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Food Security as U.S. National Security: Why Fragile States in Africa Matter

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Introduction

The United States' role in foreign affairs is guided by an interest to keep the general peace around the world while protecting national security and economic interests. Stability in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa is crucial to national security, and one way to keep peace is by supplying the basic human need of food. According to the Fund for Peace, the three most fragile states in 2017 were in Africa—the Central African Republic, South Sudan, and Somalia.¹ Several other African countries are fragile, suffering from standard measures of instability, such as widespread corruption, weak institutions, and resource scarcity. Together, these problems create displacement, human-rights violations, and power vacuums where non-state actors can flourish. These issues should concern the United States not only for moral reasons, but also because they negatively affect American interests. Food aid and agricultural systems must be used as a tool to promote peace in Africa to decrease the region's burden on the United States and to help stabilize a region that is often referred to as a lost continent.

With bipartisan support, the Global Food Security Act became law in July of 2016. It requires the President and appropriate agencies—including USAID, State Department, and the Office of US Trade—to formulate a plan to address food-insecure countries and report on that plan annually.² The bill cited the *Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community* (2014): “[l]ack of adequate food will be a destabilizing factor in countries important to US national security that do not have the financial or technical abilities to solve their internal food security problems.”³ Though it is uncertain whether annual reports will continue under the Trump administration, the US has demonstrated (at least through the Global Food Security Act) that it views food security as a matter of national security. According to the most recent

¹ “Fragile States Index Annual Report 2017,” *Fund for Peace* (2017): 7.

² S. 1252, 114th Cong. (2016) (enacted).

³ *Ibid.*

Worldwide Threat Assessment, Africa is among the regions most susceptible to terrorism, especially in Somalia and South Sudan.⁴ This paper explores the ways in which food insecurity can enable conflict, how the US can improve the ways it offers food aid, and why African food security is in America's national security interest.

Consequences of Food Insecurity

Enforcing and communicating a universal conception of human rights by any party is difficult. Nevertheless, US national security strategy has placed an emphasis on human rights in recent years. The former Secretary of State under President George W. Bush, Condoleezza Rice, once remarked that: “[f]or the United States, supporting international development is a vital investment in the free, prosperous, and peaceful international order that fundamentally serves our national interest.”⁵ Fragile regimes in Africa cannot successfully maintain themselves, let alone pose an immediate threat to the United States. However, these regimes are likely to seek alliances with adversaries that may pose a threat, such as China, creating a region of the world adverse to American interests and values.

Secondly, migrant and refugee flows are concerns for the United States due to their economic and social consequences. While many of the most serious cases of refugee crises today are nowhere near the US, they do affect some of the United States' key allies around the globe. A clear example of this is Syrian migration into NATO member countries. In addition to military conflict, bipartisan research has shown that climate can also contribute to mass migrations by impacting harvest yields in regions still reliant on subsistence agriculture. For example, the famines in Somalia and Yemen have sparked emigration caused by food insecurity. Such crises

⁴ Daniel R. Coats, *Worldwide Threat Assessments of the US Intelligence Community* (Washington, DC: Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 2017),

<https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Testimonies/SSCI%20Unclassified%20SFR%20-%20Final.pdf>.

⁵ Grant T. Harris, *Why Africa Matters to US National Security* (Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council, 2017), http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/Why_Africa_Matters_to_US_National_Security_0524_web.pdf.

may not be front page news compared to violent conflicts in surrounding states, but they present just as real a threat.

The third reason why the US should care about weak states is that terrorist organizations thrive in such environments. Since September 11, 2001, US national security policy has been primarily driven by the war on terror. While the fear of a repeat attack on American soil has calmed since 2001, the threat of terrorism is still present, and the United States must be proactive to stay ahead of terrorist threats. Terrorists thrive in weak state environments because either the lack of rule of law inhibits the host state's ability to act against them, or because corrupt governments refuse to act, such as when Sudan provided refuge to Osama bin Laden in the 1990s.⁶ As a developing region, Africa is full of potential, and the United States will have to decide whether it will help it stabilize or allow it to become a refuge and breeding ground for terrorism.

