332792>; Aislinn Laing and Henry Samuel, "Al Qaeda Claims Responsibility for Ivory Coast Hotel Shooting in which 16 'Including Four Europeans' Killed at Resort," *The Telegraph*, March 14, 2016, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/cotedivoire/12192667/Ivory-Coast-hotel-shooting-Gunmen-open-fire-and-kill-11-in-beach-resort-Grand-Bassam-latest.html>.

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- 3) **Creating the type of instability that provides opportunities for American competitors.** Russia's Wagner Group that is now embedded in strategic areas of Libya entered the country during the widespread instability brought on in part by terrorist groups. Wagner also now has a major operation in Mali, Niger's coup government contacted the group for help,<sup>12</sup> and there are rumors that the mercenaries may be in Burkina Faso, though that is disputed.<sup>13</sup> Wagner's activities contributed to the European Union and some European countries suspending certain types of assistance, including their provision of combat training missions, in the Central African Republic and Mali.<sup>14</sup> The result is that the security situations in those countries deteriorated, and the U.S. has fewer close partners with which to cooperate on the problem.
- 4) **Undermining important economic projects.** This is a less pronounced threat than the others listed, but still meaningful. Terrorism-related insecurity harms local and even national economies, deepening poverty. It can also directly threaten U.S. economic interests. For instance, ASWJ in northern Mozambique shut down operations around a massive natural gas field in the area, an operation supported by American companies and the U.S. government through the U.S. Development Finance Corporation (USDFC) and EXIM.

## The Two Pillars of African Terrorism

Unfortunately, the situation in Africa suggests that these dangers will remain potent and will likely grow. One pillar of the terrorism problem in Africa is the dismal state of governance that creates an enabling environment for terrorist appeals. In the latest Ibrahim Index of African Governance, African countries average a 49 out of 100 score.<sup>15</sup> Unaccountable, abusive, and incompetent governments strengthen the appeal of terrorist groups who claim to have the solution to problems governments cause or cannot solve. A government's inability to protect its people also increases the chances that they will acquiesce or support a terrorist group simply out of self-preservation.

The recent rash of coups highlights the weak and insufficient governance on the continent and suggests that the problem is going to worsen. Coup governments rarely deliver the type of

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<sup>12</sup> Sam Mednick, "Niger's Junta Asks for Help from Russian Group Wagner as it Faces Military Intervention Threat," AP, August 5, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/wagner-russia-coup-niger-military-force-e0e1108b58a9e955af465a3efe6605c0>.

<sup>13</sup> Lalla Sy, "Wagner Group: Burkina Faso Anger over Russian Mercenary Link," *BBC*, December 16, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-63998458>.

<sup>14</sup> "Germany to End EU training Mission in Mali," Reuters, May 5, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-ready-continue-un-mission-mali-defmin-2022-05-04/>; "France Suspends Aid, Military Support for Central African Republic," Reuters, June 9, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/france-suspends-aid-military-support-central-african-republic-2021-06-08/>; "EU Suspends Military Training in Central Africa over Russian Mercenaries," Reuters, December 15, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/eu-centralafrica-security-idAFL8N2T0586>.

<sup>15</sup> Calculations by author. The data can be found at Mo Ibrahim Foundation, <https://iiag.online/>.

# Hudson Institute

transparent, effective, and responsive governance that is necessary to ameliorate the enabling environment for terrorism. Burkina Faso and Mali are illustrative examples. Terrorism-related deaths in the former grew by 376 percent in 2022,<sup>16</sup> which followed the January coup that year that ousted President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré.<sup>17</sup> In the latter, violent terrorist incidents have increased three-fold since the country's first coup in 2020.<sup>18</sup> While the security situations in both countries were extremely poor before the coups, it is highly probable that the new military governments are even more incompetent at containing the spread of terrorism than were the civilian governments they replaced.

Furthermore, the Wagner Group to which some coup governments have turned operates in ways that exacerbates the governance deficiencies that contribute to terrorism in the first place. Wagner's habitual brutality alienates communities whose support is needed to effectively fight terrorism, and its parasitic nature leaches away the scant governing capacity its partner regimes have.

The other key element of the African terrorism problem is the Salafi-jihadi ideology that motivates the core of many of these groups. Most Muslims in Africa traditionally practiced their faith according to Sufi rites, the syncretism and mysticism of which repels Salafis. Over the last several decades, however, Salafism has grown throughout the continent, and even become the dominant practice in some countries like Somalia. While only a small minority of Salafis are violent, and other sects—including Sufiism—have produced Islamist terrorists, the rapid growth of Salafism in Africa has widened the pool of Muslims who share some core theological beliefs with Salafi-jihadis.<sup>19</sup>

A more recent global development may have negative consequences for the fight against African terrorism as well. The poorly planned and executed 2021 U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan amid the Taliban's reconquest has once again created an entire country that can serve as a terrorist haven. The notorious Haqqani Network—an eager supporter of Islamist terrorism abroad—has embedded itself in the Taliban government.<sup>20</sup> And according to leaked U.S. Department of Defense documents, the Islamic State now uses Afghanistan as a hub from which to coordinate its activities and plot attacks against the U.S.,<sup>21</sup> while the United Nations reports that al-Qaeda recently established five

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<sup>16</sup> Institute for Economics & Peace, *Global Terrorism Index 2023*.

