

2016

Burning Bridges: American Security Assistance and Human Rights in Mauritania

Isabel Wade

Claremont McKenna College

Recommended Citation

Wade, Isabel, "Burning Bridges: American Security Assistance and Human Rights in Mauritania" (2016). *CMC Senior Theses*. Paper 1431.

http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/1431

This Open Access Senior Thesis is brought to you by Scholarship@Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in this collection by an authorized administrator. For more information, please contact scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu.

Claremont McKenna College

**Burning Bridges: American Security Assistance and Human Rights in
Mauritania**

submitted to
Professor Jennifer Taw

by
Isabel Wade

for
Fall 2015 & Spring 2016
April 25, 2016

Abstract

This paper examines the intersection between human rights and security assistance in Mauritania. In American security assistance broadly, and within the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership specifically, there has been an over-securitization of “whole of government” counterterrorism policy. While the United States recognizes the need to address the social, economic, and political roots of extremism, it has failed to do so in practice. If the United States continues to support Mauritania with conventional security assistance but does not tackle the root causes of extremism, it will ultimately fail in fighting terrorism in the Sahel. In order to succeed, the U.S. government must give greater authority to the Department of State and USAID, create greater accountability for human rights within the Department of Defense, and improve interagency coordination. In the long term, the U.S. government must change its paradigm regarding the relationship between security and human rights.

Acknowledgments

I would first like to thank all those whom I interviewed in Mauritania. Specifically, I would like to recognize the continued strength of Biram Dah Abeid and Brahim Bilal Ramdhane, who remain in jail for fighting to end slavery in Mauritania. I would also like to thank Houley Kane, who hosted and guided me throughout my time in Mauritania. This project would not have been possible without her. I would also like to thank Mohamed Lemine, my *père mauritanien*, who first invited me to Mauritania, hosted me with his family, and connected me to my first sources.

Thank you also to Professor Taw, who has been a constant source of support and inspiration throughout my time at Claremont McKenna. Professor Taw taught me to always say more with less, to always back up my analysis with empirical evidence, and above all to never forget why I was writing this thesis. Finally, I want to thank Professor Taw for always being there to offer strong words of encouragement. Her unwavering support crafted my time at CMC, and for that I am forever grateful.

Finally, thank you to my friends and family who supported me throughout this project. Thank you to Clara Broderick, Marieme Sall, Brianna Losoya, and my entire host family in Senegal. They were the first to listen to my ideas, help me organize my research, and quite literally pick me up when I had fallen. Thank you also to Victoria Fletcher and Serigne Ndiaye who first connected me with sources in Mauritania and who allowed me to travel to Mauritania. Thank you also to my amazing friends in Claremont who brighten each day. Finally, thank you to my dad, sister, and brother who remind me that above all it is important to be kind.

Contents

Introduction	5
Literature Review	7
Chapter 1: Mauritanian Domestic Context.....	14
Introduction to Mauritania	14
Mauritania’s Internal Instability	18
<i>Civil-Military Relations</i>	18
<i>Racial Discrimination and Political Exclusion</i>	20
<i>Persecution of Islamists</i>	24
<i>Poverty and Economic Inequality</i>	26
<i>Political Corruption and Organized Crime</i>	28
<i>Ineffective Creation and Implementation of Laws</i>	32
<i>Torture</i>	34
Mauritania’s Future.....	36
Chapter 2: Context for American Security Assistance.....	40
American Interest in Mauritania	40
The Current Threat.....	42
American Policy Towards Mauritania.....	45
Chapter 3: Failures in “Whole of Government” Counterterrorism	50
American Interests	50
American Goals	51
Civilian Engagement and Humanitarian Assistance.....	54
Human Rights Vetting	59

Human Rights Training	67
Failure to Coordinate and Monitor Programs Between Agencies	72
Chapter 4: Recommendations.....	75
Long Term Solutions to Larger Problems	75
Short Term Solutions	77
<i>USAID and the State Department: Greater Monitoring and Evaluation</i>	77
<i>Standardized Programming and Funding Streams</i>	80
<i>Move More Development Programs Away from DOD and back to USAID</i>	81
<i>Standard Application and Increased Oversight of Leahy Laws in TSCTP Training</i>	82
<i>Tie Security Assistance to Civilian Reforms</i>	83
Conclusion.....	86
Bibliography	88

Introduction

Less than two weeks after I interviewed the Vice President of the Initiative for the Resurgent Abolitionist Movement (IRA), Brahim Bilal Ramdhane, the Mauritanian government imprisoned him and the Initiative's president, Biram Dah Abeid. This treatment is common in Mauritania, a country that routinely oppresses civil society, persecutes political opposition, and engages in egregious abuses of human rights. Mauritania is also a recipient of American security assistance targeted at countering violent extremist organizations (VEO) in the Sahel, the region Mauritania shares with Mali, Burkina Faso and parts of Chad, Eritrea, Nigeria, Niger, South Sudan, Sudan, and Algeria. The humanitarian and political conditions in Mauritania make its population highly susceptible to radicalization. If Mauritania's social, economic, and humanitarian issues continue, Mauritania could face the same internal conflict and chaos as Mali. The United States provides security assistance to avoid such an outcome, among other things. However, the United States does not effectively counter the human rights abuses in the country that create the environment for such instability. Instead, U.S. security assistance supports the very government responsible for such abuses.

While the United States recognizes that it must consider these developmental, economic, and humanitarian factors in its counterterrorism efforts, it has not effectively done so in Mauritania. Instead, the government has overemphasized security efforts in the country without giving due consideration to the impact of Mauritania's severe human rights abuses, inequality, and poor governance. To more effectively prevent and combat terrorism in the region, the United States must better prioritize human rights within its counterterrorism policies, both in its support of the Mauritanian military and through its

“whole of government” efforts through the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP).

For Brahim and other Mauritians trying to improve the human rights conditions in their country, the United States is a lot of talk with little action:

I think that they come to listen to us. But I have not seen the impact they have on the Mauritanian authority. The power in Mauritania has not changed...They do not put pressure. I do not see the pressure of the Americans on the Mauritanian government. Because the Mauritanian government is very weak. If the Americans put pressure on Mauritania, they are going to change things. But they have not applied that pressure.¹

This project begins with an account of the human rights abuses, inequality, and corruption in Mauritania and how they contribute to extremism in the country. It continues with a review of American security assistance to Mauritania and details how this security assistance has failed to address these underlying issues. Finally, it provides brief recommendations as to how the United States can better incorporate human rights into its security policy as a whole and in Mauritania, specifically.

¹ Brahim Bilal Abeid (Vice President of IRA) in discussion with the author, November 3, 2014. Author's translation.

Literature Review

It has become increasingly clear that combatting violent extremism requires more than military solutions. This is also true for Mauritania, a key US partner in curbing terrorism in the Sahel. Anouar Boukhars, a nonresident scholar in the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's Middle East Program, has worked extensively on the internal drivers of insecurity in Mauritania. He emphasizes that Mauritania's disenfranchisement of its youth and unequal distribution of wealth and power among its ethnic groups has led to increased radicalization of its population.² In order for Mauritania to have a truly stable foundation, the country must move towards stronger, more transparent institutions. It will also have to actively place members of its Haratin population in positions of power and work towards more equitable social and economic development. Boukhars emphasizes that foreign nations supporting Mauritania in the war on terror must predicate their aid on the creation of more accountable and transparent institutions. If foreign powers only bolster Mauritania's "coercive apparatus," they will fail to successfully counter terrorism in the country and the region as a whole.³

The partnership with Mauritania is part of the U.S.'s post-9/11 expansion of counterterrorism efforts into countries "on the periphery." The peripheral states are safe havens for terrorist organizations that do not pose direct threats to the United States.⁴ Maria Ryan of the University of Nottingham highlights that fighting terrorism in the periphery must focus primarily on the instability and poor governance that allows these

² Anouar Boukhars, "Mauritania's Precarious Stability and Islamist Undercurrent," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, February 2016, 1, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CEIP_CP266_Boukhars_Final.pdf.

³ Boukhars, "Mauritania's Precarious Stability and Islamist Undercurrent," February 2016, 2.

⁴ Maria Ryan, "'War in countries we are not at war with': The 'war on terror' on the periphery from Bush to Obama," *International Politics* 48, no. 2 (2011): 366.

groups to survive.⁵ Ryan emphasizes that the United States has gone beyond the conventional counterterrorism measures to “focus on winning hearts and minds and diminishing the conditions that might breed terrorism” in periphery nations.⁶ U.S.-sponsored public works projects and humanitarian assistance as well as pro-American press releases promote a positive view of the United States within these nations.⁷ Ryan concludes by emphasizing that the United States should focus on development in these nations rather than providing them with security assistance.

Yet, the challenge the US faces is two-fold: it does not have the will, the right, or the capacity to rewrite Mauritania’s culture. While the United States is attempting to assist Mauritania in improving its human rights and development, the U.S. government is structured in such a way that privileges short-term military fixes over long-term social and economic solutions.

To the first point, Hans Morgenthau points out that, in addition to using morality as cover for their own actions, states often assume they hold the moral high ground, to which they believe other countries must conform.⁸ This assumption is dangerous, as all “human rights as perceived by individuals are inevitably filtered through historic and social circumstances.”⁹ Morgenthau does not see one nation as obliged or able to completely reform another even with “the best intentions and the most extensive commitment of resources.”¹⁰

⁵ Ryan, 381.

⁶ Ryan, 372.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (United States: McGraw Hill, 1985), 246.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 107.

Hedley Bull picks up on these points in his book *The Anarchical Society*, in which he notes that when undertaking human rights in any global or even national context, “justice is a term than can ultimately be given only some kind of private or subjective definition.”¹¹ Bull gives three core definitions of justice: seeking the equal dispersal and application of rights within society and international relations, seeking equal application of the law, seeking application and creation of rights proportional to the needs of different communities and, finally, engaging in bargaining and communication to decide upon the distribution of rights and burdens within society.¹² Within these definitions, Bull clarifies that justice belongs both to states (sovereignty) and people within states (universality). Policies that seek to protect the rights of individuals and maintain justice at the individual level can conflict with justice at the interstate level, leading to disorder in international relations.¹³

Bull remarks that negotiations and bargains driven first and foremost by the self-interest of the respective states shape international relations.¹⁴ To fully recognize human rights at the individual level would be to let go of peace and security as the main priority of states. As a result, all states regardless of their commitment to human rights will support an international regime that maintains stability over one that fights for equal rights for all, even if that means supporting those who continuously suppress human rights.¹⁵ In practice, there is a direct conflict between the institutions that protect

¹¹ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 75.

¹² *Ibid*, 76-77.

¹³ *Ibid*, 80.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 82.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 85.

international order and international efforts to prioritize human rights. In the end, international order consistently remains the priority of states.¹⁶

The problem with the foregoing arguments is that sometimes promoting human rights actually can protect security interests, both within states and internationally. A state providing security assistance to another may thus need to address issues of human rights in its own security interests and in its partner's. In *Counterinsurgency in Crisis*, David Ucko and Robert Egnell specify that training foreign militaries in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism must include human rights elements. Military training is only effective if the foreign militaries maintain their skills, remain accountable to their institutions, and use their skills in ways that are not corrupt or abusive.¹⁷ This requires the buy-in of military and political leadership. As a result, the country training the foreign militaries must also promote good governance, accountability, and human rights reforms within the host government.¹⁸ If the government continues human rights abuses, so will the military. This will undermine counterinsurgency efforts and military training.

In *Humanitarian Intervention*, Robert Keohane highlights that having a military presence in a country with a disenfranchised population will lead to resentment towards the nation providing assistance. The United States and other nations providing assistance can mitigate this resentment by providing humanitarian support and promoting human rights. Resentful populations in fragile states are more likely to breed extremist groups

¹⁶ Ibid, 89.

¹⁷ David Ucko and Robert Egnell, *Counterinsurgency in Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 160.

¹⁸ Ibid.

that target the states providing assistance to the current regime.¹⁹ In the same collection, Michael Ignatieff highlights the need for effective governance and rule of law in strengthening states. Specifically in regards to fragile or failed states, the state cannot be rebuilt with the same structures that weakened it.²⁰ Fragile institutions and weak states will only support the proliferation of terrorist groups and instability.²¹ In strengthening state institutions, foreign actors must engage with local populations, as local populations must buy into the legitimacy of government institutions and leadership in order for the state to remain stable.²²

As Ryan points out, this is something the United States has begun to understand. Lesley Ann Warner has done significant work on counterterrorism partnerships in Africa, specifically looking at holistic strategies like the TSCTP. Warner conducted research and interviews with top counterterrorism professionals in both the United States and Africa, focusing specifically on those working in justice, military capacity building, vocational training, community engagement, public diplomacy, and law enforcement.²³ In her review of countering violent extremism through the TSCTP, she notes that there are many factors that contribute to the rise of violent extremism including unemployment, corruption, and government repression.²⁴ Human rights violations and human insecurity specifically lead to more people, particularly youth, entering terrorist organizations.²⁵ In

¹⁹ Robert Keohane, "Political Authority After Intervention," in *Humanitarian Intervention*, ed. J. L. Holzgrefe and Robert O. Keohane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 296.

²⁰ Michael Ignatieff, "State Failure and Nation Building," in *Humanitarian Intervention*, ed. J. L. Holzgrefe and Robert O. Keohane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 307.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 318-319.

²³ Lesley Ann Warner, "The Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership: Building Partner Capacity to Counter Terrorism and Violent Extremism," *The Center for Complex Operations* (March 2014): 14.

²⁴ Warner, "The Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership," 20.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

recognition of these factors, the United States, the European Union, and their international partners have all attempted capacity-building operations in the Sahel and other volatile regions.

Returning to the second point, even when the U.S. decides that it is in its national interest to promote human rights as a means of combating terrorism, its own structures make doing so nearly impossible. Thus, while the American government has incorporated some human rights and governance into its counterterrorism strategy, it has also increasingly militarized development and human rights assistance. In *Mission Revolution*, Jennifer Taw argues that when the Department of Defense (DOD) implements a development program, DOD focuses only on how that program impacts security interests in the short term.²⁶ This undermines long term development and so undermines stability and security in the long term. The inequality between State and DOD worsens this problem, with Congress increasingly giving DOD jurisdiction over programs while limiting the influence of State and USAID.²⁷ In order to maintain stability in countries with terrorist threats, the United States must reframe its outlook on the relationship between human rights, security, and development.

Similarly, Joanna Spear highlights the problem of DOD dominance in interagency programs, specifically in counterterrorism. USAID, State, and DOD agendas conflict in American counterterrorism programs encompassing the 3Ds of diplomacy, defense, and development. Given DOD's expansive budget and influence, its agenda is most likely to

²⁶ Jennifer Taw, *Mission Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 177.

²⁷ Taw, 173.

be implemented.²⁸ While USAID and State have been able to retake some of their programming and influence in recent years, DOD still controls the majority of programming in counterterrorism partnerships, even when those efforts are intended to be whole of government.²⁹ Development programs implemented by DOD are typically unsustainable and so undermine the goal of whole of government counterterrorism programs.³⁰

Hans Morgenthau argues that states generally act in their own interests, but conceal their true motives: “What is actually aspiration for power, then, appears to be something different, something that is in harmony with the demands of reason, morality, and justice.”³¹ While Morgenthau acknowledges that states value human rights, respecting “absolute moral” principles, he believes they will sacrifice such principles if they conflict with a “higher purpose such as the national interest.”³² This paper argues that human rights and the national interest actually intersect and that though there are significant practical challenges in human rights promotion, long term security interests depend upon it.

²⁸ Joanna Spear, “The Militarization of United States Foreign Aid,” in *The Securitization of Foreign Aid*, ed. Stephen Brown and Jorn Gravingholt (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 23.

²⁹ Joanna Spear, “The Militarization of United States Foreign Aid, 29.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 33.

³¹ Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 219.

³² *Ibid*, 228.

Chapter 1: Mauritanian Domestic Context

Introduction to Mauritania

Mauritania is a highly underdeveloped nation located in Northwest Africa, bordered by Senegal in the South, Morocco, Western Sahara, and Algeria in the North, and Mali in the East. While Mauritania is fairly large for a sub-Saharan African nation, it is home to only 3.97 million people.³³ A former French colony, Mauritania's mix of French, Arab, and African historical influences is represented in its society. Mauritania is located in the Sahel, a strip of land stretching between North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. Historically, the Sahel has been where the Arab cultures of the North and the African cultures of the South blend together; today that occurs within the Sahelian nations of Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Niger, Senegal, and Burkina Faso.³⁴ These states share similar geography and levels of development, all falling in the lowest level of the Human Development Index.³⁵ In addition, these states share problems of social conflict rooted in race, tribal affiliation, and extremism (with Senegal remaining a large exception).

Mauritania's economy relies primarily on the exploitation of iron ore and other minerals (gypsum, copper, phosphate, diamond, and gold) as well as fishing off its coast.³⁶ Its economy is currently growing at a rate of 5% per year; however, the economy also suffers from severe institutional weakness, fragile economic growth, and a large

³³ "Mauritania," *World Bank*, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/country/mauritania>.

³⁴ Some sources also include Sudan and South Sudan in the Sahel.

³⁵ "Human Development Reports," *United Nations Development Programme*, accessed December 1, 2015, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI>.

³⁶ "Mauritania," *CIA World Factbook*, accessed November 30, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mr.html>.

trade deficit.³⁷ Iron ore makes up 46% of Mauritania's exports followed by fish (16%) and gold (11%). China, France, Spain, Japan, and the United Arab Emirates are Mauritania's top trading partners. Its land is largely dry and barren, making it difficult for many to survive on subsistence farming. Although over fifty percent of the nation relies on agriculture and livestock for income, an increasingly large percentage of nomads and subsistence farmers have had to relocate to the cities as a result of recurring drought.³⁸

After independence in 1960, Mauritania became an Islamic Republic, as its population is approximately 99% Muslim (government statistics claim 100%). Given the nation's colonial history and geographic location, Mauritania continuously struggles with its national identity. For example, the nation is regulated by a mix of French and Islamic civil law. Mauritanian law draws on the Constitution, Sharia law, and governmental legislation in its judicial decisions.³⁹ While Arabic (Hassaniya dialect) has now become the country's official and national language, French remains Mauritania's administrative language and Pulaar, Soninke, and Wolof all remain national tribal languages. In practice, it is often difficult for groups to find a common language, most often choosing to communicate in either Hassaniya or French.⁴⁰

As a result of Mauritania's geographic placement between majority-Arab North Africa and majority-African sub-Saharan Africa, its population is largely divided

³⁷ "Mauritania Country Brief," *International Trade Center*, accessed December 1, 2015, <http://www.intracen.org/country/mauritania/>.

³⁸ "Mauritania," *CIA World Factbook*, accessed November 30, 2015.

³⁹ Zelezeck Nguimatsa Serge, "Researching the Legal System and Laws of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania," *Hauser Global Law School Program*, August 2009, <http://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/Mauritania.html#sourcesoflaws>.

⁴⁰ Alfred G. Gerteiny, "Mauritania," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed November 10, 2015, <http://www.britannica.com/place/Mauritania>.

between the Arab and African communities.⁴¹ This divide is strengthened by Mauritania's racial caste system, with white Arabs at the very top of the hierarchy, followed by black Arabs, black Africans, and Haratin respectively. It is also important to understand the unique cultural and racial divides of the Sahel. While black Arabs and the Haratin caste are historically African - their ancestors were those enslaved by the Arab peoples when the Arab and African societies first met on the Sahel - these two groups consider themselves Arab. The Afro-Mauritanian community encompasses those belonging to African tribes, particularly the Soninke, Pulaar, and Wolof.