Africa can potentially threaten or support American interests. As stated above, food insecurity in Africa creates problems for the US. The potential to politically align with other major powers, the destabilizing effect of refugees on the US and its allies, and the propensity to breed terrorism are all reasons to take Africa seriously as a national security concern. US interests include promoting international market economies that it can easily access, so to increase economic power at home. If the US ignores stability measures in Africa, this could negatively affect both American security interests and global economic growth,⁷ which are both American priorities. The US needs a strategy that promotes food security in fragile states to address these concerns.

⁶ Harris, *Why Africa Matters to US National Security*.

⁷ International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook: Too Slow for Too Long* (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2016), <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2016/01/>.

Food prices in Africa are expected to rise in the next few years due to famine,⁸ which means there is a risk that instability will grow, heightening the security concern to the United States. Food insecurity, like any social ailment, does not necessarily cause instability, but the two do reinforce each other. Obviously, American food assistance by itself cannot solve every problem in these fragile states. Success will ultimately depend on these countries establishing and enforcing the rule of law and shoring up government legitimacy. That said, nation building is not a viable option in this region, as the US has already committed itself to this in the Middle East and largely failed. The US *can*, however, provide developmental aid to help promote stability and provide a foundation for future institutional growth. Therefore, it is important that the US not only maintain food security efforts in weak states but also incentivize recipient behavior that will make such aid more effective.

Overview: South Sudan, Somalia, and Central African Republic

In a country the size of Texas with a population of 10 million people,⁹ the world's youngest nation, South Sudan, was problematic even before its official inception. The South Sudanese are locked in a prolonged civil war that pits the President Salva Kiir's party—the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM)—against the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement in opposition (SPLM-IO). The SPLM-IO is led by former Vice President, Riek Machar.¹⁰ After accusations from President Kiir that Machar was planning a coup d'état in 2013, a renewed civil war has further exacerbated the country's instability. After independence was celebrated just a couple of years earlier, the international community is now left wondering what can be done to end the violence.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Andrew Robertson and Steve Olson, *Harnessing Operational Systems to Support Peacebuilding* (Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press) 2013: 41.

¹⁰ "Fragile States Index Annual Report 2017," *Fund for Peace* (2017): 11.

As a result of this chaos, South Sudanese have suffered from ethnic cleansing and a shortage of food sources. South Sudan has now replaced Somalia as the most fragile state in the world,¹¹ so stabilizing South Sudan is important to prevent conflict from spilling over into surrounding states. Despite abundant natural resources and oil income, South Sudan's people have yet to feel the benefits of its resources. Commentators have described the Sudanese predicament as a "resource curse,"¹² a phenomenon where a state with abundant resources suffers from poverty and poor institutions. Most South Sudanese live on less than a dollar a day and about half do not have access to clean water.¹³ Lack of confidence in institutions and ethnic grievances have led to violent conflicts that interrupt everyday life, especially burdening poor subsistence farmers.¹⁴

To the east of South Sudan lies Somalia, which is also struggling with internal conflict. The ongoing civil war has resulted in about 1.5 million displaced in the country and 900,000 refugees in the Middle East and Africa.¹⁵ The diaspora occurring out of Somalia deteriorates civil society and makes it attractive to terrorist groups that seek to capitalize on chaos within a state. Hostility in the country's central authority has given terrorist organizations a foothold on land, and allowed others to exploit its waters. Foreign companies, mostly from Yemen, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, have been reported to poach their seas for seafood.¹⁶ Such violation of sovereignty has forced many Somali fisherman to abandon their livelihoods and engage in

¹¹ Ibid., 8.

¹² Luke A. Patey, "Crude Days Ahead? Oil and the Resource Curse in Sudan," *African Affairs* 109.437 (August 2010): 617.

¹³ Robertson and Olson, *Harnessing Operational Systems to Support Peacebuilding*, 41.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ UNHCR, *Somalia Situation 2017* (Geneva, Switzerland, 2017), <http://www.unhcr.org/591ae0e17.pdf>.