<sup>17</sup> The leader of the January 2022 coup, Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, was himself unseated in September 2022 by a coup led by Captain Ibrahim Traoré, the current ruler of Burkina Faso.

<sup>18</sup> Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *Mali Catastrophe Accelerating under Junta Rule*, July 10, 2023, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/mali-catastrophe-accelerating-under-junta-rule/>.

<sup>19</sup> Joshua Meservey, "Sahelian Islam's Shift Towards Salafism And Its Implications For Regional Terrorism," Hoover Institution, September 21, 2021, <https://www.hoover.org/research/sahelian-islams-shift-towards-salafism-and-its-implications-regional-terrorism>.

<sup>20</sup> Jeff M. Smith, "The Haqqani Network: The New Kingmakers in Kabul," *War on the Rocks*, November 12, 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/11/the-haqqani-network-afghanistans-new-power-players/>.

<sup>21</sup> Dan Lamothe and Joby Warrick, "Afghanistan Has Become a Terrorism Staging Ground Again, Leak Reveals," *Washington Post*, April 22, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/04/22/afghanistan-terrorism-leaked-documents/>.

# Hudson Institute

new training camps in the country.<sup>22</sup> There is a long history of African terrorists training or fighting in Afghanistan and returning to the continent to strengthen or even start terrorist organizations.<sup>23</sup> Because of what happened recently in Afghanistan, that danger is once again relevant.

## Recommendations

While the scale of the problem of African terrorism is daunting, the U.S. is not helpless against it, though it is also not the decisive actor in the fight. American interventions will only be effective if they enhance what effective and committed governments, militaries, civil society organizations, and ordinary citizens are trying to achieve on the ground in terrorism affected areas.

The U.S. should:

- 1) Coordinate the fight against terrorism with partners and allies.** The problem of African terrorism is too large for the U.S. alone, so it should partner as closely as necessary to achieve the most effect with partners. That includes non-African partners such as Israel and European countries, as well as African states like Rwanda and Uganda. The latter two countries highlight a dilemma that faces American policymakers, namely that some of the U.S.'s most effective and accommodating security partners in Africa do not have the level of democracy that Washington wishes. Yet Rwanda is by far the most effective force fighting ASWJ in northern Mozambique. Uganda has been a core element of the anti-al-Shabaab fight in Somalia for years, and is also battling the truly vicious Allied Democratic Forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In these cases, American interests require that Washington work closely with those countries, while

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<sup>22</sup> Some U.S. government officials dispute the U.N.'s reporting, as seen here: Jeff Seldin, "UN Report Warns Al-Qaida, Islamic State Growing in Afghanistan," VOA, June 14, 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/a/un-report-warns-al-qaida-islamic-state-growing-in-afghanistan/7138133.html>. However, some counterterrorism scholars have pushed back on the U.S. officials' assertions here: Bill Roggio, "On Eve of 9/11 Anniversary, U.S. Officials Continue to Downplay Al Qaeda's Presence in Afghanistan," FDD's Long War Journal, September 11, 2023, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2023/09/u-s-officials-continue-to-downplay-al-qaedas-presence-in-afghanistan.php> and here: Kévin Jackson (@allegesonjihad) "US intelligence claim that Ayman al-Zawahiri was the only senior al-Qa'ida official in the Taliban's Afghanistan. Not everyone agrees though. For @akhbar, I profile Hamza al-Ghamidi, a top Saudi al-Qa'ida leader said to be based in Afghanistan:," X, September 15, 2023, 10:39 AM, <https://twitter.com/allegesonjihad/status/1702693543335035127?t=xbyODorGLXMptHLKoQJYVg&s=03>. For the U.N. report, see United Nations Security Council, *Fourteenth Report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2665 (2022) Concerning the Taliban and other Associated Individuals and Entities Constituting a Threat to the Peace Stability and Security of Afghanistan*, June 1, 2023, <https://docplayer.net/233358581-Security-council-United-nations-s-2023-370.html>.

<sup>23</sup> For instance, the Armed Islamic Group (known by its French acronym, GIA), an offshoot of which would eventually become al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, first connected with al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. One of the Sahel's most notorious terrorists, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, also fought in Afghanistan against the Soviets, as did many of the founders of al-Shabaab.

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also seeking opportunities to influence them towards more democratic governance. Such are the difficult tradeoffs and balancing acts that are necessary in the fight against African terrorism.