The White Arabs make up about 20% of the population and yet hold a majority of the political power. At the bottom of the caste system are the Haratines, which literally translates into "freed slaves." This translation is misleading since much of the Haratine caste in Mauritania remains enslaved today, while those who are free still face significant discrimination as a result of their social standing and race.⁴² The Haratins make up the largest ethnic group at 40% of the population.⁴³ Estimates from credible non-governmental organizations and media outlets estimate the percentage of Mauritians enslaved ranges from 4% to 20%. Even at *only* 4% of its population enslaved, which would be about 155,600 people, Mauritania still has the greatest number of enslaved peoples per capita of any nation.⁴⁴ Even free Haratin remain politically, socially, and economically oppressed.

⁴¹ Author's Research, Mauritania, November 1, 2014.

⁴² John D. Sutter, "Slavery's Last Stronghold," *CNN*, accessed November 1, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/interactive/2012/03/world/mauritania.slaverys.last.stronghold/>.

⁴³ Boukhars, "Mauritania's Precarious Stability and Islamist Undercurrent," February 2016, 15.

⁴⁴ "Global Rankings," *The Global Slavery Index*, accessed March 23, 2016, <http://www.globalslaveryindex.org/findings/>.

⁴⁵ Sutter, "Slavery's Last Stronghold," *CNN*.

Mauritania officially has a democratic, multiparty system and bicameral legislative structure, as established under the 1991 Constitution.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the Mauritanian government is most often regarded as a dictatorship, with political coups and exclusion of political opposition defining Mauritania's history. Mauritania's most infamous dictator, Maaouya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya, ruled from 1992 to 2005. His dictatorship used torture as a common method for gaining information and silencing political prisoners. Known for his systemic abuse of human rights and oppression of civil society, Taya is most famous for his expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Afro-Mauritanians in response to the 1989 border conflict with Senegal.

In 2005, Colonel Ely Ould Mohahmed Vall of the Mauritanian Army deposed Taya in a coup. Vall shocked the international community by swiftly implementing a transition to civilian, democratic rule.⁴⁷ This would be Mauritania's first truly democratic poll.⁴⁸ Vall invited the U.N. to oversee the elections, and the international community hailed the elections as a regional model.⁴⁹ The new government implemented vital reforms including criminalizing slavery, reintegrating Mauritanian refugees in Senegal (from the 1989 conflict), addressing government corruption, and increasing the separation between the military and the civilian government.⁵⁰ The last of those reforms threatened the military, driving General Mohammed Ould Abdel Aziz to stage a coup. While Aziz later held elections (in which he ran and won), Mauritania had lost a majority of the

⁴⁶ Alfred G. Gerteiny, "Mauritania," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed November 10, 2015, <http://www.britannica.com/place/Mauritania/Economy#toc283203>.

⁴⁷ Dafna Hochman, "Civil-Military Power Struggles: The Case of Mauritania," *Current History* 108, no. 718 (May 2009): 221.

⁴⁸ Desha Girod and Meir Walters, "Elite-led democratisation in aid-dependent states: the case of Mauritania," *The Journal of North African Studies* 17, no. 2 (March 2012), 187.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Boubacar N'Diaye, "To 'Midwife' – and Abort – a Democracy: Mauritania's Transition from Military Rule, 2005-2008," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 47, no. 1 (March 2009): 143.

reforms implemented under democratically-elected President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi. Aziz is the current president in Mauritania and was recently reelected to a second five-year term.

Currently, Mauritania suffers from government corruption, oppression of civil society, and significant abuse of human rights. These factors contribute to the radicalization of youth in Mauritania and increase sympathy for violent extremist organizations. In order to combat extremism in Mauritania, the American government must also combat the human rights abuses and government weakness undermining Mauritania's stability.

Mauritania's Internal Instability

Civil-Military Relations

A political coup has installed nearly every Mauritanian president. Current President Aziz led the coup against democratically-elected President Abdallahi and supported the coup against President Taya. The military and the Mauritanian government are intertwined, weakening the division between civilian authority and the military. In the long term, the military's control over domestic political power in Mauritania will make it impossible to implement democratic mechanisms, anti-corruption reforms, and accountability measures within the Mauritanian government.

Most recently, the lack of division between Mauritania's civilian government and the military led to a coup against Mauritania's first democratically elected President

Abdallahi.⁵¹ Soldiers detained Abdallahi after he attempted to dismiss four senior military officers, including General Aziz.⁵² General Aziz officially ousted him in a coup in 2008.⁵³ The military's control over domestic affairs was demonstrated in Aziz's comments after taking power: "The armed forces and the security forces will always stay with the people to deepen the democracy...It's them who brought the democracy here and it's them who have always protected this democracy and they will always preserve it."⁵⁴

The clarification of civil-military relations within the democratic process is specifically important in the Sahel. With the continued emphasis on counterterrorism and regional instability, the need for clarified civil-military relations has become highly salient. In Mali, the military ousted President Touré as they claimed he was not doing enough to counter VEOs and rebellious tribal groups.⁵⁵ President Aziz supported this decision, reaffirming his lack of confidence in Mali's counterterrorism measures and affirming the importance of his focus on security.⁵⁶ By focusing only on the importance of conventional security measures in counterterrorism, Aziz increases the perceived legitimacy of the military's influence in domestic policy. Similarly, foreign governments inadvertently support this justification by focusing primarily on conventional security in their counterterrorism support. In order to change the military's role in domestic

⁵¹ Girod and Walters, "Elite-led democratisation in aid-dependent states: the case of Mauritania," 189.

⁵² "U.S. halt aid over Mauritania coup," *BBC News*, August 8, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7548866.stm>.

⁵³ Girod and Walters, "Elite-led democratisation in aid-dependent states: the case of Mauritania," 189.

⁵⁴ "U.S. halt aid over Mauritania coup," *BBC News*.

⁵⁵ Adam Nossiter, "Soldiers Overthrow Mali Government in Setback for Democracy in Africa," *New York Times*, March 22, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/23/world/africa/mali-coup-france-calls-for-elections.html>.

⁵⁶ Ibrahim Yahaya Ibrahim, "Managing the Sahelo-Saharan Islamic Insurgency in Mauritania," *University of Florida Sahel Research Group*, August 2014, 23, http://sahelresearch.africa.ufl.edu/files/Yahaya_StakesMauritania_Final.pdf.

governance, foreign governments must place a greater emphasis on government accountability, anti-corruption, and human rights in their counterterrorism support.

Racial Discrimination and Political Exclusion

The Mauritanian government has historically excluded major political opposition from participation in government. This exclusion is based largely upon Mauritania's racial caste system. This ethnic inequality and prejudice has sparked anger and frustration within these marginalized groups, specifically among members of the Afro-Mauritanian and Haratin communities. These two communities have suffered directly as a result of Mauritania's racist policies and perpetuation of slavery.

The most significant example of racist policies against the Afro-Mauritanian community came under President Taya in 1989. A border war had broken out between Senegal and Mauritania, sparked by a small outbreak of violence between Senegalese farmers and Mauritanian nomadic herders along the Senegalese river. While the conflict was minor, it brought in members of the Mauritanian and Senegalese militaries and ignited pre-existing racial tensions between and within Mauritania and Senegal.⁵⁷ In response, racial violence broke out in urban centers in Senegal and Mauritania. In Senegal, mobs targeted White Arabs for looking "Mauritanian." Similarly, Afro-Mauritanians suffered violent attacks in Mauritania for appearing "Senegalese." As a result of the violence, the Senegalese and Mauritanian governments decided to repatriate Mauritanian and Senegalese citizens back to their respective countries. However, the Mauritanian government took this decision as an opportunity to expel 30,000 Black

⁵⁷ Ron Parker, "The Senegal-Mauritania Conflict of 1989," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 29, no. 1 (1991): 165.

Africans, a majority with Mauritanian citizenship, who were considered political threats.⁵⁸ The decision forced these political refugees to remain in Senegal for over fifteen years. Finally in 2007, President Abdallahi signed a tripartite agreement to repatriate and reintegrate Mauritians living in Senegal.

The Haratin group has also become increasingly active in demanding social equality and political inclusion.⁵⁹ In recent years, Haratin activity has driven increased action politically and within civil society. The government has met both with greater crackdown on leaders of the Haratin movements. Particularly, the government fears that the Haratin caste and the Afro-Mauritanian community will band together against the White Arab regime. This would pose a significantly greater threat to the regime's power than the Haratin currently pose, specifically as the Afro-Mauritanians and Haratin both suffer racial discrimination in Mauritanian society. In 2012, the two groups united in protest against Biram Dah Abeid's arrest for burning Maliki texts of Islamic law.⁶⁰ According to Biram, the police told him that his greatest crime had been bringing the two groups together in political protest.⁶¹

Despite continued international attention towards slavery in Mauritania, the Mauritanian government continues to deny that its existence. In an interview with the author, Mohammed Ould El Kory, Director of Communications for TADAMOUN, the official human rights branch of the Mauritanian government, remarked that NGOs only advocate against slavery for money and power: "Today, there is not a single case of

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Boukhars, "Mauritania's Precarious Stability and Islamist Undercurrent," February 2016, 15.

⁶⁰ These are the religious texts that allegedly promote slavery.

⁶¹ Alexis Okeowo, "Freedom Fighter," *The New Yorker*, September 8, 2014, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/09/08/freedom-fighter>.

slavery in Mauritania. But...there are organizations that say there is in order to receive funds. They say anything. Generally, it's the people who honestly are not very serious."⁶² In practice, the Mauritanian government cracks down on these organizations, seeing them as a political threat.

Recently, these groups have become more active within Mauritania's political system, with Biram Dah Abeid running as the primary opposition candidate in the June 2014 presidential elections.⁶³ These elections, however, represented the major problems of political exclusion in Mauritania. The Mauritanian government pushed forward with the elections despite a breakdown in dialogue between it and the major opposition parties. The main opposition parties boycotted the election, calling it an "electoral masquerade," noting that the organizers of the election were biased and that the electoral process was flawed, lacking sufficient transparency measures.⁶⁴ Official statistics report that 56% of Mauritians turned out to vote. Moreover, the election ran smoothly, with no evident fraud. Yet Biram Dah Abeid - the most successful opposition candidate - captured only 9% of the vote.⁶⁵ President Aziz won the election by a large margin. The elections did little to quell ethnic division and conflict.

⁶² Mohammed Ould El Kory (Director of Communications for TADAMOUN) in conversation with author, November 6, 2014. Author's translation.

⁶³ "Mauritania's president Abdel Aziz wins another term in disputed elections," *Euro News*, June 23, 2014, <http://www.euronews.com/2014/06/23/mauritania-s-president-abdelaziz-wins-another-term-in-disputed-elections/>. ; Mauritanian President Abdel Aziz easily re-elected in boycotted vote," *Reuters*, June 22, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mauritania-election-idUSKBN0EX12U20140622>. ; "Mauritania," *National Democratic Institute*, accessed November 20, 2015, <https://www.ndi.org/mauritania>. ;

"Mauritania's president Abdel Aziz wins another term in disputed elections," *Euro News*, June 23, 2014.

⁶⁴ "Mass protest in Mauritania rejects holding presidential elections," *Middle East Monitor*, June 5, 2014, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/africa/11905-mass-protest-in-mauritania-rejects-holding-presidential-elections>.

⁶⁵ "Haratin: Biram Dah Abeid Emerges As Main Rival In Presidential Election," *Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization*, June 18, 2014, <http://www.unpo.org/article/17245>.

Despite failing to win the election, Biram Dah Abeid became increasingly popular and the government considered his organization – IRA – a real threat to its political power. In response, the government has cracked down widely on civil society organizations. It has arrested Biram Dah Abeid multiple times, along with the senior staff of IRA. Most recently, the government arrested Biram and his vice president under counterterrorism laws for “belonging to an illegal organisation, leading an unauthorised rally, and violence against the police.”⁶⁶ Since their arrests, the IRA activists have been sentenced to two years in prison.⁶⁷

Counterterrorism, political exclusion, and the oppression of civil society are intertwined in Mauritania. The government continues to justify the imprisonment and torture of political threats such as the IRA leadership under the guise of security and counterterrorism. While the government’s targets have changed as Mauritanian leaders co-opt civil organizations into their political regimes, the persecution of civil society continues. The marginalized groups that benefit from these civil society organizations will be more likely to turn to VEOs to incite political and social change if they do not have a mechanism to do so within society.⁶⁸ In a 2012 report on insecurity in Mauritania, Boukhars noted that the only two Mauritanian suicide bombers were Haratin.⁶⁹ Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), he noted, “thrives on manipulating people who are

⁶⁶ Monica Mark, “Mauritania Activists jailed as police quash resurgent anti-slavery protests,” *The Guardian*, January 17, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jan/17/mauritania-anti-slavery-activists-jailed-biram-ould-abeid>.

⁶⁷ “Mauritania upholds conviction of anti-slave activists,” *Al Jazeera*, August 21, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/08/mauritania-upholds-conviction-anti-slave-activists-150821044245025.html>.

⁶⁸ Anouar Boukhars, “The Drivers of Insecurity in Mauritania,” *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, April 2012, 14, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/mauritania_insecurity.pdf.

⁶⁹ Boukhars, “The Drivers of Insecurity in Mauritania,” *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, April 2012, 14.

hungry for social justice.”⁷⁰ Similarly, scholars such as Ibrahim Yahaya Ibrahim note that violent extremist groups use the “pervasive marginality” and social fragmentation of oppressed groups in Mauritania to manipulate and recruit disenfranchised Mauritanian youth.⁷¹

As the Mauritanian government feels directly threatened by activists and members of the Haratin and Afro-Mauritanian ethnic groups, they will likely not implement sufficient reforms on their own. In order to effectively counter this threat to instability, the United States and other foreign actors assisting Mauritania must push the government to implement greater structural reforms to include these groups. In addition, the United States should implement initiatives such as the Peace Through Development (PDEV) program to empower these communities and foster discussion on issues of political participation and ethnic conflict.

Persecution of Islamists

Islamist parties in Mauritania pose a threat to the Mauritanian government not because they are Islamist but because they pose a major political threat. Increasingly, Islamist parties have become very popular among Mauritians, especially Mauritanian youth. They threaten the political status quo by increasing political participation and challenging the Mauritanian government’s cooperation with the West on

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibrahim Yahaya Ibrahim, “Managing the Sahelo-Saharan Islamic Insurgency in Mauritania,” *University of Florida Sahel Research Group*, 19.

counterterrorism.⁷² Nevertheless, they also strongly condemn Al Qaeda and are vital in the de-radicalization of Mauritanian youth.⁷³

The Mauritanian government only accepts Islamist parties who align themselves with the political status quo and who do not pose a significant threat. In the past, Islamist popularity and criticism of the government's policies posed a significant threat. In response, Aziz and past presidents used counter-extremism measures to justify excluding Islamists from political participation and for targeting political opposition. President Taya, Mauritania's dictator from 1992 to 2005, and Colonel Vall, who deposed President Taya, both targeted Islamists as part of their respective counterterrorism strategies. Under Taya, it was evident that imprisoning, torturing, and intimidating Islamists, though nominally a counterterrorism strategy, served to eliminate Islamist political opposition.⁷⁴

The Mauritanian government only minimally accepted Islamist participation in politics after the legalization of the main Islamist party and Aziz's rise to power. When President Abdallahi legalized the Islamists' main political party, the National Rally for Reform and Development (Tawassoul), as part of his democratic reforms, this posed a significant threat to the power of the military and Mauritanian elite.⁷⁵ This was a major factor leading up to the coup against Aballahi. The Mauritanian government only officially accepted Tawassoul once the party supported Aziz after he deposed

⁷² Alex Thurston, "Mauritania's Islamists," *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, March 2012, 4. http://carnegieendowment.org/files/mauritania_islamists.pdf.

⁷³ Ibid, 3.

⁷⁴ "Mauritania: The Case of the 'Islamists': Torture in the Name of the Fight Against Terrorism," *International Federation for Human Rights*, September 2007, 16, <https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/Mauritanie479ang.pdf>.

⁷⁵ Thurston, "Mauritania's Islamists," *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, March 2012, 15. ; Boukhars, "Mauritania's Precarious Stability and Islamist Undercurrent," February 2016, 7.

Abdallahi.⁷⁶ Since then, however, the party has served as one of the main opposition forces in government, boycotting the 2014 elections but winning many seats in government in other years.⁷⁷ If Tawassoul becomes a significant threat to Aziz's power, it may once again face political exclusion and persecution.

The inclusion of Islamists in politics and civil society is highly important for counterterrorism, as these groups provide an outlet for moderate discussion of Islam and contribute to the de-radicalization of Mauritanian youth. As Islamists and VEOs recruit from the same demographics, eliminating Islamist parties gives greater opportunities to VEOs to recruit Mauritanian youth. With an increasing radicalization of Mauritanian youth, it is vital for Islamist groups to have the freedom and capacity to promote moderate versions of Islam.⁷⁸

Poverty and Economic Inequality

As of 2014, only 56.8% of Mauritanian men ages 15-24 participated in the labor force.⁷⁹ In addition, 68% of the population lives along or below the poverty line, with a quarter of Mauritians living on less than USD 1.25 per day.⁸⁰ Mauritania ranks 156 out of 188 on the Human Development Index.⁸¹ According to Anouar Boukhars, "poverty, relative deprivation, endemic corruption, and historical abuse influence paths to violent

⁷⁶ Ibid, 8.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Thurston, "Mauritania's Islamists," *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, March 2012, 16.

⁷⁹ "Labor force participation rate for ages 15-24, male (%)" (modeled ILO estimate), *The World Bank*, accessed April 3, 2016,

<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.ACTI.1524.MA.ZS/countries/MR?display=graph>.

⁸⁰ "Mauritania," *World Food Programme*, accessed April 4, 2016,

<https://www.wfp.org/countries/mauritania>.

⁸¹ "Human Development Reports," *United Nations Development Programme*, accessed December 1, 2015.

extremism.”⁸² These groups provide income opportunities and the ability for disenfranchised citizens to be part of a mission bigger than themselves. Unemployment and economic inequality made several groups, specifically unemployed youth, sympathetic to arguments that complete Islamization of society would solve Mauritania’s problems.

In Mauritania, relative deprivation and economic inequality are the most prevalent economic factors driving Mauritians to join violent extremist organizations. While many live in extreme poverty, the White Arab caste still owns a majority of the wealth and power.⁸³ They have greater access to capital and greater support from the government. This combination of immense poverty among all groups and extreme inequality between ethnic groups drives the marginalized ethnic groups to radicalization.⁸⁴

A lack of economic opportunity makes youth particularly susceptible to VEO recruitment. As has been demonstrated by the Pew Research Center, USAID, and several notable scholars, a country’s overall economic income or growth does not make it more or less susceptible to violent extremism.⁸⁵ However, high levels of income inequality have been linked to greater levels of terrorist activity and recruitment. In a study conducted by Tim Kreiger at the University of Freiburg, the scholars found that a higher level of income inequality had a significant positive correlation with terrorist activity (measured by the number of terrorist attacks and terrorist victims in the country

⁸² Boukhars, “Mauritania’s Precarious Stability and Islamist Undercurrent,” February 2016, 9.

⁸³ Sutter, “Slavery’s Last Stonghold,” *CNN*.

⁸⁴ Tim Krieger and Daniel Meirrieks, “Does income inequality lead to terrorism?” *University of Freiburg*, July 2010, 4.