¹⁶ Mary Harper, *Getting Somalia Wrong?: Faith, War, and Hope in a Shattered State* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 2012).

piracy, which has threatened international shipping lanes and posed a burden on the US Navy. Somalia's dire situation has reduced a large portion of the country to relying on food aid.¹⁷

This raises a question for US policymakers: how can the US devise a food aid policy that would empower countries like Somalia to feed themselves? Food scarcity has been, and continues to be, a major driver of conflict in Somalia. Several Somali famines have garnered international assistance, most recently in 2011. The harsh climate is made worse by a lack of infrastructure, which has made access to water and pasture more difficult during dry seasons.¹⁸ In recent years, the northeast and southern pasturelands have reached the famine levels of 'crisis' and 'emergency.' Not only has lack of water in these areas impacted harvests but it has also led to mass livestock starvation.¹⁹

The Central African Republic (CAR) is the third most fragile state according to the Fund for Peace index, and like Somalia and South Sudan, internal conflicts have undermined the country's food security. When rebel forces overthrew President François Bozizé in 2013, the CAR's economy descended into chaos, adversely impacting production in various sectors, including agriculture, the main contributor to GDP in the CAR. People are struggling for food, but harvest yields have remained lower than pre-crisis levels. The harvest in 2015, for instance, was 54 percent below pre-crisis amount.²⁰ The CAR is a young country—its history begins in 1960 when it gained independence from France—but since then, it has experienced several military coups that required intervention by UN peacekeeper and French forces.²¹ Recent

¹⁷ Mbugua, "Drivers of Insecurity in Somalia," 22.

¹⁸ Ibid., 11-12.

¹⁹ "Somalia Food Security Alert," *Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit*, January 17, 2017.

²⁰ Benjamin Badjeck, Alessandro Costantino, Oscar Gobbato, and Souleika Abdillahi, *Central African Republic - FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission*, Rome, Italy: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations World Food Programme, 2016. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2016CAF.pdf>.

²¹ Patrick Vinck and Phuong N. Pham, "Outreach Evaluation: The International Criminal Court in the Central African Republic," *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* 4, no. 3 (November 2010): 426. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijq014>.

elections in 2016 did not stabilize the CAR's economic situation; rebel forces still threaten rule of law, economic growth, and the overall well-being of the citizenry.

International non-state actors also undermine stability in regions of the Central African Republic beyond the reach of the central government. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is no longer listed as a terrorist group by the State Department, but it has been operating in Uganda, the CAR, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, since 1986, making it one of the continent's oldest and sustained armed group.²² Although the LRA is weaker today than it was a few years ago, they remain a force that threatens trade and aid deliveries, especially in remote areas, which need food the most.²³ Although the US has denounced the LRA and groups of other armed rebels, it has not treated the CAR's situation as a priority. There is no proof that the LRA is linked with al-Qaeda, so American support has been limited to financial support of French efforts. France has been the only state to robustly respond to the CAR's collapse²⁴—mostly due to France's historical colonial relationship—but it will be difficult to put the CAR back together without future help from the US.

The Intersection of Hunger and Conflict

Poverty is often the root cause of both food insecurity and violent conflict. The same countries where the US is concerned about terrorism and refugee migration also require food aid. This is why more recent American strategy has included a humanitarian element; in 2013, for example, Congress addressed the crisis in the CAR and included humanitarian response as a

²² "The Lord's Resistance Army," State Department, 2012, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/03/186734.htm>.

²³ US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Crisis in the Central African Republic: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations*, 113th Cong., 1st sess. (2013): 53.

²⁴ Richard Downie, "France to the Rescue (again) in the Central African Republic," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, December 6, 2013.

major prong of its stabilization strategy.²⁵ However, the most effective means of improving security, community-based violence protection, and successfully implemented transition planning is to enable a country to achieve food security through its own resources.²⁶ Therefore, when possible, the US should replace its supporting role of shipping food commodities and instead provide financial support. This proves to be less expensive and does not disrupt local markets as much, as will be explained further.

In South Sudan, conflict has continued after the 2011 referendum in which South Sudan officially seceded from Sudan.²⁷ Violent conflict and a lack of development reinforce each other, so addressing both is necessary to preventing South Sudan from becoming a failed state—less than a decade after its inception. Conflict that disrupts agricultural growth also deters investment in the sector, which is further compounded because confidence that South Sudan will stabilize is low. For example, small-scale, local farmers are not even investing in basic fencing because they expect the ongoing conflict to destroy it.²⁸ Due to lack of fencing, roaming livestock are able to ruin harvests, so the fear of violence creates a domino effect throughout agriculture. Regional farming is under siege, and continued violence threatens the ability of South Sudanese farmers to sustain themselves.