- 2) **Cooperate with West African countries to build a terrorism firebreak.** Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger are the epicenter of the explosion in Sahelian terrorism, and the problem is going to worsen. Neighboring those countries are relatively stable states like Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo that are friendly to the U.S., but which are threatened by violence spreading from their terrorism-affected neighbors. The U.S. should focus its efforts in the Sahel on helping those countries protect themselves, which will require helping to coordinate their counterterrorism efforts, sharing intelligence, working with them to enhance their governance capacities, and maintaining a robust counterterrorism presence in the region.
- 3) **Hold countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar to their promises to stop funding extremism, including the proselytization of fundamentalist Islam.** Saudi Arabia alone spent tens of billions of dollars spreading Wahhabism, its version of Salafism, throughout places like Africa. Recently, however, the Kingdom appears to be taking steps to make good on its promise to reform,<sup>24</sup> though judging such things with precision is difficult. The U.S. should encourage Saudi Arabia's efforts, though it should also monitor them to ensure there is no reversal. The U.S. should also help countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar refine their abilities to disrupt the flow of private money from their citizens to extremist causes worldwide. Morocco, meanwhile, has for years run a home-grown effort to debunk Salafi-jihadi theology,<sup>25</sup> and the U.S. should do what it can to support that program, and encourage other Muslim-majority countries to do the same.

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<sup>24</sup> For a few representative examples from the Muslim World League, Saudi Arabia's most prominent and semi-official charity that once funded extremism around the world, see "The Vice President of Burundi Inaugurates the International Forum of the Muslim World League on 'Religious and Ethnic Pluralism and Positive Coexistence,'" Muslim World League, January 21, 2019, <https://www.themwl.org/en/node/35919>; "Muslim World League Head Becomes First Recipient of Award Uniting Faiths," *Jewish News Syndicate*, June 9, 2020, <https://www.jns.org/muslim-world-league-head-becomes-first-recipient-of-award-uniting-faiths/>. See also Eldad J. Pardo, *Review of Selected Saudi Textbooks 2020–21*, Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education, December 2020, <https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/Review-of-Selected-Saudi-Textbooks-2020-21.pdf>; Robert Satloff, "A Historic Holocaust Awareness Awakening in Saudi Arabia, of All Places," The Washington Institute, January 26, 2018, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/a-historic-holocaust-awareness-awakening-in-saudi-arabia-of-all-places>.

<sup>25</sup> Jean-Marie Lemaire and Sara Doublier, "Video: Morocco's Anti-Jihadist Strategy," *France 24*, May 25, 2016, <https://www.france24.com/en/20160325-reporters-morocco-anti-jihad-strategy-counter-terrorism-intelligence>.



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- 4) **Ensure adequate religious literacy among U.S. diplomats and military personnel.** Religion remains the dominant organizing principle in many societies around the world, but the U.S. has a recent poor track record in understanding religiously motivated actors like Salafi-jihadi terrorists.<sup>26</sup> Misunderstanding Salafi-jihadis' core religious convictions makes it impossible to create an effective strategy for fighting them, with potentially profound consequences for American security.
- 5) **Continue and enhance efforts to bolster trade and investment between the U.S. and Africa.** One element of the enabling environment for terrorism in Africa is the lack of economic opportunity many Africans face. Increased U.S. private sector investment would allow American companies to reap more of the economic opportunities on the continent while also creating jobs for Africans and contributing to economic growth. Understandably, few American companies are interested in operating in the most terrorist-prone areas, yet any contribution they make to growing economies and more jobs elsewhere could help ameliorate some of the appeal of Salafi-jihadism in those places. Congress can also ensure that U.S. agencies like the USDFC and Prosper Africa prioritize helping the U.S. private sector in Africa. It should also push State Department to fulfill its obligation created by the Championing American Business Through Diplomacy act to prioritize commercial diplomacy.<sup>27</sup>
- 6) **Continue, improve, and expand support for African civil society organizations.** These groups are often among the few that are capable and committed enough to push their governments to perform better. However, just as the security situation has deteriorated in places despite substantial American military investments, governance and democracy in Africa has also weakened despite significant American support to African civil society organizations. The U.S. needs to study why in some cases our support for civil society and better governance has failed, and make the necessary reforms.

## Conclusion

African terrorism is a generational challenge, and current trends are running in the wrong direction. The U.S. must remain focused and committed to supporting Africans who are on the front lines battling the twin pillars of the problem, poor governance and the Salafi-jihadi ideology. Any weariness

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<sup>26</sup> Emilie Kao and Joshua Meserve, *Minding the "God Gap": ISIS' Genocide of Religious Minorities and American Statecraft*, The Heritage Foundation, November 8, 2018, <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/report/minding-the-god-gap-isis-genocide-religious-minorities-and-american>.

<sup>27</sup> U.S. House of Representatives, *22 USC Ch. 106: Championing American Business through Diplomacy*, no date, <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title22/chapter106&edition=prelim>.

# Hudson Institute

or complacency about the challenge is likely to have damaging consequences to Americans and American national interests.