⁸⁵ “Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism,” *USAID*, February 2009, 11.
http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnadt978.pdf.

regardless of nationality).⁸⁶ While there has been significant disagreement over the impact of poverty on terrorism, there has been increasing consensus that poverty is a significant factor in terrorist activity when combined with other problems “like violations of political rights, institutional inefficacy, and corruption.”⁸⁷

A significant number of Mauritians who become terrorists originally joined criminal networks to gain a source of income in the face of unemployment and disenfranchisement.⁸⁸ VEOs are often more attractive than organized crime, as they offer Mauritians, specifically Mauritanian youth, a chance to overthrow the corrupt governments in place and even atone for the sins in their criminal past in addition to benefitting economically.⁸⁹ Extremists convince Mauritians that Mauritania’s endemic poverty and corruption are a direct result of deviating from the right Islamic path.⁹⁰ By joining these terrorist networks, Mauritians can alleviate their own economic woes and, in their eyes, reform Mauritania’s unjust and fraudulent institutions.⁹¹

Political Corruption and Organized Crime

The Mauritanian government is rife with corruption. In Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index, which “ranks countries/territories based on how corrupt a country’s public sector is perceived to be,” Mauritania ranked 112 out of 168 countries. Transparency International gave Mauritania a score of only 31 out of 100,

⁸⁶ Krieger and Meirrieks, 4.

⁸⁷ Bridget L. Coggins, “Does State Failure Cause Terrorism? An Empirical Analysis (1999 – 2008),” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (2014), 4.

⁸⁸ Boukhars, “The Drivers of Insecurity in Mauritania,” *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, April 2012, 16-17.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

with 0 indicating the most corrupt globally and 100 indicating the least.⁹² Anouar Boukhars has similarly noted in his research that all of his interviewees identified pervasive corruption as one of the main drivers of dissatisfaction and tension among Mauritians.⁹³

The management of resources and dispersion of power is highly clientelistic, feeding corruption and hindering wealth creation.⁹⁴ Tribal and ethnic affiliations form the basis for this clientelist system.⁹⁵ If the president wants to punish deviant politicians or members of the elite, he will exclude them from this clientelist network and the resources it provides.⁹⁶ Within natural resource management, this clientelism leads to inefficient use of Mauritania's natural resources. Mauritians see their country's resources, specifically its abundance of fish and iron, and become frustrated with the dire poverty and underdevelopment of their nation.⁹⁷ The clientelism only benefits those of the White Arab class. As a result, the fight over Mauritania's resources is steadily becoming a game of "us-versus-them."⁹⁸ In turn, those excluded from the share of resources and political power turn to VEOs as a way to access wealth or potentially to overthrow those in power.⁹⁹

⁹² "Mauritania," *Transparency International*, accessed April 1, 2016,

https://www.transparency.org/country/#MRT_DataResearch_SurveysIndices.

⁹³ Boukhars, "The Drivers of Insecurity in Mauritania," *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, April 2012, 4.

⁹⁴ Miguel Hernando de Larramendi, "Mauritania's challenges," in *Political Regimes in the Arab World: Society and the Exercise of Power*, ed. Ferran Izquierdo Brichs (New York: Routledge, 2013), 123.

⁹⁵ Boris Samuel, "Economic calculations, instability and (in)formalization of the state in Mauritania, 2003-2011," *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* 35, no. 1 (2014): 79.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁹⁷ Ibrahim Yahaya Ibrahim, "Managing the Sahelo-Saharan Islamic Insurgency in Mauritania," *Sahel Research Working Group* 3 (August 2014): 18.

⁹⁸ Boukhars, "Mauritania's Precarious Stability and Islamist Undercurrent," February 2016, 3.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

Corruption also exacerbates ethnic tension. Corrupt and clientelist governments that grant resources only to their supporters on the basis of ethnicity or identity strengthen the importance of ethnic or tribal affiliations. When those in power grant resources and power to those within their own ethnic group, outside ethnic groups can only gain those resources and positions by coming into power themselves.¹⁰⁰ In consequence, ethnic or tribal groups may resort to terrorist activities to achieve this goal of removing the political elites in power.¹⁰¹ This is especially common in regions rife with intrastate conflict. VEOs are able to capitalize on ethnic grievances to recruit new members and justify violence.¹⁰²

Members of the Mauritanian government have allowed organized crime networks to continue if they benefit members of the government elite. Illicit flow of goods has been common throughout the region. By capturing these flows, state officials can privately benefit. However, private capture of the profit from goods transport does not benefit the state.¹⁰³ In fact, state collusion with organized crime undermines state stability and supports the drug and weapons trade.¹⁰⁴ This trade often incidentally supports terrorist networks both by forming new recruits and paying the terrorist groups for secure transit across VEO territory.¹⁰⁵ For example, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the current leader of al-

¹⁰⁰ William Ascher, "Development Strategies and Violence," in *Development Strategies and Inter-Group Violence*, ed. William Ascher and Natalia Mirovitskaya, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 4.

¹⁰¹ Martha Crenshaw, "The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Strategic Choice," in *Terrorism in Perspective*, ed. Sue Mahan and Pamala Griset (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2008), 25.

¹⁰² Corinne Graff, "Poverty, Development, and Violent Extremism in Weak States," in *Confronting Poverty: Weak States and U.S. National Security*, ed. Susan Rice, Corrine Graff, and Carlos Pascual (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2010), 46.

¹⁰³ Wolfram Lacher, "Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region," *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, September 2012, 4, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/sahel_sahara.pdf.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

Maraboutines and one of the historically leading figures in AQIM, began his career running a cigarette smuggling network across the Sahel.¹⁰⁶

Corruption undermines state capacity. The Mauritanian government does not have the capacity to govern all of its territory or provide basic services for its population.¹⁰⁷ It is largely underfunded, lacking the technology and manpower needed to regulate its large swaths of sparse landmass or provide basic social services to those it governs.¹⁰⁸ Lack of governance over swaths of territory also strengthens terrorist activity and recruitment. Poor governance allows VEOs to recruit and gain legitimacy, as the state is not able to enforce laws effectively or retain its monopoly on the use of force.¹⁰⁹ When a government does not effectively control large areas of its country or properly monitor its borders, criminal and terrorist networks penetrate these states.¹¹⁰ This has been especially common across sub-Saharan Africa and has allowed internationally sponsored terrorist networks to use politically weak regions as operational bases.¹¹¹ As states lose authority over areas within their territory, the citizens within those areas may follow or be forced to follow the authority of armed groups/VEOs in the area. These criminal and terrorist networks then set up informal economies and tax the citizens in that area.¹¹² This considerably increases the strength and power of these groups.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 5.

¹⁰⁷ Cedric Jourde, "Sifting Through the Layers of Insecurity in the Sahel: The Case of Mauritania," *Africa Center for Strategic Studies* 15 (September 2011): 2.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Krieger and Meirrieks, 7.

¹¹⁰ Monika Fancois and Inder Sud, "Promoting Stability and Development in Fragile and Failed States," *Development Policy Review* 24, no. 2 (2006): 145.

¹¹¹ Tiffany Howard, "Failed States and the Spread of Terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 33, no. 11 (October 2010), 960.

¹¹² Krieger and Meirrieks, 10.

This corruption acts as an incentive for Mauritians, particularly Mauritanian youth, to join violent extremist organizations. As a small group of political elite accumulate resources and power, Mauritians do not see mechanisms for change within their government or civil society. As a result, they are more likely to turn to VEOs and criminal networks to gain access to resources or disrupt Mauritania's regime. Ironically, Mauritania's elite support these same criminal networks. This web of corruption in Mauritania leads to a disenfranchised population, inefficiency in resource use, and the greater likelihood for radicalization of Mauritanian citizens. Without tackling this corruption, counterterrorism efforts will not tackle a major root of extremism in Mauritania.

Ineffective Creation and Implementation of Laws

There is little due process or effective application of the law in any area of Mauritania's judicial system. Notably, Mauritania does not effectively prosecute those who abuse human rights, specifically those who violate the rights of women and other marginalized groups. Mauritania only made slavery punishable by law in 2007 and has yet to effectively criminalize violence against women.¹¹³ Even when there are laws on the books to prosecute violations of human rights, the judicial system does not execute them in court. Lalla Aicha Cheikhou Ouédraogo, President of the Committee of Solidarity with

¹¹³ Mohamed Yahya Abdel Wedoud, "Rape victims fear being jailed in Mauritania," CNN, December 22, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/africa/12/21/mauritania.rape/>.

the Victims of Human Rights Violations, has emphasized that the primary problem is the lack of application of existing laws.¹¹⁴

Until recently, there was no adequate law criminalizing slavery. In 2015, the Mauritanian government established a new anti-slavery law that sentences an offender to 20 years in prison, effectively doubling the previous jail sentence. The law also combats ten other types of slavery, including child marriage and forced marriage of widows.¹¹⁵ However, it remains unclear whether the government and law enforcement will effectively execute the law.¹¹⁶ Many in Mauritania follow the Maliki School of Islamic law, and many within that school believe that Islam justifies slavery.¹¹⁷ As a result, it is more common for judges to release the slaver, often prosecuting the enslaved person instead, as they do not view slavery as a crime.¹¹⁸

When people cannot find justice in the traditional mechanisms of the state, they will turn elsewhere. Aminetou Ely, President of the Association of Women Heads of Families, cites Mauritania's weak judicial system as one of the major recruiting factors for violent extremist organizations: "Terrorism recruits among discriminated people, among poor people... among the people who do not have access to justice. They recruit among the slaves, because they do not have someone who listens to them. They are

¹¹⁴ Lalla Aicha Cheikhou Ouédraogo (President of the Committee of Solidarity with the Victims of Human Rights Violations) in conversation with author, November 3, 2014. Author's translation.

¹¹⁵ "Mauritania anti-slavery law welcomed by campaigners," *BBC News*, August 14, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33936243>.

¹¹⁶ "Mauritania new anti-slavery law: Effective enforcement is the key – UN rights expert." *United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner*, August 21, 2015, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16338&LangID=E>.

¹¹⁷ Boukars, "Mauritania's Precarious Stability and Islamist Undercurrent," *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 15.

¹¹⁸ Mark, "Mauritania Activists jailed as police quash resurgent anti-slavery protests," *The Guardian*.

victims of injustice.”¹¹⁹ When people cannot find mechanisms for change within their own legal systems, they may turn to more radical alternatives, such as acts of terrorism, to achieve their goals.¹²⁰ In order for the state to effectively combat terrorism, it must also combat the injustices that generate terrorism.¹²¹

Torture

The United Nations, academic scholars, and prominent NGOs such as Amnesty International have continuously called out Mauritania’s government for the use of torture by Mauritanian military and police. In February of this year, United Nations Human Rights expert Juan E. Mendez reported back from a ten-day investigation of Mauritanian military security facilities. During his investigation, Mendez found that cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment existed in all facilities he visited. He found that “the severity of the pain and suffering endured did constitute torture, such as in prolonged solitary confinement, or stress positions or severe beatings lasting several days.”¹²² While it is unclear whether Mendez was accusing the military or police of torture, both have been accused of torture in the past.

¹¹⁹ Aminetou Ely (President of the Association Women Heads of Households) in discussion with the author, October 3. Author’s translation.

¹²⁰ Boukhars, “The Drivers of Insecurity in Mauritania,” *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 14.

¹²¹ Aminetou Ely (President of the Association Women Heads of Households) in discussion with the author, October 3. Author’s translation.

¹²² “Mauritania: ‘Safeguards against torture must be made to work’ – UN rights experts urge,” *United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner*, February 3, 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=17009&LangID=E>.

Amnesty international has continued to condemn torture by police, military personnel, and prison officers.¹²³ In 2008, Amnesty International also found the Mauritanian government guilty of using torture against “all categories of prisoners in Mauritania.”¹²⁴ Amnesty International found that the authorities carried out torture in the police school, the first police brigade, the gendarmerie barracks, the headquarters of the Army Chief of Staff, and the naval base.¹²⁵ The organization recorded that in 2010, for example, Mauritanian soldiers burned and stabbed approximately 20 Malians arrested under charges of drug trafficking.¹²⁶ The group also found that both the military and police used torture to extract statements of guilt.¹²⁷ This was especially common in trials of alleged terrorists. After the detainee had been tortured and eventually signed a statement of guilt, the government would use the statement to sentence them in an immediate summary trial.¹²⁸

Under the Leahy Laws, America’s laws prohibiting security assistance to military units who have committed gross abuses of human rights, the United States cannot provide security assistance to military units or domestic law enforcement committing torture.¹²⁹ This investigation is only the most recent to demonstrate that the Mauritanian military, police, and prison guards continue to commit torture on a regular basis. In State’s 2014

¹²³ “Mauritania: Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review,” *Amnesty International*, November 2015, 4.

¹²⁴ “Mauritania: Government Guilty of Routine Torture,” December 3, 2008, *Amnesty International*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2008/12/mauritania-government-guilty-routine-torture-20081203/>.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ “Amnesty International Report 2011,” *Amnesty International*, 2011, 223.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ “Men, women and children tortured to confess to crimes in Mauritania,” *Amnesty International*, June 26, 2013, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2013/06/men-women-and-children-tortured-confess-crimes-mauritania/>.

¹²⁹ “Foreign Assistance Act of 1961,” *Congress Legal Counsel*, December 18, 2015, 171. <http://legcounsel.house.gov/Comps/Foreign%20Assistance%20Act%20Of%201961.pdf>.

Mauritania Human Rights Report (2014), the agency acknowledged that the allegations were credible.¹³⁰ While the State Department may be investigating these allegations and withdrawing training and support from the military units responsible, they have not done so openly.

It is important to combat torture by Mauritanian security forces, as abuse by security forces creates sympathy for terrorist organizations. Scholars, such as Boukhars, have also cited this torture and repression as a primary factor for radicalization of moderate Islamists and other activists.¹³¹ When combined with a lack of due process and the arrests of political opposition, torture and abuse creates sympathy for VEOs among the civilian population and justify the violent actions of terrorist groups.

Mauritania's Future

Political marginalization, ethnic inequality, and abuse of human rights are all interconnected, providing the ideal environment for terrorist recruitment and instability. Madame Laila Aicha Ouedraogo, the president of the Committee of Solidarity with Victims of Human Rights Violations, noted in an interview with the author that “the terrorists, they recruit often from the most vulnerable social groups. And the most vulnerable group is the slaves. The most vulnerable groups are the ethnic minorities, because they are very poor. Because they are discriminated against. They are

¹³⁰ “Mauritania 2014 Human Rights Report,” *Department of State*, accessed April 2, 2016, 3, <http://photos.state.gov/libraries/mauritania/231771/PDFs/MAUTITANIA-ENG-HR.pdf>.

¹³¹ Boukhars, “Mauritania’s Precarious Stability and Islamist Undercurrent,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, February 2016, 7.

marginalized. They cannot work easily.”¹³² Without tackling all of these problems holistically, each problem will undermine efforts to alleviate the others.

In Mauritania, President Aziz has not effectively combatted these problems. Aziz has reduced Mauritania’s absolute poverty, with the rate of economic growth averaging at over 5% each year since 2012.¹³³ In addition, he has improved the nation’s infrastructural development. However, his policies have contributed to the issues of ethnic inequality and human rights abuse. In addition, his main priority in both rhetoric and practice has been military strength and conventional counterterrorism. While this has alleviated many immediate terrorist threats, this will not tackle extremism and terrorism in Mauritania in the long term. The Mauritanian government will combat terrorism in the long term only by tackling its underlying social, political, and economic problems.

Mauritania has an increasing problem of radicalization among its youth (ages 16 to 24), driven largely by political dissatisfaction and extremist influences from local leaders.¹³⁴ From 2005-2011, there was a rise in terrorist activity in Mauritania. While President Aziz’s militarist counterterrorism policies were effective in countering terrorist activity in the short term, these policies only temporarily address the issues of radicalization and terrorism in Mauritania.¹³⁵ The state repression, discrimination, and poor governance that contributed to the initial radicalization of Mauritians still exist.¹³⁶

¹³² Madame Lailla Aicha Ouedraogo (the President of the Committee of Solidarity with Victims of Human Rights Violations) in conversation with author, November 3, 2014. Author’s translation.

¹³³ “Mauritania Country Brief,” *International Trade Center*.

¹³⁴ Ibrahim, “Managing the Sahelo-Saharan Islamic Insurgency in Mauritania,” *University of Florida Sahel Research Group*, August 2014, 17-18.

¹³⁵ Boukhars, “Mauritania’s Precarious Stability and Islamist Undercurrent,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, February 2016, 8.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 11.

Many point to Mali as an example for Mauritania's future if the underlying factors of extremism remain unaddressed.¹³⁷

In the years preceding the Tuareg rebellion and military coup in Mali, the nation was a leader and example for stability and democracy in the Sahel. It was as stable as Mauritania militarily and arguably more stable politically. Contrary to the regional trend of political leaders attempting to hold on to power, Malian President Amadou Toumani Touré was committed to respecting the constitution and stepping down from power.¹³⁸ U.S. administrations and non-governmental actors did not consider Mali at risk for a political coup.¹³⁹ Nevertheless, the root causes of extremism and discontent – poverty, inequality, ethnic tensions, and radicalization – undermined this stability and plunged Mali into chaos.¹⁴⁰ The influx of weapons from Libya after the fall of Gaddafi only acted as a catalyst for these grievances to become active political rebellion.¹⁴¹

Mali's devolution into political chaos has caused severe political crisis across the Sahel. It has created openings for AQIM, Ansar Dine, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA), and al-Maraboutines, granting them a greater foothold in the region. This crisis could have easily occurred in Mauritania. In fact, the conflict in Mali could represent Mauritania's future if the underlying causes of extremism and discontent remain. In order for Mauritania to avoid this same political chaos and radicalization of its

¹³⁷ Kristina Manson, "Mauritania 'vulnerable' to increase in Islamic extremism," *Financial Times*, April 13, 2014, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/9d154d56-bff0-11e3-b6e8-00144feabdc0.html#axzz45qflzJrv>.

¹³⁸ Adam Nossiter, "Soldiers Overthrow Mali Government in Setback for Democracy in Africa," *New York Times*, March 22, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/23/world/africa/mali-coup-france-calls-for-elections.html?_r=0.

¹³⁹ Alexis Arieff, "Crisis in Mali," *Congressional Research Service*, January 14, 2013, 4, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42664.pdf>.

¹⁴⁰ Stephanie Pezard and Michael Shurkin, "Toward a secure and stable northern Mali," *RAND Corporation*, accessed March 10, 2016, 2.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

population, it must address the underlying factors of impoverishment, abuse, marginalization, and corruption within Mauritanian society, economics, and politics

Chapter 2: Context for American Security Assistance

American Interest in Mauritania

The United States remains engaged in the Sahel to counter the proliferation and growth of regional violent extremist organizations. VEOs have a foothold in the Sahara-Sahel region, as most Sahelian states are either submerged in political chaos (Mali) or remain incredibly fragile (Mauritania, Niger, and Chad). Experts on international strategy such as Joshua Burgess have emphasized that “the situation hints at a deepening geopolitical entropy that will only embolden violent factions.”¹⁴² The region acts as a bridge between sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa. The United States fears that instability in the Sahel could spread to fragile neighboring regions, thereby posing a greater threat to American interests.¹⁴³ The United States sees Mauritania as a key regional ally in counterterrorism and regional stability given Mauritania’s geographic position between North and Sub Saharan Africa. Once extremist organizations enter into North Africa, particularly Morocco, the fear is that they then have access to major European allies, specifically France and Spain. Frederic Wehrey of the Carnegie Endowment emphasized that Mauritania’s geographic position and landscape ensure that what happens in Mauritania does not stay in Mauritania.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Joshua C. Burgess, “No Time to Hit Snooze in North Africa and the Sahel,” *The Washington Institute*, February 10, 2014, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/no-time-to-hit-snooze-in-north-africa-and-the-sahel>.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Frederic Wehrey and Anouar, “Simmering Conflicts in the Sahara,” *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 10, 2013, <http://carneгиеendowment.org/2013/06/10/simmering-conflicts-in-sahara/g9oa>.