The case of conflict between the Sudanese army and Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) illustrates how conflict can interfere with international food relief efforts. After the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed that granted South Sudan's independence, fighting in the rest of Sudan escalated and led the Sudanese government to block

²⁵ Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Crisis in the Central African Republic*, 36.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Robertson and Olson, *Harnessing Operational Systems to Support Peacebuilding*, 41.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

food assistance and UN staff from conflict zones in 2011.²⁹ A little over 2.4 million refugees and asylum-seekers from South Sudan are in surrounding countries as a consequence.³⁰ This is especially harmful to the new country of South Sudan, a nation incapable of providing stable conditions to those within its borders, let alone migrants from the north. When discussing bilateral food aid strategy, the US should be concerned when foreign governments deny food aid because the strategic goal of humanitarian assistance is to help stabilize areas of conflict that implicitly makes the US safer.

Lack of competent governance disrupts the economy as well. As violence is rising in the CAR's capital of Bangui, food prices have risen due to both scarcity and general insecurity—which has caused producers to abandon their businesses. The prices of various agricultural commodities, for instance, are twenty-two to eighty-seven percent higher than before the violence.³¹ Reduced food access, failing market mechanisms, and high food prices reinforce one another.

US Food Assistance: A Historical View to Present Day

The Food for Peace Program (FFP), codified by Title II of the Food for Peace Act, is the primary mechanism responsible for food aid today. The FFP is primarily administered by the US Agency of International Development and is funded through the US Department of Agriculture. The original intent behind Public Law 480 in 1954, which later became known as the Food for Peace Act, was to serve other nations while promoting the American agricultural sector by expanding export markets to countries in need.³² Under FFP, aid goes primarily to emergency

²⁹ Hendrix and Brinkman, "Food Insecurity and Conflict Dynamics," 6.

³⁰ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Refugees and Asylum-Seekers from South Sudan – Total," United Nations, March 31, 2018, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/southsudan>.

³¹ Badjeck, Costantino, Gobbato, and Abdillahi, *Central African Republic - FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission*.

³² Food for Peace Act of 1954, Pub. L. No. 480-101. 2 (1954) <https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/pl480.pdf>.

situations, but development programs are also included. The original intention of the program is important to understanding its inefficiencies that have led to failures. While USAID handles program coordination and implementation, US farmers—who are already heavily subsidized—must provide all food commodities according to program mandates. These mandates include the requirement that all food must be purchased and processed in the United States and transportation requirements of food aid.³³

Expediency is important in emergency situations like severe famines or war, but these mandates do not actually prioritize expediency. Under the Cargo Preference for Food Aid (CPFA), at least half of food aid must be delivered by US-flagged vessels,³⁴ instead of international vessels with competitive rates. Rationales for this decision include: “maintaining a viable civilian US-flagged oceangoing fleet” in order to ensure the “government’s ability to undertake military engagements overseas.”³⁵ Economic analyses have shown, however, that there is no evidence that food aid increases fleet readiness.³⁶ This, combined with restrictions that require fifty percent of American food to be shipped on US flagged carriers,³⁷ reveals that the program is more focused on protecting American agricultural interests than actually providing assistance in a timely and inexpensive way.

As the name suggests, the Food for Peace Program seeks to promote peace by relieving food insecurity that results from a lack of access and availability. FFP program analyst Tim McRae argued that decreasing the “risk of conflict and laying the foundations for peace and

³³ John Frittelli, *Cargo Preferences for US-Flag Shipping*, CRS Report No. R44254 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2015), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R44254.pdf>.

³⁴ Stephanie Mercier and Vincent H. Smith, *Military Readiness and Food Aid Cargo Preference: Many Costs and Few Benefits* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 2015), <http://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Military-readiness-and-food-aid-cargo-preference.pdf>.

³⁵ Mercier and Smith, *Military Readiness and Food Aid Cargo Preference*.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

development require food security.”³⁸ Though Title II needs reform, as will be detailed later, it nonetheless serves others around the world and promotes food security and therefore political stability. Today, political crises and violence have forced more than a million people out of their homes in South Sudan, and USAID has addressed their needs by sending thousands of tons of food and by pledging money to go towards food security measures in the country.³⁹ This program is needed to prevent further conflict, but FFP does not necessarily get to the root problem of food insecurity, seeking instead to keep disaster at bay.

