



NSDS HUB

NATO STRATEGIC DIRECTION SOUTH

1st NSD-S HUB Study day

“Challenges and opportunities of population growth and demographic change in Africa”



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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF POPULATION GROWTH AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IN AFRICA

BACKGROUND



Following the Secretary General's announcement of full capability in the Brussels Summit on 11-12 July 2018, the NATO Strategic Direction South (NSD-S) Hub hosted its first study day on 24 July 2018 in Naples, focusing on the challenges and opportunities of population growth and demographic change in Africa.

The purpose of this Study Day was to connect with international organizations, non-governmental organizations and other subject matter experts from Think Tanks and

Academia coming from Africa, in order to gain greater understanding of the view of the African stakeholders; establish networks and contacts; identify relationships in the region; and to promote the NSD-S Hub:

KEY TAKEAWAYS

For the last two decades migration has been a key issue when referring to Africa and will continue to be a challenge in coming years. This continent will play a central role in shaping size and distribution of total population over the next decades.

This movement of African people among countries is a lot more diversified than western countries tend to think; it cannot be dubbed as 'desperation migration', but mostly as regular. These migration movements are mainly driven by economic development and social transformation; labor demand; environmental degradation and climate change; violence and political oppression; and education. It should also be reminded that the majority of the migration movement is internal to the continent.

Currently, a young age population structure that will lead in the mid/long term to an increase of active workforce was identified as one of the main challenges that African societies will face. Furthermore, the current low agricultural productivity will result in an increasing urbanization.

In this realm, and although some Study Day lecturers hinted that population will surge, this will not cause an invasion of African migrants to Europe. Moreover, they implied that population growth is an opportunity for development in Africa.

Additionally, main economic aspects related to demographic changes are: lack of industrialization, low external trade rates and foreign investment; deficient farming mechanization, external actors' influence in African countries economies and the need for agreements on how to tackle the external



debt.

Some experts in the event pointed out the necessity of investing in what is named “maritime economy”, also known as the “blue economy”. This issue was raised on multiple occasions and, from their point of view, is clearly an untapped resource.

NATO and NATO countries may also pay attention to new opportunities such as the economic growth trends among some African countries; plans such as ECOWAS Vision 2020; African Union 2063 Agenda and/or National development plans.

Therefore and in some African stakeholders’ opinion it is required an equal level engagement with an understanding that the intention is to find a solution which will be of benefit to all parties. The post-colonial approach is still perceived.

In addition, these experts also depicted some of the main threats that African countries may face in the near future. If it is not properly addressed, Niger could be the next Mali. To the South / East in the region of Diffa, the country is the object of attack of Boko Haram and to the West it is often object to incursions of the Group of Support to Islam and Muslims. Moreover, Niger shares with Libya, a destabilized country, hundreds of kilometers of border. Besides, a new crisis shaking the region today is that of Cameroon, where many refugees leave English speaking areas, heading towards neighboring Nigeria.

Last but not least, China’s footprint in Africa was emphasized on several occasions. Currently China is involved in many projects, especially related to civil infrastructures such as dams, underground, hospitals, ports ... The idea of China as soft power has changed and now its military presence is more significant. Some years ago China was perceived as a developing country, now it is a real power.

Hence, China is changing and is providing more training and education; its investments are seen as mutually beneficial.

In its approximation to African countries, China has multiple discourses, but China has shown respect for these countries and thus is perceived as being far from post-colonial mentality. Furthermore, China is also praised for not intervention in internal affairs, as they do not relate their business to any social/ political evolution of the African partners.

Finally, China’s private sector and Government are aligned. Therefore, Western Multilateral approach, not only from different countries, but also even lacking a coherent strategy from single western countries, cannot compete with this bilateral system.

CONCLUSIONS



Summarizing, the Study Day has been the first noteworthy event organized by the Hub. The short period of Hub’s life implied that this was a great challenge to perform.

However, it may be concluded that it was a remarkable success in terms of content and the quality of its lecturers. The Study day has also been a test-bed for the potential of the Hub to network with new organizations in Africa that enhance NATO understanding to its southern flank.

The main benefits that the Hub has obtained from this stimulating event can be summarized as follows:

- It has driven the inclusion of projects in the Hub’s Production Plan related to in-depth analysis of Chinese influence in the Area of Interest.

- It has contributed to enhance the relation with the AU, by initiating the bilateral relation with Conflict Prevention and Early Warning Division (CPEWD) representatives
- It contributed to the refinement and completion of some Hub's products, such as those related to the "Fulani issues", and the "Influence of external partners in North Africa post-Arab Spring".
- It has laid the basis of cooperation with important NGOs that are located in the African continent and have a mature and extensive network in African countries, like Kofi Annan IPTC or the OCP Policy Center;
- Expanding the Hub's COI, that is being involved in performing of our consultations that are using modern technologies like on-line chat-rooms, webinars etc.

At the same time, lots of participants were delighted to have the opportunity to be heard in NATO's spheres of decision through the Hub. The event built up an atmosphere of confidence among the participants and lecturers, as well as mutual trust and understanding.

The different views provided by experts and lecturers have opened a window of opportunity to develop further knowledge on critical issues that shape Hub's area of interest such as the real footprint of external actors; illicit trafficking or energy security. These issues will drive Hub's activities and future Study Days.