Poor governance, weak human rights, and a non-existent civil society have supported the proliferation and growth of violent extremist organizations. With the instability and conflict in Mali, it has become increasingly important to secure Mauritania's borders. Since Mali devolved into crisis, terrorist activity has increased in the Maghreb as a whole.¹⁴⁵ Among the insurgents, the United States government highlighted the leadership of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Ansar Dine, and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa.¹⁴⁶ Since then, VEOs have used the crisis in Mali to maintain a foothold in the region, using the country's internal strife to recruit militants and strengthen their organization.

Additionally, the continued instability in North Africa, specifically Libya, has added to Mauritania's strategic importance. If the United States does not counter terrorist groups in the Sahel, they could reestablish themselves in North Africa. This instability could then further spread beyond the Sahel through unsecured weapons transportation and the proliferation of extremist groups.¹⁴⁷ As a result, bolstering Mauritania's capacity to counter these groups and secure its borders has become a top American priority.

These VEOs pose an immediate threat to embassies and American personnel abroad. For example, the Department of State has alleged that the militants who attacked the American Embassy in Libya had connections to AQIM.¹⁴⁸ Hillary Clinton directly stated that the infamous attack "didn't happen in a vacuum" and was instead rooted in the Arab

¹⁴⁵ Benjamin Nickels, "Mali's Regional Ramifications," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 6, 2013, <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/?fa=52018>.

¹⁴⁶ Alexis Arieff, "Crisis in Mali," *Congressional Research Service*, January 14, 2013, 1. http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc490950/m1/1/high_res_d/R42664_2013Jan14.pdf.

¹⁴⁷ Cedric Jourde, "Sifting Through the Layers of Insecurity in the Sahel: The Case of Mauritania," *African Center for Strategic Studies* 15 (2011): 1. <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a550694.pdf>.

¹⁴⁸ Zachary Laub and Jonathon Masters, "Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)," *Council on Foreign Relations*, March 27, 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/al-qaeda-islamic-maghreb-aqim/p12717>.

world's recent revolutions and the instability in Mali that had created a "safe haven for terrorists."¹⁴⁹ President Obama similarly remarked that the main threat against the United States no longer comes from a central Al Qaeda leadership but instead from affiliated groups. While these groups are less likely to commit "9/11 style attacks against the homeland," they still pose significant threat to American personnel overseas and to U.S. interests abroad.¹⁵⁰

The Current Threat

While there are several other violent extremist organizations active in Mauritania and the Sahel, AQIM is the most prominent. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb is a Salafi-jihadist militant group that grew out of the Algerian Civil War. The group was first called the Armed Islamic Group (AIG) and later evolved to become the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat. In the early 2000s, the group aligned itself with Al-Qaeda in order to improve its recruiting and fundraising ability. It also aligned itself with Al-Qaeda in order to stage higher profile attacks.¹⁵¹ The group has claimed it wants to create an Islamic emirate encompassing the Sahel and the Maghreb.¹⁵² Largely because of its affiliation with Al Qaeda and its international rhetoric, AQIM has received the

¹⁴⁹ Michael R. Gordan, "Facing Congress, Clinton Defense Her Actions Before and After Libya Attacks," *The New York Times*, January 23, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/24/us/testifying-on-benghazi-clinton-cites-new-security-steps.html>; "Hilary Clinton: Benghazi Attack Didn't Happen in a Vacuum," *Fox News*, January 23, 2013, <http://insider.foxnews.com/2013/01/23/hillary-clinton-benghazi-attack-didnt-happen-in-a-vacuum>.

¹⁵⁰ "Remarks by the President at the United States Military Academy Commencement Ceremony," *The White House*, May 28, 2014, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/05/28/remarks-president-united-states-military-academy-commencement-ceremony>.

¹⁵¹ ¹⁵¹ Zachary Laub and Jonathon Masters, "Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)," *Council on Foreign Relations*, March 27, 2015.

¹⁵² Seth G. Jones, "A Persistent Threat: The Evolution of al Qaeda and Other Salafi Jihadists," *RAND Corporation*, 2014, 16. http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR600/RR637/RAND_RR637.pdf.

greatest amount of political attention among the Sahelian VEOs from Western media and scholars.

During the early 2000s, AQIM posed only a moderate threat to American interests as compared to other Al Qaeda affiliates and little threat to targets abroad. A RAND 2014 study classified the group as a “medium threat.” A medium threat classification indicates that while AQIM poses a threat to American facilities, embassies, and citizens overseas, it does not pose a threat to the U.S. homeland.¹⁵³ While the group has almost always had the capacity to attack the United States and its European enemies, it has not.¹⁵⁴ The study also demonstrated that AQIM conducted fewer attacks in the 2000s than any other Al Qaeda affiliate studied. According to the RAND Corporation, while other groups had increased their attacks, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb appeared to be less active.¹⁵⁵¹⁵⁶ Primarily, they focused on kidnapping foreigners.¹⁵⁷

During the early 2000s, AQIM also began to fracture. In 2012, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, a famous Algerian jihadist and an AQIM leader, split off from AQIM to establish the al-Mulathamun Battalion.¹⁵⁸ A senior counterterrorism official at the State Department at the time called Belmokhtar “a more adventurous, perhaps even more reckless operator than the A.Q.I.M. leadership has shown itself to be...and that translates

¹⁵³ Ibid, 40.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 57.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 35.

¹⁵⁶ The other affiliates mentioned include Jabhat al-Nusra, al Shabaab, Al Qaeda in Iraq, Al Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula, and Core Al Qaeda.

¹⁵⁷ Jones, 38.

¹⁵⁸ “Terrorist Designation of the al-Mulathamun Battalion,” *U.S. Department of State*, December 18, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/218880.html>.

into a threat.”¹⁵⁹ Less than a year after its creation, al-Mulathamun Battalion carried out a deadly attack on a gas plant in Algeria, killing 38 people (including three Americans).¹⁶⁰ Since then, the group formed an alliance with the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa, consolidating their resources and allowing them to carry out more attacks. The group, al-Mourabitines, has recently received media attention yet it poses one of the greatest threats to the region in recent years.

Most recently, the group has reestablished its relationship with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Together, these groups have carried out the two most recent attacks on luxury hotels in Mali and Burkina Faso.¹⁶¹ These groups working together pose a significantly greater threat to the security of foreigners and locals, the interests of the United States in the Sahel, and the security of Sahelian governments.¹⁶² The consolidation of regional VEOs poses a greater threat to Western and American interests, as these groups have become more focused on targeting Westerners and Western interests.¹⁶³ When each organization acted independently with its own mission, there was a significant threat to stability and human security in the region but a lower risk that these groups would carry out larger terrorist attacks. Now that several of these organizations are working together, this risk has increased. Media outlets, such as CNN and the New

¹⁵⁹ Michael R. Gordon, “State Dept. Warns of New Terrorist Group Posing Threat to U.S. Interests in Africa,” *New York Times*, December 18, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/19/world/africa/state-dept-warns-of-new-terrorist-group-posing-threat-to-us-interests-in-africa.html>.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Gordon, “State Dept. Warns of New Terrorist Group Posing Threat to U.S. Interests in Africa,” *New York Times*; “Mali hotel attack: security forces hunt more than three suspects,” *The Guardian*, November 21, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/21/mali-hotel-attack-armed-forces-hunt-bamako-al-mourabitounes>.

¹⁶² Gordon, “State Dept. Warns of New Terrorist Group Posing Threat to U.S. Interests in Africa,” *New York Times*.

¹⁶³ John Campbell and J. Peter Pham, “Does Washington Have a Stake in the Sahel,” *Council on the Foreign Relations*, January 14, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/africa-sub-saharan/does-washington-have-stake-sahel/p32195>.

York Times, have called the attacks proof that there is an “al Qaeda revival in Africa.”¹⁶⁴

There has also been increasing discussion in scholarship and the media over an Al-Qaeda/al-Mourabitines – ISIS rivalry over recruits and international attention.¹⁶⁵

In 2016 alone, AQIM, al-Maraboutines, and MUJWA have staged attacks in Burkina Faso, Cote D’Ivoire, Mali, and Niger. If West African and foreign governments do not effectively address the underlying factors that strengthen these groups, these VEOs will only get stronger. Instability in the region will worsen and attacks against national governments and Western targets will increase.

American Policy Towards Mauritania

The United States did not view Mauritania as a significant security partner until the attacks of September 11th and the subsequent expansion of the American war on terror. The United States was no longer able to maintain its primacy and security dominance through conventional deterrence. Instead, the United States determined it needed to fight transnational threats.¹⁶⁶ Africa quickly became the Bush administration’s secondary theater in the war on terror, rooting out safe havens for terrorists.¹⁶⁷

Before 9/11 occurred and the United States established the Pan-Sahel Initiative, the United States placed little emphasis on Mauritania as a strategic partner. While the United States supported Mauritanian security efforts, the United States also suspended

¹⁶⁴ Tim Lister, “Burkina Faso attack demonstrates al Qaeda revival in Africa,” *CNN*, January 16, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/16/world/burkina-faso-attack-al-qaeda/>; Dionne Searcey, Eric Schmitt, and Rukmini Callimachi, “Al Qaeda’s Branch in Africa Makes a Lethal Comeback,” *New York Times*, March 15, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/16/world/africa/al-qaedas-african-offshoot-makes-a-lethal-comeback.html?_r=0.

¹⁶⁵ Jared Malsin, “What to Know About the Deadly ISIS vs. al-Qaeda Rivalry,” *Time*, November 24, 2015, <http://time.com/4124810/isis-al-qaeda-rivalry-terror-attacks-mali-paris/>.

¹⁶⁶ Ryan, 368.

¹⁶⁷ Ryan, 370-371.

that support in the face of severe human rights abuse. In 1991, the United States suspended its International Military and Education Training (IMET) funding to Mauritania as a result of the systematic imprisonment and subsequent deaths of hundreds of Mauritania's black political prisoners.¹⁶⁸ This was in the wake of the Mauritanian government's deportation of tens of thousands of its Afro-Mauritanian citizens to Senegal.¹⁶⁹ At the time, the United States and Mauritania were on opposing sides of the Gulf War, and the United States had little reason to provide security assistance to the Mauritanian regime.¹⁷⁰ According to the State Department, Mauritania later "turned away from Iraq and towards the West" in the late 1990s, thereby improving its relationship with the United States.¹⁷¹

With 9/11 and the start of the war on terror, the United States placed a greater emphasis on Mauritania and other periphery nations in security partnerships. As the American government increased the salience of these partnerships, it became less likely that the United States would suspend aid in the face of human rights abuses. In fact, the Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI) – the predecessor to the TSCTP – did not include economic development, governance, human rights, or other social reforms in its mandate.¹⁷² The start of the PSI also marked a shift towards offensive military training of national forces in the Sahel.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch, *Mauritania's Campaign of Terror: State-Sponsored Repression of Black Africans* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1994), 147.

¹⁶⁹ "Mauritania," *U.S. Department of State*, accessed March 10, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/mauritania/85037.htm>.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Lianne Kennedy Boudali, "The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership," *The Combating Terrorism Center*, April 2007, 4, <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a466542.pdf>.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

During the Pan-Sahel Initiative (2001-2004), President Maaouya Sid Ahmed Taya ruled Mauritania. His regime enacted brutal policies. As Mauritania became increasingly important to the American government in the war on terror, Taya used counterterrorism as an excuse to hunt down political dissidents including Islamists, anti-slavery activists, and democratic opposition parties.¹⁷⁴ Some organizations have alleged a link between American security assistance and state oppression in Mauritania. The International Federation for Human Rights specifically alleged that the Taya regime increased state oppression in order to receive American military and economic support:

The most widespread and credible analyses showed the necessity for the former president, Ould Taya, to exaggerate the Islamist threat to demonstrate action in the global fight against terrorism and thus attract the good graces of the United States for economic and military support. This posturing also served as a pretext to stifle all forms of protests and oppositions of power. In search of international legitimacy after its coup d'Etat on 5 August 2005, the CMJD seems to have followed this strategy to strengthen power that was illegally obtained.¹⁷⁵

This does not imply that the United States knew the extent of the Taya regime's brutality when it provided the nation with military aid. However, this demonstrates that the United States has already inadvertently supported an abusive regime in Mauritania because it did not effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of its policies. While Taya lost power in a 2005 military coup, the current regime maintains oppressive policies, including the use of torture.¹⁷⁶

Since then, the United States has supported the Mauritanian regime and military despite their appalling human rights records, with the exception of aid suspension

¹⁷⁴ Anouar Boukhars, "Mauritania's Precarious Stability and Islamist Undercurrent," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, February 2016, 6-7.

¹⁷⁵ "Mauritania: The Case of the 'Islamists': Torture in the Name of the Fight Against Terrorism," *International Federation for Human Rights*, 30.

¹⁷⁶ Hannah Armstrong, "Torture Against Terrorism," *The New York Times*, May 7, 2013, http://latitude.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/05/07/fighting-terrorism-in-mauritania-even-it-means-torture/?_r=0.

immediately following military coups. Immediately following the 2008 coup against Mauritania's democratically elected government, the United States froze all non-humanitarian aid.¹⁷⁷ After General Aziz held (and won) elections in 2009, the United States, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, World Bank, and others resumed ties and aid to the country.¹⁷⁸ Since then, the United States has maintained security assistance to Mauritania, specifically through the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership.

Currently, Mauritania receives significant funding given its proximity to the crisis in Mali and the presence of AQIM in its northern territory.¹⁷⁹ Within the TSCTP, Mauritania has received the second greatest amount of funding. Between 2009 and 2013, Mali received the greatest amount of TSCTP funds at \$40.6 million.¹⁸⁰ Mauritania followed closely behind, receiving \$34.5 million.¹⁸¹ Due to the crisis in Mali, the United States places a heavier security emphasis on Mauritania in comparison to other countries within the TSCTP. As a result, the Mauritanian government has been able to avoid human rights programs implemented in other TSCTP nations.

While the American government created the TSCTP to embody a whole of government approach to counterterrorism, the TSCTP is not a "whole of government" program in practice. The TSCTP in Mauritania suffers from a lack of effective

¹⁷⁷ "US halt aid over Mauritania coup," *BBC News*, August 8, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7548866.stm>.

¹⁷⁸ "AFRICOM POSTURE STATEMENT: Ward Reports Annual Testimony to Congress," *United States Africa Command*, March 9, 2010, <http://www.africom.mil/NewsByCategory/Article/7245/africom-posture-statement-ward-reports-annual-test>; "NATO resumes cooperation with Mauritania," *Reuters*, September 25, 2009, <http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFJOE58O0E120090925>.

¹⁷⁹ Martin F. Kindl, "AFRCOM'S ROLE IN INTERAGENCY COUNTERTERRORISM EFFORTS: AN ASSESSMENT IN 3D," *Naval War College*, 6, <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a535418.pdf>.

¹⁸⁰ "Combating Terrorism: U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management," *Government Accountability Office*, June 2014, 15, <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-14-518>.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

coordination between State and DOD. Specifically, American policy in Mauritania overemphasizes the security threat and its security response without giving due attention to the human rights issues that foster extremism. While the Department of Defense implements strict, regional training programs, USAID and the State Department have not implemented mandatory programming or maintained the same consistency in programming. While USAID and State have lower funding and fewer resources than the Department of Defense, they are in charge of all monitoring and evaluation for human rights and development programs (with the exception of those directly created by DOD). As a result, State and USAID do not have the capacity to effectively monitor and develop all of their programs.

Chapter 3: Failures in “Whole of Government” Counterterrorism

American Interests

The American government fights terrorism abroad first and foremost to protect its citizens at home and around the world.¹⁸² American domestic attitudes have helped sustain the American government’s efforts in the war on terror. Pew Research has demonstrated in recent studies that Americans remain highly concerned over the potential for a terrorist attack on American soil. These concerns are reinforced by terrorist attacks against Western targets abroad. Pew Research recorded that nearly as many Americans feared an attack against the U.S. would come “soon” immediately following the Paris shootings as did immediately following 9/11.¹⁸³ More Americans than ever before (62%) also say they are “very concerned” about the rise of Islamic extremism globally.¹⁸⁴ Finally, a Gallup poll recorded that 79% of Americans currently see international terrorism as a critical threat to “the vital interests of the United States in the next ten years.”¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² “The President Speaks at the National Counterterrorism Center,” *The White House*, December 17, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2015/12/17/president-speaks-national-counterterrorism-center>.

¹⁸³ “Terrorism Worries Little Changed; Most Give Government Good Marks for Reducing Threat,” *Pew Research Center*, January 12, 2015, <http://www.people-press.org/2015/01/12/terrorism-worries-little-changed-most-give-government-good-marks-for-reducing-threat/>.

¹⁸⁴ “Growing Concern about Rise of Islamic Extremism at Home and Abroad,” *Pew Research Center*, September 10, 2014, <http://www.people-press.org/2014/09/10/growing-concern-about-rise-of-islamic-extremism-at-home-and-abroad/>.

¹⁸⁵ “War on Terrorism,” *Gallup*, accessed February 18, 2016, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/5257/war-terrorism.aspx>.

The United States also provides security assistance largely to maintain its global sphere of influence. Security partnerships give the United States the relationships, resources, and historical precedents it can leverage to secure policies beneficial to its own interests.¹⁸⁶ Even in areas remote from the United States and with little relevance to current American objectives, the United States preserves some presence, specifically in regards to security, in case a crisis occurs.¹⁸⁷ The United States 2015 Military Strategy, for example, stated that the United States remains committed to “projecting global influence” and that the United States does not have the luxury of focusing on only one region or issue – all are interconnected and vital to American interests.¹⁸⁸ This is specifically relevant for regions that are highly susceptible to coercion by more powerful states and regions that have the potential to become conflict zones. This has been shown in American involvement in Africa and Asia, where the United States continues to demonstrate its military and economic presence in order to balance Chinese interests and to ensure regional stability.¹⁸⁹

American Goals

The primary goal of American foreign security assistance programs intended to combat global terrorism is to ensure that recipients are self-sufficient and successful in

¹⁸⁶ Andrew J. Shapiro, “A New Era for U.S. Security Assistance,” *The Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2012): 30-32.

¹⁸⁷ Jeremy Shapiro, “Defending the defensible: The value of spheres of influence in U.S. foreign policy,” *Brookings Institution*, March 11, 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/order-from-chaos/posts/2015/03/11-defending-indefensible-spheres-of-influence-us-foreign-policy-shapiro>.

¹⁸⁸ “The National Military Strategy of the United States of America,” *Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 13, http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/2015_National_Military_Strategy.pdf.

¹⁸⁹ Lloyd Thrall, “China’s Expanding African Relations,” *RAND Corporation*, 2015, 89. http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR900/RR905/RAND_RR905.pdf.

countering and preventing terrorism.¹⁹⁰ This is impossible when a government is seen as illegitimate or ineffective. A government's loss of legitimacy and a population's extreme dissatisfaction with its government provide an ideal environment for terrorist activity. If a state is unable to maintain order and provide basic services, the nation's standard of living remains low or deteriorates, and the population has no governmental mechanisms to redress these issues.¹⁹¹ This disaffected population is highly susceptible to violent extremist organization (VEO) recruitment, as they have to seek other ways of receiving basic social protections and services.¹⁹² This is especially pertinent in countries without an active civil society. When a government has marginalized civil society organizations while failing to provide needed social services, it drives its population to join extremist organizations and criminal networks that can provide such services.¹⁹³

Weak social services, underdeveloped judicial systems, and security services' abuses of human rights intertwine with security threats, creating greater opportunities for terrorism and weakening the state. As a result, the U.S. must effectively respond to these issues to fully combat terrorism. Human rights programs in U.S. counterterrorism efforts have taken the form of "multifaceted" strategies that assist governments in strengthening "immediate and longer term capabilities."¹⁹⁴ These programs encompass multiple

¹⁹⁰ "Fact Sheet: U.S. Security Sector Assistance Policy," *The White House*, April 5, 2013, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/04/05/fact-sheet-us-security-sector-assistance-policy>.