Feed the Future, the newest US government initiative, aims to address global food insecurity through longer-lasting programs. Codified by the US Global Food Security Act of 2016, the government initiative currently targets twelve countries, making “core investments in agriculture, resilience and nutrition to help countries grow and develop.”⁴⁰ These twelve countries span the globe, from Bangladesh to Uganda to Guatemala. However, failing states such as the CAR, Somalia, and South Sudan—those experiencing the most instability—are not included in the Feed the Future initiative. This program supports free market economics by supporting open regional trade policies and leveraging agricultural loans and capital investment for farmers (\$2.7 billion and \$800 million, respectively).⁴¹ This new initiative complements the work FFP does, and focuses more on long-term, sustainable development that enables countries to have a successful future without large scale food security concerns. The Feed the Future Initiative makes two things clear: (1) food supply and access are US national security concerns,

³⁸ Robertson and Olson, *Harnessing Operational Systems to Support Peacebuilding*, 43.

³⁹ United States Agency of International Development, *Food for Peace: Voices from the Field* (Washington, DC, 2016), <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/Food%20for%20Peace%20-%20Voices%20from%20the%20Field%20-%20online%20version%20rev.pdf>.

⁴⁰ “Approach,” *Feed the Future*, accessed November 29, 2017.

⁴¹ United States Agency of International Development, *Administrator Green Announces Next Phase of Feed the Future on First International Trip*, August 31, 2017.

and (2) US response cannot be limited to sending food in emergencies. A permanent solution will require a long-term commitment.

Lessons Learned from the US Approach in Somalia

The United States often misunderstands other states' cultural and economic systems, which causes it to implement strategy in a way that does more harm than good in the long run. This can even happen in a seemingly noble act like delivering food aid. Furthermore, Washington fails to establish coherent goals for humanitarian responses or communicate planning between different government agencies. The following section will cover the politics of developing countries, US government miscalculations, and the inconsistent agendas of American bureaucracies. These factors have all led to millions of dollars wasted in Africa's poster child for failed states, Somalia. The poor planning used to deliver food assistance to Somalia demonstrates the complexity of an issue on which the United States must improve.

Some argue that the bureaucracy of development aid has encouraged bad behavior from corrupt politicians in developing countries. In response to a famine in the 1970s, for instance, the Somali government acted as an intermediary as food resources entered the country. Humanitarian agencies worked with corrupt officials because it was the only way to access people in need of aid. For example, the Somali government took advantage of large-scale humanitarian relief in the 1970s during a severe food shortage, which included rerouting much of the relief resources to create a lucrative market for their own benefit.⁴² This state of affairs continued until the Somali government collapsed in 1992, and was made worse by militia groups and infighting clans who took over control of the supply chain.⁴³ Whether it is the corrupt

⁴² Hammond and Vaughan-Lee, "Humanitarian Space in Somalia," 6.

⁴³ Ibid.

officials or nonstate groups that are the intermediaries of aid, both may cause an undesirable impact on the strategic and humanitarian goals of the United States.

To successfully ensure food security, it is important to do so consistently. US assistance to Somalia in the 1990s was sporadic. Then from 2008 to 2011, the United States decreased aid to Somalia by eighty-eight percent (\$237 million to \$20 million).⁴⁴ A major criticism of American intervention in Somalia is that, once engaged, the US began to focus on military strategy more than on its intended goal of providing aid. While military strategies are not the focus of this paper, it is crucial to a mission's success that the US government provide a plan that is agreeable—or at least communicated—to all stakeholders and agencies involved. American interests in Somalia were not clear, well-communicated, or consistent. Therefore, the mission was a failure.

The recent famine from 2010 to 2011 in Somalia raises the criticism that the US and the international community could have prevented thousands from dying as well as from leaving the country and contributing to global refugee crises. More than a year after the famine ended and after a transition in government, the country has still been struggling with conflict and food insecurity.⁴⁵ Humanitarian organizations also criticize the political agendas of donor countries, such as the US. However, it is not realistic to insulate humanitarian goals from politics, because of the effect that they have on one another. For example, Somalia's leading insurgency group, al-Shabaab, blocked humanitarian aid during the last famine.⁴⁶ Anti-American forces like al-Shabaab that have restrained the success food security ends, are often the same ones threatening stability of the region. While the US may be able to improve its delivery of aid to perhaps make

⁴⁴ Laura Hammond and Hannah Vaughan-Lee, "Humanitarian Space in Somalia: A Scarce Commodity," *Humanitarian Policy Group* (April 2012): 9.