¹⁹¹ Robert I. Rotberg, "Failed States in a World of Terror," *Foreign Affairs*, August 2002, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2002-07-01/failed-states-world-terror>.

¹⁹² Edward Newman, "Exploring the 'Root Causes' of Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29, no. 8 (2006): 752.

¹⁹³ Eric Werker and Faisal Ahmed, "What Do Non-Governmental Organizations Do?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 8, no. 41 (May 2007): 5.

¹⁹⁴ "Programs and Initiatives," *U.S. Department of State*, accessed September 20, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/programs/>.

agencies, notably the Department of State, the Department of Defense, and USAID.¹⁹⁵ In theory, these interagency programs are the answer to addressing both human rights and security in counterterrorism. In practice, these programs suffer from limited resources and a lack of coordinated strategy among agencies. Increasingly, American security assistance has come under criticism for being largely ineffective. The Brookings Institution stated that American security assistance has been applied too broadly, rewarded bad behavior, and failed to enforce accountability mechanisms. As a result, American security assistance has not been effectively used as leverage for greater political reforms or as a tool to effectively promote security in developing nations.¹⁹⁶ Similarly, the Center for New American Security has argued that security partnerships and assistance programs have become an end in themselves, with little examination of the true efficacy of security assistance in achieving America's strategic goals.¹⁹⁷

For the FY 2015, the Department of Defense received \$495.6 billion in discretionary funding.¹⁹⁸ In comparison, USAID and the State Department had to share \$40.3 billion. This gross inequality between DOD and the State department manifests in whole of government counterterrorism programs. This overemphasis on the Department of Defense and security undermines American security assistance to Mauritania. The Department of Defense has continuously swallowed human rights abuse, corruption,

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Gordon Adams and Richard Sokolsky, "Good money after bad: Time to overhaul U.S. security assistance," *Brookings Institution*, July 22, 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/order-from-chaos/posts/2015/07/22-overhaul-us-security-assistance-adams-sokolsky>.

¹⁹⁷ Dafna Rand and Stephen Tankel, "Security Cooperation and Assistance: Rethinking the Return on Investment," *Center for a New American Security*, August 2015, 22. http://www.cnas.org/sites/default/files/publications-pdf/CNAS%20Report_Security%20Cooperation_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁹⁸ "Fiscal Year 2015: Budget of the U.S. Government," *Office of Management and Budget*, 2015, 57. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/budget/fy2015/assets/budget.pdf>.

inequality, and ethnic conflict into its mission; however, its primary agenda does not focus on these topics. As a result, DOD personnel are unequipped to effectively combat these issues. In Mauritania, it has barely implemented programs to counter social, political, and economic problems. When the DOD does implement diplomacy and development programs, it does so through the lens of immediate security interest. Unfortunately, DOD takes on significantly more of these programs under its purview in counterterrorism efforts.¹⁹⁹ This takes away authority from State and USAID. In implementing social, economic, and political programs, DOD prioritizes short term results and short term response to security threats over long term stability and development.²⁰⁰ This undermines security in the long term.

Civilian Engagement and Humanitarian Assistance

When these factors of state weakness, inequality, and ethnic tension come together in one setting, they create a perfect environment for terrorist activities. In these cases, conflicting groups and violent extremist organizations are more likely to use terrorism as a tactic and are better able to convince others to do the same.²⁰¹ USAID attempts to mitigate these problems by engaging civilians in dialogue with each other and the government, as well as providing economic assistance to those in need.²⁰² The State Department's Bureau of African Affairs works directly with USAID on programs to

¹⁹⁹ Spear, "The Militarization of U.S. Foreign Aid," 29.

²⁰⁰ Taw, *Mission Revolution*, 171.

²⁰¹ Edward Newman, "Weak States, State Failure, and Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 4 (2007): 484.

²⁰² "FACT SHEET: U.S. Support for Peace, Security, and Countering Violent Extremism in Africa," *The White House*, July 27, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/07/27/fact-sheet-us-support-peace-security-and-countering-violent-extremism>.

reduce the appeal of joining VEOs. In Somalia and Kenya, the agencies use radio, theatre, music, social media, and local groups to spread messages countering the appeal of extremist organizations.²⁰³ The Bureau of African Affairs also has an Economic Support Fund to promote democratic participation, political reconciliation, and governance activities broadly.²⁰⁴ Similarly, in USAID's Peace Through Development II program, the agency assists youth in communities in Niger, Chad, and Burkina Faso. The program focuses on providing vocational and entrepreneurial skills, civic education, and forums for dialogue.²⁰⁵

Unfortunately, USAID and State do not receive enough support to maintain the monitoring, evaluation, and funding structures to sustain many of these programs. State and USAID programs receive less funding than is needed to achieve maximum utility and impact. For example, USAID in Mali did not receive funding in 2006. While the program received funding in 2005 and 2007, the lack of funds in 2006 caused the suspension of a peace-building program in Northern Mali. This caused the Malian government to question USAID's commitment to TSCTP activities in the country.²⁰⁶

Instead, the Department of Defense takes on the majority of development and social programming in Mauritania. The United States provides support for food and agriculture both through the Department of Defense and USAID. In comparison to

²⁰³ "Combating Terrorism: State Department Can Improve Management of East Africa Program," *Government Accountability Office*, June 2014, 13, <http://www.gao.gov/assets/670/664126.pdf>.

²⁰⁴ Combating Terrorism: State Department Can Improve Management of East Africa Program," *Government Accountability Office*, 38; "Economic Support Fund," *The Department of State*, accessed January 3, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/101425.pdf>.

²⁰⁵ "Peace Through Development II (PDEV II)," *USAID*, accessed March 2, 2016, <https://www.usaid.gov/west-africa-regional/fact-sheets/peace-through-development-ii-pdev-ii>.

²⁰⁶ "Combating Terrorism: Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership," *U.S. Government Accountability Office*, July 2008, 26. <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08860.pdf>.

USAID programming in other TSCTP countries, USAID in Mauritania does not focus at all on peacebuilding programs. The USAID efforts in Mauritania primarily involve food aid and poverty reduction. It appears that this is a direct result of the influx of Malian refugees into Mauritania after the start of the crisis in Mali. While USAID contributed as much as \$20.6 million in 2012, it only contributed \$3 million in food aid in FY 2016. All of this aid went directly to “Emergency” funding, with no money designated to development.²⁰⁷ The Department of Defense undertakes development and humanitarian assistance efforts through the AFRICOM Humanitarian Assistance Program. In Mauritania, this program undertook many of the activities conventionally under USAID. In 2013, for example, AFRICOM funded and implemented seven livestock inspection and vaccination facilities in Mauritania.²⁰⁸

While the United States makes conventional security programs mandatory in TSCTP countries, there is extreme leniency in the application of USAID and State programs. The American government also does not place sufficient priority on implementing these programs or providing humanitarian assistance. While Mauritania’s cooperation within the TSCTP should include the economic development, governance, and human rights areas of the TSCTP, there are few of these programs currently in place in Mauritania. In regards to peace building and community empowerment, DOD also takes on more of this programming in Mauritania. Mauritania was able to opt-out of USAID’s Peace Through Development program, creating its own vocational training

²⁰⁷ “Food Assistance Fact Sheet – Mauritania,” *USAID*, February 2, 2016, <https://www.usaid.gov/mauritania/food-assistance>.

²⁰⁸ “AFRICOM’s Humanitarian Assistance Program Helps Ranchers in Mauritania,” *United States Africa Command*, August 19, 2013, <http://www.africom.mil/NewsByCategory/article/10928/united-states-africa-commands-humanitarian-assistance-program-helps-ranchers-in-mauritania>.

program and accepting limited DOD social and political programming. Mauritania's opt-out of USAID's Peace Through Development program demonstrates the inequality between conventional security and human rights programs.

PDEV works on good governance, youth empowerment and integration, media outreach, and support to vulnerable communities.²⁰⁹ Before it ended, the program in Mauritania had targeted populations at-risk of recruitment from extremist organizations, helping to identify the drivers of extremism in Mauritania and direct TSCTP action accordingly.²¹⁰ In a 2011 USAID assessment report on the PDEV program, USAID noted that the program had been shut down in Mauritania due to "political changes."²¹¹ While the report indicated that USAID intended to restart the program, the agency could not.²¹²

According to USAID, the agency invited Mauritania to join the program in its second phase (PDEV II) from 2011 to 2016; however, Mauritania opted out, noting that it preferred bilateral assistance over multilateral programming.²¹³ Specifically, the Mauritanian government would not accept PDEV II's delegation to NGOs to administer the program.²¹⁴ To replace the Peace Through Development program, Mauritania installed a vocational training program through the Mauritanian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development (MAED). USAID and the Mauritanian government implement the program through a Limited Scope Grant Agreement (LSGA). Instead of USAID

²⁰⁹ Ibid 9

²¹⁰ Ibid, 38

²¹¹ "USAID/West Africa Peace Through Development (PDEV): Program Assessment Report," *USAID*, March 2011, 2. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pdacr829.pdf.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ "Combatting Terrorism: U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management," *Government Accountability Office*, 36.

²¹⁴ Lesley Anne Warner, "The Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership," *Center for Complex Operations*, March 2014, 51. <https://lesleyannewarner.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/tsctp-building-partner-capacity-to-counter-terrorism-and-violent-extremism2.pdf>.

directly managing the program, the Mauritanian government covers the costs of the program and then submits reimbursements to USAID.²¹⁵ In theory, giving the host government full control of a development program is a step in the right direction; however, the Mauritanian government is corrupt and actively excludes specific Mauritanian ethnic and social groups.²¹⁶ As a result, the program under Mauritanian authority is likely not as effective as it would be under direct USAID oversight.

The Peace Through Development program would likely have a great impact on counterterrorism efforts in Mauritania. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) noted that the program had made at least “moderate progress” in accessing marginalized populations. The GAO in fact recommended that the program be expanded, hinting that a suspension of the program could undermine U.S. objectives.²¹⁷ Mauritania’s current vocational program does not appear as expansive as the PDEV II program. There is no emphasis on youth empowerment, integration, or outreach to vulnerable populations. As a result, Mauritania’s program does not tackle the root causes of terrorism to the same extent as PDEV II.

In place of PDEV, DOD implements its own programming. For example, the Civil Military Support Elements (CMSE), Military Information Support Teams (MIST), and the Public Affairs Section (PAS) focus on promoting tolerance, pro-American sentiment, and moderate Islamic perspectives in Mauritania.²¹⁸ MIST and PAS recently considered implementing a national radio program in Mauritania to “promote tolerance

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 68.

²¹⁷ “Combating Terrorism: U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management,” *Government Accountability Office*, 22.

²¹⁸ Boiudali, “The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership,” 5. ; Warner, “The Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership,” 44.

and national unity.” The teams modeled this program after a similar, successful program implemented in Niger.²¹⁹ PAS also implemented a sports diplomacy program to keep Mauritanian youth away from terrorist recruitment.²²⁰ Broadly, these teams also put on events for local speakers espousing moderate viewpoints and capacity-building seminars for local militaries.²²¹ These programs, while beneficial, focus primarily on improving America’s image and promoting tolerance broadly without targeting the underlying problem of ethnic tension and disenfranchisement.

The United States has little programming on human rights and development in Mauritania and has largely excluded USAID and State from any programming. As a result, American counterterrorism efforts do not address the underlying judicial, governmental, and social problems driving extremism. This is not representative of the spirit or goals of the TSCTP and undermines American counterterrorism policy.

Human Rights Vetting

The State Department is also responsible for human rights vetting and human rights training goals for the Department of Defense in their programs with local forces. While a majority of the funding for the TSCTP does not fall under Leahy Law restrictions, the State Department and Department of Defense are generally expected to conduct human rights vetting in all of their military training. The State Department and embassies conduct the majority of the human rights vetting for military units that it then

²¹⁹ Warner, “The Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership,” 44.

²²⁰ Ibid, 48.

²²¹ Boiudali, “The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership,” 5.

communicates to the Department of Defense.²²² While DOD can conduct its own vetting, typically DOD personnel are uninvolved in the process after they submit names to the State Department for vetting.²²³ As a result, the majority of the work for vetting these military units falls entirely on the Department of State even though the Department of State has significantly less funding and capacity than the Department of Defense. As a result, the State Department has not effectively implemented Leahy Law vetting processes within all of its embassies, providing significantly outdated information to much of its staff.

The Leahy Laws are an example of the tension between security and human rights. According to the Government Accountability Office, the Leahy Laws were “intended to encourage accountability and professionalism in foreign security forces by leveraging U.S. assistance to encourage foreign governments to prevent human rights violations and hold violators accountable.”²²⁴ Under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, the term “gross violations of internationally recognized human rights” includes torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, prolonged detention without charges and trial, causing the disappearance of persons by the abduction and clandestine detention of those persons, and other flagrant denial of the right to life, liberty, or the security of person.²²⁵ In theory, the Leahy Laws are an example of the American Congress leveraging security assistance to deter foreign militaries from committing gross abuses of human rights. However, the American government has demonstrated that in

²²² Serafino et al., “‘Leahy Law’ Human Rights Provisions and Security Assistance: Issue Overview,” *Congressional Research Service*, January 29, 2014, 14. <https://www.fas.org/spp/crs/row/R43361.pdf>.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 7.

²²⁴ “Additional Guidance, Monitoring, and Training Could Improve Implementation of the Leahy Laws,” *Government Accountability Office*, September 2013, 24. <http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/658107.pdf>.

²²⁵ “Human Rights: Additional Guidance, Monitoring, and Training Could Improve Implementation of the Leahy Laws,” *Government Accountability Office*, September 2013, 24.

countries facing immediate security - specifically terrorist - threats within or at their borders, the U.S. government provides those countries with security assistance without the Leahy Law conditions.

Under the Leahy Laws, security assistance includes any training, equipment, or any other support to military forces.²²⁶ The Leahy Laws attempt to restrict American support to abusive militaries by making it illegal for the State Department or Department of Defense to provide training, funding, or equipment to military units who have committed gross abuses of human rights.²²⁷ The definition of “unit” has since been specified to mean “the smallest operational group in the field that has been implicated in the reported violation.”²²⁸ The State and DOD Leahy Laws apply to Foreign Military Sales (FMS), Foreign Military Financing (FMF), International Military Education and Training (IMET), Peacekeeping Operations (PKO), Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET), and assistance funded by the Combatant Commander’s Initiative Fund.²²⁹ However, the laws do not apply to International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INCLE) funds and Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining and Related Programs (NADR) funds.²³⁰ While Congress has not stated their reasoning explicitly, these two programs are likely exempt from Leahy Law vetting because they respond directly to security threats. The State Department highlights that INCLE funds are used “where

²²⁶ Rand and Tankel, “Security Cooperation and Assistance: Rethinking the Return on Investment,” 12.

²²⁷ “Human Rights,” *Patrick Leahy: U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont*, accessed February 20, 2016, <http://www.leahy.senate.gov/issues/human-rights>.

²²⁸ “Senate Report 107-058- Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriation Bill, 2002,” *The Library of Congress*, accessed March 2, 2016, http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/cpquery/?&dbname=cp107&sid=cp107QsiiF&refer=&r_n=sr058.107&item=&sel=TOC_167137&.

²²⁹ Serafino et al., “‘Leahy Law’ Human Rights Provisions and Security Assistance: Issue Overview,” 5.

²³⁰ Serafino et al., “‘Leahy Law’ Human Rights Provisions and Security Assistance: Issue Overview,” 5.

security situations are most dire.”²³¹ Similarly, NADR funds go directly to non-proliferation and anti-terrorism projects –vital American security priorities.²³²

While referred to generally as “the Leahy Law(s),” there is one Leahy Law for the Department of Defense and another for the Department of State.²³³ The first set of Leahy Laws, established in the 1990s, amended the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.²³⁴ A similar amendment was added to the Defense Appropriations Act.²³⁵ The laws established conditions for providing foreign security assistance, including assistance to antiterrorism operations.²³⁶ Under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, the United States also cannot provide assistance to “the police, domestic intelligence, or similar law enforcement forces of a country” if there is credible information that they are committing gross abuses of human rights.²³⁷

Under section 620M of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, “No assistance shall be furnished under this Act or the Arms Export Control Act to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country if the Secretary of State has credible information that such unit has committed a gross violation of human rights.”²³⁸ A similar clause exists under Section 8057 of the Defense Appropriations Act: “None of the funds made available by this Act may be used for any training, equipment, or other assistance for a unit of a

²³¹ “FY 2012 Program and Budget Guide: Program Overview,” *U.S. Department of State*, accessed October 10, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/rpt/pbg/fy2012/185676.htm>.

²³² Curt Tarnoff and Alex Tiersky, “State, Foreign Operations Appropriations: A Guide to Component Accounts,” *Congressional Research Service*, January 5, 2016, 11. <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40482.pdf>.

²³³ “Additional Guidance, Monitoring, and Training Could Improve Implementation of the Leahy Laws,” *Government Accountability Office*, 4.

²³⁴ Nina Serafino et al., “‘Leahy Law’ Human Rights Provisions and Security Assistance: Issue Overview,” *Congressional Research Service*, January 29, 2014, 3. <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R43361.pdf>.

²³⁵ “H.R. 2685 – Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2016: Sec 8057,” *Congress*, June 15, 2015, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/2685/text>.

²³⁶ Serafino et al., “‘Leahy Law’ Human Rights Provisions and Security Assistance: Issue Overview,” 5.

²³⁷ “Foreign Assistance Act of 1961,” *Congress Legal Counsel*, 171.

²³⁸ “Foreign Assistance Act of 1961,” *Congress Legal Counsel*, 231.

foreign security force if the Secretary of Defense has credible information that the unit has committed a gross violation of human rights.”²³⁹ Under both the Defense Appropriations Act and the Foreign Assistance Act, the State Department has the responsibility to communicate information on human rights abuse to the Department of Defense and DOD must take such allegations seriously.²⁴⁰ The State Department has the responsibility to maintain a list of all units receiving security assistance and periodically request information from embassies, DOD, and the CIA on allegations of human rights abuse.²⁴¹ This information can come from NGO, media, or civilian sources but should be corroborated by multiple parties.²⁴²

If a foreign military unit fails the vetting process, the American government can still provide security assistance if the Committee on Foreign Relations (Senate), the Committee on Foreign Affairs (House of Representatives), and the Committee on Appropriations determine that the government of that country is taking “steps to address the violations” and bring the individual perpetrators to justice.²⁴³ In order to assist a unit under investigation, DOD is required to ensure that “all necessary corrective steps have been taken” to prevent the abuse from happening again.²⁴⁴ This leaves the requirements of the Leahy Laws largely open to interpretation.²⁴⁵ Similarly, the Department of State can support these units if the host government demonstrates the police or soldiers who

²³⁹ “H.R. 2685 – Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2016: Sec 8057,” *Congress*.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ “Leahy Vetting: Law, Policy, Process,” *Department of State*, April 15, 2013.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ “Human Rights: Additional Guidance, Monitoring, and Training Could Improve Implementation of the Leahy Laws,” *Government Accountability Office*, 6.

²⁴⁴ “Human Rights: Additional Guidance, Monitoring, and Training Could Improve Implementation of the Leahy Laws,” *Government Accountability Office*, 4.

²⁴⁵ Lerna Yanik, “Guns and Human Rights: Major Powers, Global Arms Transfers, and Human Rights Violations,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 28 (2006): 369.

committed the abuses are brought to justice.²⁴⁶ The State Department can assist the host government in this process.²⁴⁷

Since Congress first passed the Leahy Laws, they have been amended to exclude specific countries and programs. Congress can exempt specific programs and nations from the Leahy Laws if Congress believes they are vital to achieving an American interest. In the Senate appropriations bill for the Department of State, foreign operations, and related programs for FY 2014, clauses prohibiting assistance to abusive militaries were written to exclude specific countries or counterterrorism programs. The restrictions on foreign assistance did not apply to IMET “assistance to Ethiopian military efforts in support of international peacekeeping operations, counterterrorism along the border with Somalia, and for assistance to the Ethiopian Defense Command and Staff College.”²⁴⁸ In addition, the Department of Defense can now provide assistance to militaries regardless of their human rights record if the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State determine an extraordinary circumstance overrides the importance of the Leahy Law provisions.²⁴⁹ In some areas, however, aid is still conditioned on human rights. For example, under the FY 2016 Appropriations Bill for the Department of State, foreign operations, and related programs, American foreign military financing to Egypt has been

²⁴⁶ “Human Rights: Additional Guidance, Monitoring, and Training Could Improve Implementation of the Leahy Laws,” *Government Accountability Office*, 4. ; “Foreign Assistance Act of 1961,” *Congress Legal Counsel*, 171.

²⁴⁷ Nina Serafino et al., “‘Leahy Law’ Human Rights Provisions and Security Assistance: Issue Overview,” 5-6.

²⁴⁸ “113th Congress: S. 1372,” *Congress*, July 25, 2013, 161.

<https://www.congress.gov/113/bills/s/1372/BILLS-113s1372pcs.pdf>

²⁴⁹ Nina Serafino et al., “‘Leahy Law’ Human Rights Provisions and Security Assistance: Issue Overview,” 5.

conditioned on the release of political prisoners, respect for civil freedoms, and the advancement of democracy and human rights.²⁵⁰

When the Leahy Laws are applied, their application is often weak and inconsistent. The Government Accountability Office found that while the State Department is supposed to ensure that each embassy has a standard operating procedure (SOP) up-to-date and in place for human rights vetting, very few SOPs are adequately updated. It was unclear whether some embassies had standard operating procedures in place for Leahy Law requirements.²⁵¹ This problem is exacerbated by inadequate follow-up by the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.²⁵² While the department told GAO that they reviewed embassy standard operating procedures, GAO found that many embassies did not have SOPs in place and that the SOPs in place were inconsistent between embassies.²⁵³ Even once an embassy has put a standard operating procedure in place for complying with the Leahy Laws, the embassy is likely to receive insufficient and outdated information. In GAO's same report, the office found that both personnel in Washington, D.C. and within the embassies received outdated training on human rights vetting. Leahy Law training occurs primarily on independent, online courses and within other professional trainings. As a result, it is difficult to ensure that all vetting staff sufficiently understand the vetting process and can implement it effectively.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁰ "114th Congress: S. 1725," *Congress*, July 9, 2015, <https://www.congress.gov/114/bills/s/1725/BILLS-114s1725pcs.pdf> 167-168

²⁵¹ "Human Rights: Additional Guidance, Monitoring, and Training Could Improve Implementation of the Leahy Laws," *Government Accountability Office*, 18.

²⁵² *Ibid*, 20.

²⁵³ *Ibid*, 21.

²⁵⁴ "Human Rights: Additional Guidance, Monitoring, and Training Could Improve Implementation of the Leahy Laws," *Government Accountability Office*, 23.

From the Government Accountability Office's report, it seems that the Leahy Law procedure has not been effectively implemented in many embassies. While the Leahy Laws are mandated under certain programs, it is also unclear when they are applied beyond that mandate. For example, the DOD Regional Counterterrorism Fellowship Program (CTFP) apparently vets all participants as a matter of policy.²⁵⁵ In comparison, it is unclear if and when programs such as NADR implement Leahy Law vetting procedures. Whenever it is implemented, the Leahy vetting process is inconsistent and has few mechanisms to ensure vetting staff can effectively execute the procedure. These problems impact both the State and DOD Leahy Laws. While the Department of Defense conducts its own vetting of new security forces, the State Department is also meant to communicate its results of vetting potential recipients of American security assistance to the Department of Defense.²⁵⁶ The Department of Defense then cannot use any funds granted through the Department of State security assistance program to train units accused of human rights abuses.²⁵⁷ If the State Department does not carry out adequate vetting, vetting will not be sufficient across the board.

The American government needs to reevaluate human rights within the TSCTP as a whole. While the TSCTP currently emphasizes human rights and development within security efforts, the TSCTP lacks human rights accountability mechanisms at its foundation. Funding for the security aspects of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership comes primarily from the Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and

²⁵⁵ Nina Serafino et al., "'Leahy Law' Human Rights Provisions and Security Assistance: Issue Overview," 9.

²⁵⁶ "Report to Congress," *Regional Defense Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program*, 2015, 3. http://open.defense.gov/portals/23/Documents/foreignasst/FY15_Regional_Defense_Combating_Terrorism_Fellowship_Program_Report_to_Congress.pdf.

²⁵⁷ "Human Rights: Additional Guidance, Monitoring, and Training Could Improve Implementation of the Leahy Laws," *Government Accountability Office*, 4.

Related Programs and International Narcotics and Law Enforcement finances. In fact, NADR funds all of the counterterrorism efforts under the TSCTP; the Bureau of Counterterrorism then coordinates these initiatives.²⁵⁸ As a result, many units receiving counterterrorism support under the TSCTP do not need to be vetted under the Leahy Law provisions.²⁵⁹ While the DOD still assures that the programs do conduct human rights vetting, there are no legal mechanisms to ensure it follows through on this vetting.

Human Rights Training

The Department of Defense is responsible for implementing human rights training within its training programs for foreign security forces. However, DOD does not sufficiently stress the importance of human rights within military training. As a result, DOD does not fully implement human rights training in partner countries with abusive militaries. DOD and State cooperation on human rights is best shown through IMET. The Department of State and the Department of Defense share responsibility for International Military Education and Training. State determines the level of funding for each country as well as IMET's strategic objectives within each nation. The Department of Defense is responsible for executing the program, developing program administration and implementation in the field.²⁶⁰ The American government established IMET to train foreign militaries in American tactics and the use of American equipment. In addition,

²⁵⁸ "Combating Terrorism: U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management," *Government Accountability Office*, 9.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 8-9.

²⁶⁰ "International Military Education and Training: Agencies Should Emphasize Human Rights Training and Improve Evaluations," *Government Accountability Office*, 3-4.

the program is intended to improve human rights awareness among foreign militaries.²⁶¹ Since it first established IMET, the American government has given the program the responsibility of training foreign militaries in civil-military relations and respect for civilian control.²⁶²

However, the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program has not effectively implemented its human rights education programming. In Mauritania in 2012, the Government Accountability Office noted that IMET only touched upon human rights broadly in its military training but did not mention civil-military relations, rule of law, military justice, or other pertinent human rights issues.²⁶³ If IMET has not effectively implemented these initiatives, it is highly unlikely that other DOD programs are discussing human rights sufficiently.

Many of the programs that finance equipment and training under DOD programs are under the Department of State. DOD then executes these programs. The Department of Defense provides training to foreign military forces through the International Military and Education Training program, the Joint Combined Exchange Training program, the Combatting Terrorism Fellowship Program, and other training initiatives within the different military branches. IMET and CTFP are the two most prevalent programs in whole of government counterterrorism initiatives in developing nations. Apart from specific training initiatives, the direct funding and equipping of regional counterterrorism programs come from Foreign Military Financing, Foreign Military Sales, and the

²⁶¹ Ibid, 3.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ “International Military Education and Training: Agencies Should Emphasize Human Rights Training and Improve Evaluations,” *Government Accountability Office*, October 2011, 14. <http://www.gao.gov/assets/590/585950.pdf>.

Peacekeeping Operations account. While State delegates the program funding for each account to each country, DOD uses the funds to carry out its activities.²⁶⁴

The Peacekeeping Operations Account supports multilateral and regional peacekeeping and stability operations, specifically through funding and equipping foreign militaries in their counterterrorism operations.²⁶⁵ Foreign Military Financing provides direct grants and loans to foreign nations to purchase American weapons, defense articles, defense services, and military training.²⁶⁶ Broadly, FMF allows the President to finance the provision of defense articles and services for foreign nations. Within global and regional counterterrorism initiatives, such as the TSCTP, FMF has been used to sustain capacity building programs.²⁶⁷ Finally, Foreign Military Sales allows the American government and the foreign government to enter into a direct sales agreement for arms and technology.²⁶⁸ FMS is not used to directly finance programs and so is used less in counterterrorism programs in developing nations.

The Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program trains foreign militaries for regional cooperation on detecting, monitoring, and interdicting terrorist activities.²⁶⁹ The program specifically trains military officers, ministry of defense officials, and foreign

²⁶⁴ “Combating Terrorism: U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management,” *Government Accountability Office*, 39.

²⁶⁵ “Peacekeeping Operations Account Summary,” *U.S. Department of State*, August 3, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/ppa/sat/c14563.htm>. ; “Combating Terrorism: U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management,” *Government Accountability Office*, 37.

²⁶⁶ “U.S. Africa Command Fact Sheet: Foreign Military Financing,” *U.S. Africa Command*, last updated October 2012.

²⁶⁷ “Combating Terrorism: U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management,” *Government Accountability Office*, 39.

²⁶⁸ “Foreign Military Sales (FMS),” *Defense Security Cooperation Agency*, accessed March 1, 2016, <http://www.dsca.mil/programs/foreign-military-sales-fms>.

²⁶⁹ “Description of Programs,” *Department of State*, accessed March 10, 2016, 5. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/155988.pdf>.

security officials.²⁷⁰ The CTFP tailors its programs towards specific institutional, training, and capacity programs within foreign militaries. This program is unique in its focus on combatting the ideology behind terrorism. The CTFP supports national “human and intellectual capital that understands the ideologies and mechanisms of terrorism” so that experts can effectively combat the proliferation of terrorist ideology within their own countries.²⁷¹ While the program is tailored to the needs of individual nations, the CTFP attempts to streamline understanding and strategy in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations.²⁷² The CTFP is required to vet all its participants for human rights abuses.²⁷³

Professionalizing and training foreign militaries is especially important to counterterrorism efforts, particularly in mitigating abuses by security forces. Abuses by national militaries have also been linked to an increase in terrorist activities. Bruce Hoffman, a scholar on terrorism, sees abuse by security forces - both foreign and domestic – as the most common reason individuals join terrorist groups. This can be either the result of abusive domestic policies or the local population seeing foreign security forces as an occupying force.²⁷⁴ Scholars from the International Crisis Group have produced similar findings: “Reliance on blunt instruments and lethal force to counter terrorism risks doing more harm than good when they undermine constitutionalism, democratic governance and the rule of law and provide grist to the

²⁷⁰ “Description of Programs,” *Department of State*.

²⁷¹ “Regional Defense Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program,” *Department of Defense*, 2015, 3. http://open.defense.gov/portals/23/Documents/foreignasst/FY15_Regional_Defense_Combating_Terrorism_Fellowship_Program_Report_to_Congress.pdf.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ “Department of Defense: Instruction,” *Department of Defense*, November 14, 2013, 8. <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/200028p.pdf>.

²⁷⁴ Bruce Hoffman (Professor, Georgetown University) in conversation with author, March 24, 2016.

jihadis' propaganda mill."²⁷⁵ Abusive military tactics such as the use of torture negatively impact civilian perceptions of foreign and domestic military forces. It makes civilians less likely to come forward with information on suspected terrorists and makes it easier for terrorist groups to justify their behavior against these forces.²⁷⁶ Civilians may then become more sympathetic to terrorist activities against these forces, making them more susceptible to recruitment by terrorist organizations.²⁷⁷

Unfortunately, DOD's training programs often neglect to appropriately incorporate human rights. While State emphasizes that human rights are a part of the mission and objectives for these programs, they are rarely enforced. While IMET's original mission included focusing on human rights awareness training for foreign forces, this has only been implemented in about a quarter of countries with poor human rights records receiving IMET assistance, and none had received training that encompassed all of the human rights priorities laid out by the State Department.²⁷⁸²⁷⁹ By failing to follow through on human rights training and commitments within its programs, DOD undermines interagency human rights goals and security assistance as a whole.

Recently, the political crisis in Mali demonstrated this failure to train foreign militaries effectively in human rights and respect for civil-military relations. The leader of the coup against the Malian president, Captain Amadou Haya Sanago, received

²⁷⁵ Zohra Bensemra, "Revisiting Counter-terrorism Strategies in Pakistan: Opportunities and Pitfalls," *International Crisis Group*, July 22, 2015, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/pakistan/271-revisiting-counter-terrorism-strategies-in-pakistan-opportunities-and-pitfalls.aspx>.

²⁷⁶ Bruce Hoffman (Professor, Georgetown University) in conversation with author, March 24, 2016.

²⁷⁷ Kenneth Roth, "Misplaced Priorities: Human Rights and The Campaign Against Terrorism," *Harvard International Review* 24, no. 3 (2002). <http://hir.harvard.edu/intelligencemisplaced-priorities/>.

²⁷⁸ "International Military Education and Training: Agencies Should Emphasize Human Rights Training and Improve Evaluations," *Government Accountability Office*, 15-14.

²⁷⁹ The Government Accountability Office designated these priorities as human rights, rule of law, civil-military relations, military justice, and other.

training from the American military from 2004 to 2010.²⁸⁰ Specifically, Sanago participated in the International Military Education and Training program.²⁸¹ Of all the American military's training programs, IMET focuses most closely on human rights. The fact that Sanago participated in this training for six years and yet still deposed a democratically-elected, civilian president demonstrates the failure of human rights training within American security assistance.

Failure to Coordinate and Monitor Programs Between Agencies

These programs suffer from a lack of strategic evaluation of their programs. While managers within the programs are supposed to collect and assess data on their projects, there is little enforcement of this responsibility. As a result, higher officials do not have the information necessary to effectively make budget allocations, performance evaluations, and overall operating decisions.²⁸² This has been a problem across the board in regional counterterrorism programs. In the Partnership of Regional East African Counterterrorism (PREACT), the Bureau of African Affairs has actually presented inaccurate information to senior policy officials. In addition, there has not been sufficient evaluation of projects to ensure that they are forwarding the program's objective.²⁸³ The Government Accountability Office discovered that the Bureau of African Affairs did not

²⁸⁰ Adam Nossiter, "Leaders of Mali's Military Coup Seem to Have Uncertain Grasp on Power," *New York Times*, March 23, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/24/world/africa/in-mali-coup-leaders-seem-to-have-uncertain-grasp-on-power.html?_r=0.

²⁸¹ Craig Whitlock, "Leader of Mali military coup trained in U.S.," *The Washington Post*, March 24, 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/leader-of-mali-military-coup-trained-in-us/2012/03/23/gIQAS7Q6WS_story.html.

²⁸² "Combating Terrorism: U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management," *Government Accountability Office*, 12.

²⁸³ "Combating Terrorism: State Department Can Improve Management of East Africa Program," *Government Accountability Office*, 29.

have a clear list of which counterterrorism activities PRACT funded.²⁸⁴ With this lack of basic monitoring of programs, it is impossible to effectively evaluate and improve them. As a result, higher up officials cannot efficiently allocate resources and maximize a program's impact.

This lack of monitoring and evaluation makes it impossible to analyze which programs within these counterterrorism partnerships are having the greatest impact. As a result, the budget allocations remain the same, as the importance of individual projects is effectively unknown. Budget inequality exacerbates this problem. As USAID receives significantly less funding, a project must demonstrate significant success in order to receive continuous funding. As managers within these regional counterterrorism programs are not effectively evaluating the impact of these programs, they cannot evaluate the impact or report on its utility in order to maintain support.

These interagency programs also fail to outline their strategic goals and timeline within their broad strategy documents.²⁸⁵ As a result, each agency generally takes it upon itself to outline its own strategic plan. Within these plans, however, the agencies do not coordinate with each other. This creates redundancy and miscommunication between agencies in the execution of the overall program.²⁸⁶ Given the unique mission of each agency, their goals and agendas compete and overlap in many ways. While there have been efforts to broadly define the missions of each agency within these initiatives so that the agencies complement each other rather than conflict, this is not done within the

²⁸⁴ ²⁸⁴ Combating Terrorism: State Department Can Improve Management of East Africa Program," *Government Accountability Office*, 30.

²⁸⁵ "Combating Terrorism: Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership," *U.S. Government Accountability Office*, 21.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

specific program development of each agency. While the agencies consider each other in their broad mission, they do not incorporate the specific plans of other agencies into their own strategic planning.²⁸⁷ They also do not coordinate or share resources. In practice, the agencies do not even communicate with each other on their funds or the use of said funds. As a result, these funds are not used to the maximum utility. While vital programs do not receive the funding they need, funds go to waste elsewhere due to failure in communication between agencies.²⁸⁸

The ultimate goal of these programs is for the aid recipient nations to be able to combat terrorism on their own. Ideally, the root causes of terrorism in these nations will also have greatly diminished. While these are the broad goals, a lack of coordination of short term goals within the American interagency hinders the success of the program as a whole. This lack of coordination in combination with the already unequal amounts of funding between the Department of Defense, the State Department, and USAID undermines humanitarian and diplomatic programs. Given the lack of evaluation of these programs, it is impossible to analyze the impact of humanitarian and diplomatic efforts. However, in examination of past research on the social, political, and economic roots of terrorism, it seems evident that undermining humanitarian and governmental programs significantly undermines counterterrorism efforts as a whole.

²⁸⁷ “Combatting Terrorism: U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management,” *Government Accountability Office*, 20.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 12.

Chapter 4: Recommendations

To effectively counter terrorism in Mauritania, American agencies must better implement human rights programs. This can be completed in the short-term: the American government must address the lack of monitoring and evaluation, the unequal application of programs, and the overall miscommunication in strategic programming within the TSCTP. However, addressing program malfunctions will not be sufficient in the long term. The United States government will need to change its paradigm regarding the relationship between human rights, development, and security in order to tackle the failings of the TSCTP in the long term.

Long Term Solutions to Larger Problems

The problems in the TSCTP in Mauritania are a manifestation of the greater philosophical problem with American security assistance and how it incorporates human rights. When the U.S. government sees diplomacy and development through a security lens, human rights programs become unsustainable. Congress begins to see USAID and State as irrelevant unless the two agencies can prove they are needed within counterterrorism and security programs.²⁸⁹ When the U.S. government uses State and USAID only to respond to immediate security threats or hands human rights and development programs off entirely to the Department of Defense, these programs do not tackle the root causes of extremism as they focus on DOD's security interests. Once the United States has addressed the immediate threat, the government generally scales back on its human rights and development programs.

²⁸⁹ Taw, *Mission Revolution*, 173.

Instead of implementing human rights and development programs to assist security objectives, the U.S. government should view security assistance as creating stability and security for the effective implementation of human rights and development programs. This would effectively change the paradigm of DOD, State, and USAID to focus on long term investments in countries, as they would not expect to quit the country after they tackled the immediate security concern. This paradigm shift would also automatically make State and USAID more salient in Congressional priorities (assuming they also bought into this new outlook). Ideally, once the Congress and American policymakers understand human rights and development to be the United States' primary concern in long term stability, they will grant USAID and State significantly more funding.²⁹⁰

While this shift will take many years to engrain in the entire agency, it can begin immediately through better interagency cooperation within the designing of the long term strategy for the TSCTP and the actual implementation of the TSCTP. Instead of the State Department setting the strategic objectives and the Department of Defense implementing the programs independently, DOD, State, and USAID should work together on laying out the TSCTP goals broadly, ensuring there is no redundancy or contradictions between their programs. The Government Accountability Office has recommended that agencies work together to define program objectives, setting clear goals so that each agency knows exactly how it fits into the broader

²⁹⁰ Taw, *Mission Revolution*, 187.

program.²⁹¹ Currently, DOD and State conduct their own assessments of country needs but do not effectively coordinate their response.²⁹² In order for all agencies to have a comprehensive understanding of the situation on the ground, State and DOD personnel should conduct country needs assessments together so that both sides understand the full scope of problems on the ground. In this way, teams from both agencies would understand country needs from security, development, and diplomacy lenses.

Short Term Solutions

In the short term, there are a few policy changes that the American government can make within the execution of the TSCTP to better tackle the root causes of extremism. At an interagency level, this requires better monitoring, evaluation, and communication between agencies regarding their programs and their use of funds. State and USAID human rights programs must also be made mandatory. Finally, DOD must take greater ownership of human rights within its programs, emphasizing the importance of human rights to local governments and cutting off security assistance if the government does not follow through on its human rights obligations.

USAID and the State Department: Greater Monitoring and Evaluation

The Department of State is in charge of all monitoring and evaluation for its programs. However, State does not have an effective monitoring system in place. When

²⁹¹ “Building Partner Capacity: Key Practices to Effectively Manage Department of Defense Efforts to Promote Security Cooperation,” *Government Accountability Office*, February 14, 2013, 5.

<http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/652159.pdf>.

²⁹² “Combatting Terrorism: U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management,” *Government Accountability Office*, 27.

the Government Accountability Office requested the data on the allocation of State and USAID funds, the two agencies took months to provide a simple breakdown of their TSCTP funding.²⁹³ When GAO finally received the report, it noted that USAID and State had allocated progressively less funding to TSCTP programming each year. USAID and State had \$288 million allocated to the TSCTP between 2009 and 2013; however, there was no clear explanation as to why the funding allocated had decreased each year. As of 2013, State and USAID had disbursed only around \$139 million, indicating that they were not getting the maximum utility out of their funding.²⁹⁴ At minimum, having data on the available funding through the TSCTP would allow program managers to better coordinate “expedited options” for using funds soon to expire.²⁹⁵

State and USAID have limited funding for all of their programs. In order to have the greatest impact, they can only preserve effective programs. Currently, the Department of State and USAID do not have monitoring and evaluation processes in place.²⁹⁶ According to the Government Accountability Office, State currently lacks the manpower to establish a monitoring and evaluation system for its TSCTP programs.²⁹⁷ While select programs, such as PDEV, implement their own evaluations, these evaluations have not sufficiently measured program impact.²⁹⁸ When USAID and State do not know the impact of their programs or their spending efficiency, they cannot effectively execute their programming. Evaluating the impact of programs allows agencies to establish best

²⁹³ “Combating Terrorism: U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management,” *Government Accountability Office*, 12.

²⁹⁴ “Combating Terrorism: U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management,” *Government Accountability Office*, 13.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 18.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 12.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 18.

²⁹⁸ “Mid-Term Evaluation of USAID’s Counter-Extremism Programming in Africa,” *USAID*, February 1, 2011, 56. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pdacr583.pdf.

practices, decide which programs to maintain, and improve inefficient programs. This is not a new problem. In 2011, USAID recognized GAO and other evaluator agencies' recommendations for increased monitoring and evaluation of program impact, committing to develop an evaluation process and methodology.²⁹⁹ Nevertheless, in GAO's 2014 report on the TSCTP, the organization still highlighted USAID and State's lack of monitoring and evaluation. While USAID and State are aware of this problem, they do not have the manpower to implement a solution.³⁰⁰

The solution to this problem is simply to create a staffing position specifically for monitoring and evaluation of State and USAID programs.³⁰¹ In a consultation for State, Dexis Consulting Group recommended that State hire additional local staff to implement monitoring and evaluation of TSCTP programs in practice.³⁰² Hiring local staff to implement monitoring and evaluation in Mauritania would be highly effective, especially hiring staff from vulnerable communities. As long as State provided sufficient oversight to prevent corruption within the monitoring and evaluation, hiring local staff would ensure that State and USAID programs were effectively reaching vulnerable populations. This would also give the State Department and USAID another method of listening to local opinions of TSCTP programs.

²⁹⁹ Ibid, xxxii.

³⁰⁰ "Combatting Terrorism: U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management," *Government Accountability Office*, 18.

³⁰¹ "Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) Evaluative Study," *USAID*, April 15, 2014, 21. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00JXQ3.pdf.

³⁰² Ibid.

Standardized Programming and Funding Streams

USAID and the State Department already have difficulty tracking their funding and program implementation. This is primarily due to the numerous funding streams, specifically the combination of regional and national funding pools.³⁰³ This problem is exacerbated by the fact that TSCTP countries are divided across USAID geographic offices. The majority fall under the USAID Bureau for Africa, which is then divided further into regional offices, and the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs.³⁰⁴ The USAID Bureau for the Middle East and the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs oversees the rest of the TSCTP countries.³⁰⁵

To assist in this process, the U.S. government should standardize USAID and State programs across TSCTP countries to the greatest extent possible. It is important to grant USAID and the State Department maneuverability to allow the agencies to engage in long term strategic planning.³⁰⁶ As a result, State Department and USAID funding allocations may be most effective if the agencies allocate specific pots of funding for programs tackling both short term solutions and long term investments. While there should be standard programs implemented across TSCTP countries, USAID and State should maintain comprehensive records of all the funding available per country on each project. This would make it easier for USAID and State to keep track of funds spent on programs and examine which countries need greater support than others.

³⁰³ "Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) Evaluative Study," *USAID*, 10.

³⁰⁴ "Bureau for Africa," *USAID*, accessed April 1, 2016, <https://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/organization/bureaus/bureau-africa>. ; "Bureau for Africa Affairs," *U.S. Department of State*, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/p/af/>.

³⁰⁵ "Mauritania," *USAID*, accessed April 1, 2016, <https://www.usaid.gov/mauritania>. ; "Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs," *U.S. Department of State*, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/>.

³⁰⁶ Spear, "The Militarization of United States Foreign Aid," 28.

As many of the different funding streams target similar programs and objectives, consolidating funding on a country by country basis would allow for a better understanding of which programs need greater funding.³⁰⁷ If one program receives funding from both Development Assistance and NADR or NADR and Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) but another program receives significantly less funding, there should be substantial evaluation of this funding misallocation. Ideally, by targeting funding on a national basis, it will be easier for USAID and State Department teams to evaluate their funding streams and provide feedback on which programs need less or more funding.

Move More Development Programs Away from DOD and back to USAID

With ideally better funding and at minimum more efficient use of funding, USAID should be equipped to take on the development projects that have been put under DOD. DOD has taken on an increasingly greater role in development, specifically in countries with large counterterrorism assistance programs such as Mauritania.³⁰⁸ It is easier for DOD to convince congress for funding for development programs when it is justified through security initiatives.³⁰⁹ However, DOD-implemented development programs are not sustainable: the Department of Defense seeks short term outcomes that will address immediate security crisis rather than focusing on long term investment and development.³¹⁰ While Congress may not approve moving a development program under DOD back to USAID, USAID and DOD could work more closely to implement

³⁰⁷ “Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) Evaluative Study,” *USAID*, 10.

³⁰⁸ Brown, “The Militarization of United States Foreign Aid,” 29.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 35.

³¹⁰ *Ibid*, 33.

development programs, with USAID acting as the main executor of the program on the ground.

Finding solutions to problems within human rights and development requires “non-linear thinking.” The Department of Defense – the U.S. Military – is accustomed to tackling problems with linear solutions.³¹¹ DOD personnel do not have the appropriate skills or training to create development and human rights programs; however, they have resources and manpower that USAID and State do not. By working directly together on the creation and implementation of human rights and development programs, these agencies would increase the impact of these programs. In addition, direct interagency cooperation would send the message that the TSCTP is a truly holistic program. This would then give the Department of Defense greater credibility when leveraging its conventional security assistance for the implementation of human rights programming.

Standard Application and Increased Oversight of Leahy Laws in TSCTP Training

The TSCTP should better implement standards for Leahy Law vetting across embassies. However, the State Department should not be the sole agency carrying out Leahy Law vetting. The Department of Defense should be responsible for the initial vetting of military units in training. Having DOD conduct vetting of military units will give DOD greater ownership of the human rights elements of its training program. When the State Department is the sole agency conducting vetting, human rights vetting appears to be a State Department add-on to a DOD program.

³¹¹ Taw, *Mission Revolution*, 152.

In a report for the Congressional Research Service, the author remarked that the Leahy Law vetting on DOD programs presents diplomatic challenges and disrupts security training programs.³¹² This notion neglects the importance of emphasizing human rights commitments within military-to-military relations. The U.S. Military explaining why funds are being withheld will have a greater impact on foreign military behavior because another military (rather than civilian) institution is setting an example by prioritizing human rights. Currently, American agencies tend to see human rights training as *State programs* integrated into DOD programs.³¹³ This demonstrates that DOD, State, and the foreign security forces all also likely see human rights as specifically State-driven programming. This is a large problem specifically in countries like Mauritania where the government has avoided implementing State and USAID efforts. In order for human rights to effectively be implemented within foreign militaries, the U.S. military must take ownership of human rights training and vetting.

Tie Security Assistance to Civilian Reforms

At its core, the TSCTP is a security program. As a result, there has been implicit bargaining room with the implementation of USAID and State programs while the military training programs remain obligatory. While this is not stated officially, there are different precedents in place for conventional security programs within the TSCTP and programs falling under development or human rights. A nation wanting to opt-out of the

³¹² Nina Serafino et al., “‘Leahy Law’ Human Rights Provisions and Security Assistance: Issue Overview,” *Congressional Research Service*, 23.

³¹³ John M. Shimotsu, “Human Rights and United States Military, Humanitarian, and Civic Assistance in Latin America,” (Master’s Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, June 2004), 18.
<http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a424784.pdf>.

military training would leave the TSCTP. In contrast, a state can opt-out of a USAID or State program through negotiation. The TSCTP does not hold governments accountable equally across programs. This undermines the TSCTP's strategic, long term goals, as the USAID and State programs target the root causes of extremism in Mauritania and other TSCTP nations. By failing to implement these programs but mandating conventional security programs, the U.S. government is only tackling the immediate crises and symptoms of extremism. Although both civilian and military reforms fall under the TSCTP, the United States only uses security assistance to leverage minimal human rights reforms within the military. To better integrate human rights into the TSCTP, American security assistance must also be conditioned upon human rights and governmental reforms broadly.

The American government should make certain USAID and State programs unconditional to correct this imbalance between security, development, and human rights agendas. The American government can better enforce the implementation of these programs by making conventional security assistance and military training conditional upon the implementation of key State and USAID programs. This would also require greater cooperation between DOD, State, and USAID to prioritize programming and determine a nation's minimum mandatory requirement for human rights programming in order to receive security assistance. For example, the American government could obligate Mauritania to accept the USAID PDEV II program in exchange for technology and training for the Mauritanian military. The U.S. Military must make clear in its initial

provision of aid that the recipient state must also implement mandatory humanitarian and development TSCTP programs in order to receive conventional security assistance.³¹⁴

Mandating that groups of Sahelian countries implement similar programs would also allow USAID and State to better understand the problems in each country. By evaluating the successes and failures of the same program across multiple nations suffering similar problems, USAID and State will be able to see the specific factors within each issue. For example, implementing the same peace building program in Mauritania, Mali, and Niger before the Malian crisis may have allowed the United States and the national government to evaluate the social fractures in each country. Potentially, a comparison of these programs could have revealed fundamental weaknesses in Mali, allowing the government and foreign partners to respond to the needs of the Malians who staged the rebellion.

Moving forward, the United States must change the implementation of the TSCTP to be a non-negotiable package. If a government really wants to combat terrorism, it must accept the development, anti-corruption, social, and legal reforms that tackle the root causes of extremism. If the United States continues to provide security assistance without mandating the implementation of core humanitarian and political reforms, it will only perpetuate the problem it is trying to solve. In consequence, DOD must buy into the promotion of these reforms and condition its security assistance upon their implementation.

³¹⁴ This is assuming that the U.S. government has created mandatory TSCTP programming for USAID and State by this point.

Conclusion

In combatting terrorism in the Sahel, a strong military is the weakest link in long term stabilization efforts, yet it receives the most support and funding from the American government. If the United States continues to focus primarily on bolstering Mauritania's military without addressing military abuses, governmental corruption, and systemic inequality, American security policy in Mauritania will fail. As has been demonstrated in Mali's recent crisis, the underlying factors of extremism will eventually undermine security assistance and even a relatively stable government.

To address the factors driving extremism, the American government must better include USAID and the State Department within its security assistance. The rigid, linear strategy of the Department of Defense and American military cannot effectively tackle developmental, economic, and social issues. Instead, DOD must buy into State and USAID programs, using DOD security assistance to leverage the implementation of core humanitarian and political reforms. Security assistance must be tied to both civil and military reforms in order for the TSCTP to be fully effective.

In the long term, this will require a full paradigm shift within the American government regarding the relationship between human rights and security broadly and USAID, State, and DOD specifically. In the short term, the American government can begin these reforms in Mauritania through improved interagency cooperation, communication, and planning. In addition, it must make specific USAID and State programs mandatory. The Mauritanian government should not be able to negotiate its way out of core USAID and State programs. Through greater interagency cooperation, the U.S. government can effectively pressure Mauritania to reform its corrupt institutions

and better respond to human rights abuses in the country. By implementing these reforms, the United States will more effectively tackle the root causes of extremism and so have a more effective counterterrorism policy overall.

In the long term, the United States needs to recognize the importance of development and human rights beyond its use in security assistance. Once the United States has responded to a security crisis, the government often significantly withdraws its assistance to the country. Instead, the U.S. government needs to continuously focus on building strong, accountable institutions respectful of human rights and good governance. This long term capacity building should also occur in weak states that have not yet faced a terrorist threat. The American government should continue to address the underlying conditions of extremism even after a security crisis while also combatting these problems in weak states where a security threat has yet to manifest. This will make American security policy more effective. To do so, the United States must invest more broadly in development and human rights, allowing State and USAID to lead (with sufficient funding) American policy in states at-risk for the proliferation of VEOs.

Bibliography

“113th Congress: S. 1372.” *Congress*. July 25, 2013.

<https://www.congress.gov/113/bills/s1372/BILLS-113s1372pcs.pdf>.

“114th Congress: S. 1725.” *Congress*. July 9, 2015.

<https://www.congress.gov/114/bills/s1725/BILLS-114s1725pcs.pdf>.

Adams, Gordon and Richard Sokolsky. “Good money after bad: Time to overhaul U.S. security assistance.” *Brookings Institution*. July 22, 2015.

<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/order-from-chaos/posts/2015/07/22-overhaul-us-security-assistance-adams-sokolsky>.

“Additional Guidance, Monitoring, and Training Could Improve Implementation of the Leahy Laws.” *Government Accountability Office*. September 2013.

<http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/658107.pdf>.

“AFRICOM POSTURE STATEMENT: Ward Reports Annual Testimony to Congress.” *United States Africa Command*. March 9, 2010.

<http://www.africom.mil/NewsByCategory/Article/7245/africom-posture-statement-ward-reports-annual-test>.

“AFRICOM’s Humanitarian Assistance Program Helps Ranchers in Mauritania.” *United States Africa Command*. August 19, 2013.

<http://www.africom.mil/NewsByCategory/article/10928/united-states-africa-commands-humanitarian-assistance-program-helps-ranchers-in-mauritania>.

“Amnesty International Report 2011.” *Amnesty International*. 2011.

Arieff, Alexis. “Crisis in Mali.” *Congressional Research Service*. January 14, 2013.

<https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42664.pdf>.

Armstrong, Hannah. “Torture Against Terrorism.” *The New York Times*. May 7, 2013.

http://latitude.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/05/07/fighting-terrorism-in-mauritania-even-it-means-torture/?_r=0.

Ascher, William. “Development Strategies and Violence.” In *Development Strategies and Inter-Group Violence*, edited by William Ascher and Natalia Mirovitskaya, 3-21.

Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

“Building Partner Capacity: Key Practices to Effectively Manage Department of Defense Efforts to Promote Security Cooperation.” *Government Accountability Office*. February 14, 2013. <http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/652159.pdf>.

“Bureau for Africa Affairs.” *U.S. Department of State*. Accessed April 1, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/p/af/>.

“Bureau for Africa.” *USAID*. Accessed April 1, 2016. <https://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/organization/bureaus/bureau-africa>.

“Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs.” *U.S. Department of State*. Accessed April 1, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/>.

Bensemra, Zohra. “Revisiting Counter-terrorism Strategies in Pakistan: Opportunities and Pitfalls.” *International Crisis Group*. July 22, 2015. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/pakistan/271-revisiting-counter-terrorism-strategies-in-pakistan-opportunities-and-pitfalls.aspx>.

Boudali, Lianne Kennedy. “The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership.” *The Combating Terrorism Center*. April 2007. <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a466542.pdf>.

Boukhars, Anouar. “Mauritania’s Precarious Stability and Islamist Undercurrent.” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. February 2016, 1. http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CEIP_CP266_Boukhars_Final.pdf.

Boukhars, Anouar. “The Drivers of Insecurity in Mauritania.” *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. April 2012, 14. http://carnegieendowment.org/files/mauritania_insecurity.pdf.

Bilal Abeid, Brahim. Vice President of IRA. In discussion with the author, November 3, 2014. Author’s translation.

Burgess, Joshua C. “No Time to Hit Snooze in North Africa and the Sahel.” *The Washington Institute*. February 10, 2014. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/no-time-to-hit-snooze-in-north-africa-and-the-sahel>.

Campbell, John and J. Peter Pham. “Does Washington Have a Stake in the Sahel.” *Council on the Foreign Relations*. January 14, 2014. <http://www.cfr.org/africa-sub-saharan/does-washington-have-stake-sahel/p32195>.

Cheikhou Ouédraogo, Lalla Aicha. President of the Committee of Solidarity with the Victims of Human Rights Violations. In conversation with author, November 3, 2014.

Coggins, Bridget L. “Does State Failure Cause Terrorism? An Empirical Analysis (1999 – 2008).” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (2014): 1 -29.

“Combating Terrorism: State Department Can Improve Management of East Africa Program.” *Government Accountability Office*. June 2014.
<http://www.gao.gov/assets/670/664126.pdf>

“Combating Terrorism: Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership.” *U.S. Government Accountability Office*, July 2008.
<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08860.pdf>.

“Combating Terrorism: U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management.” *Government Accountability Office*. June 2014.
<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-14-518>.

Crenshaw, Martha. “The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Strategic Choice.” In *Terrorism in Perspective*, edited by Sue Mahan and Pamala Griset, 24-34. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2008.

“Department of Defense: Instruction.” *Department of Defense*. November 14, 2013.
<http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/200028p.pdf>.

“Description of Programs.” *Department of State*. Accessed March 10, 2016.
<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/155988.pdf>.

“Economic Support Fund.” *The Department of State*. Accessed January 3, 2016.
<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/101425.pdf>.

El Kory, Mohammed Ould. Director of Communications for TADAMOUN. In conversation with author. November 6, 2014. Author’s translation.

Ely, Aminetou. President of the Association Women Heads of Households. In discussion with the author, October 3. Author’s translation.

“Fact Sheet: U.S. Security Sector Assistance Policy.” *The White House*.” April 5, 2013.
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/04/05/fact-sheet-us-security-sector-assistance-policy>.

“FACT SHEET: U.S. Support for Peace, Security, and Countering Violent Extremism in Africa.” *The White House*. July 27, 2015. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/07/27/fact-sheet-us-support-peace-security-and-countering-violent-extremism>.

“Fiscal Year 2015: Budget of the U.S. Government.” *Office of Management and Budget*. 2015.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/budget/fy2015/assets/budget.pdf>.

“Food Assistance Fact Sheet – Mauritania.” *USAID*. February 2, 2016.

<https://www.usaid.gov/mauritania/food-assistance>.

“Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.” *Congress Legal Counsel*. December 18, 2015.

<http://legcounsel.house.gov/Comps/Foreign%20Assistance%20Act%20Of%201961.pdf>.

“Foreign Military Sales (FMS).” *Defense Security Cooperation Agency*. Accessed March 1, 2016. <http://www.dsca.mil/programs/foreign-military-sales-fms>.

Francois, Monika and Inder Sud. “Promoting Stability and Development in Fragile and Failed States.” *Development Policy Review* 24, no. 2 (2006):141-160.

“FY 2012 Program and Budget Guide: Program Overview.” *U.S. Department of State*.

Accessed October 10, 2015. <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/rpt/pbg/fy2012/185676.htm>.

Gerteiny, Alfred G. “Mauritania.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Accessed November 10, 2015. <http://www.britannica.com/place/Mauritania>.

Girod, Desha and Meir Walters. “Elite-led democratisation in aid-dependent states: the case of Mauritania.” *The Journal of North African Studies* 17, no. 2 (March 2012): 181-193.

Gordan, Michael R. “Facing Congress, Clinton Defense Her Actions Before and After Libya Attacks.” *The New York Times*. January 23, 2013.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/24/us/testifying-on-benghazi-clinton-cites-new-security-steps.html>.

Gordon, Michael R. “State Dept. Warns of New Terrorist Group Posing Threat to U.S. Interests in Africa.” *New York Times*. December 18, 2013.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/19/world/africa/state-dept-warns-of-new-terrorist-group-posing-threat-to-us-interests-in-africa.html>.

Graff, Corinne. “Poverty, Development, and Violent Extremism in Weak States.” In *Confronting Poverty: Weak States and U.S. National Security*, edited by Susan Rice, Corrine Graff, and Carlos Pascual (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2010), 46.

“Global Rankings.” *The Global Slavery Index*. Accessed March 23, 2016.

<http://www.globalslaveryindex.org/findings/>.

“Growing Concern about Rise of Islamic Extremism at Home and Abroad.” *Pew Research Center*. September 10, 2014. <http://www.people-press.org/2014/09/10/growing-concern-about-rise-of-islamic-extremism-at-home-and-abroad/>.

“Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism.” *USAID*, February 2009. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnadt978.pdf.

Hans Morgenthau. *Politics Among Nations*. United States: McGraw Hill, 1985.

“Haratin: Biram Dah Abeid Emerges As Main Rival In Presidential Election.” *Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization*. June 18, 2014. <http://www.unpo.org/article/17245>.

Hedley Bull. *The Anarchical Society*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1977.

Hernando de Larramendi, Miguel. “Mauritania’s challenges.” In *Political Regimes in the Arab World: Society and the Exercise of Power*, edited by Ferran Izquierdo Brichs, 122-124. New York: Routledge, 2013.

“Hillary Clinton: Benghazi Attack Didn’t Happen in a Vacuum.” *Fox News*. January 23, 2013. <http://insider.foxnews.com/2013/01/23/hillary-clinton-benghazi-attack-didnt-happen-in-a-vacuum>.

Hochman, Dafna. “Civil-Military Power Struggles: The Case of Mauritania.” *Current History* 108, no. 718 (May 2009).

Hoffman, Bruce. Professor, Georgetown University. In conversation with author. March 24, 2016.

Howard, Tiffany. “Failed States and the Spread of Terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa.” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 33, no. 11 (October 2010): 960-988.

“H.R. 2685 – Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2016: Sec 8057.” *Congress*. June 15, 2015. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/2685/text>.

Human Rights Watch. *Mauritania’s Campaign of Terror: State-Sponsored Repression of Black Africans*. New York: Human Rights Watch, 1994.

“Human Development Reports.” *United Nations Development Programme*. Accessed December 1, 2015. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI>.

“Human Rights.” *Patrick Leahy: U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont*. Accessed February 20, 2016. <http://www.leahy.senate.gov/issues/human-rights>.

Ibrahim, Ibrahim Yahaya. "Managing the Sahelo-Saharan Islamic Insurgency in Mauritania." *University of Florida Sahel Research Group*. August 2014.
http://sahelresearch.africa.ufl.edu/files/Yahaya_StakesMauritania_Final.pdf.

Ignatieff, Michael. "State Failure and Nation Building." In *Humanitarian Intervention*, edited by J. L. Holzgrefe and Robert O. Keohane, 299-321. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

"International Military Education and Training: Agencies Should Emphasize Human Rights Training and Improve Evaluations." *Government Accountability Office*. October 2011. <http://www.gao.gov/assets/590/585950.pdf>.

Jones, Seth G. "A Persistent Threat: The Evolution of al Qaeda and Other Salafi Jihadists." *RAND Corporation*. 2014, 16.
http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR600/RR637/RAND_RR637.pdf.

Jourde, Cedric. "Sifting Through the Layers of Insecurity in the Sahel: The Case of Mauritania." *Africa Center for Strategic Studies* 15 (September 2011): 1-7.

Keohane, Robert. "Political Authority After Intervention." In *Humanitarian Intervention*, edited by J. L. Holzgrefe and Robert O. Keohane, 275-298. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Kindl, Martin F. "AFRCOM'S ROLE IN INTERAGENCY COUNTERTERRORISM EFFORTS: AN ASSESSMENT IN 3D." *Naval War College*.
<http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a535418.pdf>.

Krieger, Tim and Daniel Meirrieks. "Does income inequality lead to terrorism?" *University of Freiburg*. July 2010.

Kristina Manson. "Mauritania 'vulnerable' to increase in Islamic extremism." *Financial Times*. April 13, 2014. <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/9d154d56-bff0-11e3-b6e8-00144feabdc0.html#axzz45qflzJrv>.

"Labor force participation rate for ages 15-24, male (%)" (modeled ILO estimate)." *The World Bank*. Accessed April 3, 2016.
<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.ACTI.1524.MA.ZS/countries/MR?display=graph>.

Lacher, Wolfram. "Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region." *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. September 2012.
http://carnegieendowment.org/files/sahel_sahara.pdf.

Laub, Zachary and Jonathon Masters. "Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)." *Council on Foreign Relations*. March 27, 2015. <http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/al-qaeda-islamic-maghreb-aqim/p12717>.

Laws." *Government Accountability Office*. September 2013.

Lister, Tim. "Burkina Faso attack demonstrates al Qaeda revival in Africa." *CNN*. January 16, 2016. <http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/16/world/burkina-faso-attack-al-qaeda/>.

"Leahy Vetting: Law, Policy, Process." *Department of State*. April 15, 2013.

"Mali hotel attack: security forces hunt more than three suspects." *The Guardian*. November 21, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/21/mali-hotel-attack-armed-forces-hunt-bamako-al-mourabitounes>.

"Mass protest in Mauritania rejects holding presidential elections." *Middle East Monitor*. June 5, 2014. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/africa/11905-mass-protest-in-mauritania-rejects-holding-presidential-elections>.

"Mauritania 2014 Human Rights Report." *Department of State*. Accessed April 2, 2016. <http://photos.state.gov/libraries/mauritania/231771/PDFs/MAUTITANIA-ENG-HR.pdf>.

"Mauritania anti-slavery law welcomed by campaigners." *BBC News*. August 14, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33936243>.

"Mauritania Country Brief." *International Trade Center*. Accessed December 1, 2015. <http://www.intracen.org/country/mauritania/>.

"Mauritania new anti-slavery law: Effective enforcement is the key – UN rights expert." *United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner*. August 21, 2015. <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16338&LangID=E>.

"Mauritania upholds conviction of anti-slave activists." *Al Jazeera*. August 21, 2015. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/08/mauritania-upholds-conviction-anti-slave-activists-150821044245025.html>.

"Mauritania." *CIA World Factbook*. Accessed November 30, 2015. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mr.html>.

"Mauritania." *National Democratic Institute*. Accessed November 20, 2015. <https://www.ndi.org/mauritania>.

"Mauritania." *Transparency International*. Accessed April 1, 2016. https://www.transparency.org/country/#MRT_DataResearch_SurveysIndices.

“Mauritania.” *U.S. Department of State*. Accessed March 10, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/mauritania/85037.htm>.

“Mauritania.” *USAID*. Accessed April 1, 2016. <https://www.usaid.gov/mauritania>.

“Mauritania.” *World Bank*. Accessed April 2, 2016. <http://data.worldbank.org/country/mauritania>.

“Mauritania.” *World Food Programme*. Accessed April 4, 2016. <https://www.wfp.org/countries/mauritania>.

“Mauritania: ‘Safeguards against torture must be made to work’ – UN rights experts urge.” *United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner*. February 3, 2016. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=17009&LangID=E>.

“Mauritania: Government Guilty of Routine Torture.” December 3, 2008. *Amnesty International*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2008/12/mauritania-government-guilty-routine-torture-20081203/>.

“Mauritania: Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review.” *Amnesty International*. November 2015.

“Mauritania: The Case of the ‘Islamists’: Torture in the Name of the Fight Against Terrorism.” *International Federation for Human Rights*. September 2007. <https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/Mauritanie479ang.pdf>.

“Mauritania’s president Abdel Aziz wins another term in disputed elections.” *Euro News*. June 23, 2014. <http://www.euronews.com/2014/06/23/mauritania-s-president-abdelaziz-wins-another-term-in-disputed-elections/>.

Madame Laila Aicha Ouedraogo (the President of the Committee of Solidarity with Victims of Human Rights Violations) in conversation with author, November 3, 2014.

Malsin, Jared. “What to Know About the Deadly ISIS vs. al-Qaeda Rivalry.” *Time*. November 24, 2015. <http://time.com/4124810/isis-al-qaeda-rivalry-terror-attacks-mali-paris/>.

Mark, Monica. “Mauritania Activists jailed as police quash resurgent anti-slavery protests.” *The Guardian*. January 17, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jan/17/mauritania-anti-slavery-activists-jailed-biram-ould-abeid>.

Mauritanian President Abdel Aziz easily re-elected in boycotted vote.” *Reuters*. June 22, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mauritania-election-idUSKBN0EX12U20140622>.

“Men, women and children tortured to confess to crimes in Mauritania.” *Amnesty International*. June 26, 2013. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2013/06/men-women-and-children-tortured-confess-crimes-mauritania/>.

“Mid-Term Evaluation of USAID’s Counter-Extremism Programming in Africa.” *USAID*. February 1, 2011. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pdacr583.pdf.

“NATO resumes cooperation with Mauritania.” *Reuters*. September 25, 2009. <http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFJOE58O0E120090925>.

N’Diaye, Boubacar. “To ‘Midwife’ – and Abort – a Democracy: Mauritania’s Transition from Military Rule, 2005-2008.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 47, no. 1 (March 2009): 129-152.

Newman, Edward. “Exploring the ‘Root Causes’ of Terrorism.” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29, no. 8 (2006): 749-772.

Newman, Edward. “Weak States, State Failure, and Terrorism.” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 4 (2007): 463-488.

Nguimatsa Serge, Zelezeck. “Researching the Legal System and Laws of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.” *Hauser Global Law School Program*. August 2009. <http://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/Mauritania.html#sourcesoflaws>.

Nickels, Benjamin. “Mali’s Regional Ramifications.” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. June 6, 2013. <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/?fa=52018>.

Nossiter, Adam. “Leaders of Mali’s Military Coup Seem to Have Uncertain Grasp on Power.” *New York Times*. March 23, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/24/world/africa/in-mali-coup-leaders-seem-to-have-uncertain-grasp-on-power.html?_r=0.

Nossiter, Adam. “Soldiers Overthrow Mali Government in Setback for Democracy in Africa.” *New York Times*. March 22, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/23/world/africa/mali-coup-france-calls-for-elections.html>.

Okeowo, Alexis. “Freedom Fighter.” *The New Yorker*. September 8, 2014. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/09/08/freedom-fighter>.

Parker, Ron. “The Senegal-Mauritania Conflict of 1989.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 29, no. 1 (1991): 155-171.

Pezard, Stephanie and Michael Shurkin. "Toward a secure and stable northern Mali." *RAND Corporation*. Accessed March 10, 2016.

"Peace Through Development II (PDEV II)." *USAID*. Accessed March 2, 2016. <https://www.usaid.gov/west-africa-regional/fact-sheets/peace-through-development-ii-pdev-ii>.

"Peacekeeping Operations Account Summary." *U.S. Department of State*. August 3, 2015. <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/ppa/sat/c14563.htm>.

"Programs and Initiatives." *U.S. Department of State*. Accessed September 20, 2015. <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/programs/>.

Rand, Dafna and Stephen Tankel. "Security Cooperation and Assistance: Rethinking the Return on Investment." *Center for a New American Security*. August 2015. http://www.cnas.org/sites/default/files/publications-pdf/CNAS%20Report_Security%20Cooperation_FINAL.pdf.

"Regional Defense Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program." *Department of Defense*. 2015. http://open.defense.gov/portals/23/Documents/foreignasst/FY15_Regional_Defense_Combating_Terrorism_Fellowship_Program_Report_to_Congress.pdf.

"Remarks by the President at the United States Military Academy Commencement Ceremony." *The White House*, May 28, 2014. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/05/28/remarks-president-united-states-military-academy-commencement-ceremony>.

"Report to Congress." *Regional Defense Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program*. 2015. http://open.defense.gov/portals/23/Documents/foreignasst/FY15_Regional_Defense_Combating_Terrorism_Fellowship_Program_Report_to_Congress.pdf.

Rotberg, Robert I. "Failed States in a World of Terror." *Foreign Affairs*. August 2002. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2002-07-01/failed-states-world-terror>.

Roth, Kenneth. "Misplaced Priorities: Human Rights and The Campaign Against Terrorism." *Harvard International Review* 24, no. 3 (2002). <http://hir.harvard.edu/intelligencemisplaced-priorities/>.

Ryan, Maria. "'War in countries we are not at war with': The 'war on terror' on the periphery from Bush to Obama." *International Politics* 48, no. 2 (2011): 364-389.

Samuel, Boris. "Economic calculations, instability and (in)formalization of the state in Mauritania, 2003-2011." *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* 35, no. 1 (2014): 1-20.

Searcey, Dionne, Eric Schmitt, and Rukmini Callimachi. "Al Qaeda's Branch in Africa Makes a Lethal Comeback." *New York Times*. March 15, 2016.
http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/16/world/africa/al-qaedas-african-offshoot-makes-a-lethal-comeback.html?_r=0.

"Senate Report 107-058- Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriation Bill, 2002." *The Library of Congress*. Accessed March 2, 2016.
http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/cpquery/?&dbname=cp107&sid=cp107QsiiF&refer=&r_n=sr058.107&item=&sel=TOC_167137&.

Serafino, Nina et al., "'Leahy Law' Human Rights Provisions and Security Assistance: Issue Overview." *Congressional Research Service*. January 29, 2014.
<https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R43361.pdf>.

Shapiro, Andrew J. "A New Era for U.S. Security Assistance." *The Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2012): 23-35.

Shapiro, Jeremy. "Defending the defensible: The value of spheres of influence in U.S. foreign policy." *Brookings Institution*. March 11, 2015.
<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/order-from-chaos/posts/2015/03/11-defending-indefensible-spheres-of-influence-us-foreign-policy-shapiro>.

Shimotsu, John M. "Human Rights and United States Military, Humanitarian, and Civic Assistance in Latin America." (Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, June 2004).
<http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a424784.pdf>.

Spear, Joanna. "The Militarization of United States Foreign Aid." In *The Securitization of Foreign Aid*, edited by Stephen Brown and Jorn Gravingholt, 18-41. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Sutter, John D. "Slavery's Last Stronghold." *CNN*. Accessed November 1, 2014.
<http://www.cnn.com/interactive/2012/03/world/mauritania.slaverys.last.stronghold/>.

Tarnoff, Curt and Alex Tiersky. "State, Foreign Operations Appropriations: A Guide to Component Accounts." *Congressional Research Service*. January 5, 2016.
<https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40482.pdf>.

Taw, Jennifer. *Mission Revolution*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

“Terrorism Worries Little Changed; Most Give Government Good Marks for Reducing Threat.” *Pew Research Center*. January 12, 2015. <http://www.people-press.org/2015/01/12/terrorism-worries-little-changed-most-givegovernment-good-marks-for-reducing-threat/>.

“Terrorist Designation of the al-Mulathamun Battalion.” *U.S. Department of State*. December 18, 2013. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/218880.html>.

“The National Military Strategy of the United States of America.” *Joint Chiefs of Staff*. http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/2015_National_Military_Strategy.pdf.

“The President Speaks at the National Counterterrorism Center.” *The White House*. December 17, 2015. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2015/12/17/president-speaks-national-counterterrorism-center>.

Thrall, Lloyd. “China’s Expanding African Relations.” *RAND Corporation*. 2015. http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR900/RR905/RAND_RR905.pdf.

Thurston, Alex. “Mauritania’s Islamists.” *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. March 2012. http://carnegieendowment.org/files/mauritania_islamists.pdf.

“Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) Evaluative Study.” *USAID*. April 15, 2014. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00JXQ3.pdf.

Ucko, David and Robert Egnell. *Counterinsurgency in Crisis*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.

“U.S. Africa Command Fact Sheet: Foreign Military Financing.” *U.S. Africa Command*. Last updated October 2012.

“U.S. halt aid over Mauritania coup.” *BBC News*. August 8, 2008. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7548866.stm..>

“USAID/West Africa Peace Through Development (PDEV): Program Assessment Report.” *USAID*. March 2011. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pdacr829.pdf.

“War on Terrorism.” *Gallup*. Accessed February 18, 2016. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/5257/war-terrorism.aspx>.
Accountability Office. June 2014. <http://www.gao.gov/assets/670/664126.pdf>.

Warner, Lesley Anne. “The Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership.” *Center for Complex Operations*. March 2014.

<https://lesleyannewarner.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/tsctp-building-partner-capacity-to-counter-terrorism-and-violent-extremism2.pdf>.

Wehrey, Frederic and Anouar Boukhars. "Simmering Conflicts in the Sahara." *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. June 10, 2013.
<http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/06/10/simmering-conflicts-in-sahara/g9oa>.

Werker, Eric and Faisal Ahmed. "What Do Non-Governmental Organizations Do?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 8, no. 41 (May 2007): 1-38.

Whitlock, Craig. "Leader of Mali military coup trained in U.S." *The Washington Post*. March 24, 2012. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/leader-of-mali-military-coup-trained-in-us/2012/03/23/gIQAS7Q6WS_story.html.

Yahya Abdel Wedoud, Mohamed. "Rape victims fear being jailed in Mauritania." CNN. December 22, 2015. <http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/africa/12/21/mauritania.rape/>.

Yanik, Lerna. "Guns and Human Rights: Major Powers, Global Arms Transfers, and Human Rights Violations." *Human Rights Quarterly* 28 (2006): 57-388.