⁴⁵ Andrew Seal and Rob Bailey, "The 2011 Famine in Somalia: Lessons Learnt from a Failed Response?" *Conflict and Health* 7.22 (October 2013): 2.

⁴⁶ Seal and Bailey, "The 2011 Famine in Somalia," 4.

it less political, such as funding nongovernmental organizations on the ground, sources of instability need to be considered in formulating food security policy.

Innovative Approaches for the Future

Establishing food security in failing states in Africa will require a three-pronged approach: (1) reforming FFP's delivery of emergency food assistance, (2) improving local use of resources to develop lasting agricultural systems, and (3) opening trade between Africa and the United States. The first two would be led by current food assistance programs — namely, FFP and Feed the Future—while liberalizing trade would primarily be a diplomatic effort from the American government. Farming that maximizes countries' comparative advantages will not only allow them to feed themselves, but also to provide a source of income and boost their trade internationally and regionally. Moreover, a strong presence in the region for this type of humanitarian goal will not only ensure national security goals are being met, but also reinforce the importance of maintaining a US presence in the region.

In particular, China's relatively recent appearance in the region is marked by increased foreign assistance to Africa and cooperation on free trade agreements.⁴⁷ Countries in Africa with less international influence may prefer financial assistance with “no strings attached” from China to food aid from the US.⁴⁸ While China's presence in the region does not compete with traditional methods of delivering humanitarian aid, the approach better assesses the recipient counties' needs and strengths. Solving the global issue of food insecurity requires an honest assessment of the success of US methods and learning from different approaches, while also monitoring China's influence in the region.

⁴⁷ Chris Alden, “China in Africa,” *Survival* 47.3 (July 19, 2006): 147.

⁴⁸ John P. Banks, et al., *Top Five Reasons Why Africa Should Be a Priority for the United States* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 2013), https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/04_africa_priority_united_states.pdf.

In 2016, Food for Peace distributed approximately \$1.8 billion worth of food to more than 40 million people in 38 countries.⁴⁹ Though the money and resources spent by FFP are a drop in the bucket compared to the US budget, the system could be more effective with reform. As stated earlier, one of the goals of the program was to prop up US agriculture. Therefore, the program was never designed to efficiently supply food, nor do American farmers care about the system's efficiency so long as the federal government continues to support them by buying their food to send abroad. Mandates in Title II that protect American maritime and agriculture sectors inhibit FFP's ability to respond to global disasters.

Eliminating the restrictions inhibiting Title II's efficacy is just a starting point. Using local and regional food resources will be key for recipient countries to grow in long-term self-sufficiency. The US could achieve this through increasing the use of vouchers and purchasing food closer to the location of the disaster; both changes would decrease the amount of time that food would take to arrive in a land locked country such as the CAR. In fact, Congress passed a pilot program in the 2008 farm bill that tested local and regional procurement (LRP) instead of solely using US procured food.⁵⁰ While it was successful and was even made permanent, it was not funded in the following farm bill in 2015.⁵¹ The US is the only major food donor that does not take advantage of LRP as a way to save money and promote market-based systems abroad. The European Union and Canada do not have the same restrictions, which has helped them

⁴⁹ "Food for Peace – Fiscal Year 2016 Programs," *United States Agency of International Development*, 2016, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/FY_2016_Fact_Sheet_FINAL.pdf.

⁵⁰ *An Act To Provide for the Continuation of Agricultural and Other Programs of the Department of Agriculture through Fiscal Year 2012, and for Other Purposes*, Public Law 110-246, *US Statutes at Large* 122 (2008): 1841-1844.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

expand their reach in targeted states.⁵² The example of LRP shows that the US does not necessarily have to spend more on food aid to be more effective.

The last point that is often ignored in the topic of food security is the importance of free trade. Sub-Saharan Africa is the least free region of the world economically, in line with research that has concluded that domestic policies that pursue free trade are those that allow growth.⁵³ The United States made strides in 2000 when it signed the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which selected certain African states to benefit from duty free export markets in the US.⁵⁴ While the US has encouraged exports from Africa, the AGOA (renewed in 2015 until 2025) still contains exceptions on agricultural products from AGOA countries.⁵⁵ This is a missed opportunity for the US to help African countries develop their agricultural abilities, which would increase their potential to manage food crises internally. These exclusions on agriculture are connected to the United States' own form of protectionism, which is the government subsidization of American farmers.

Conclusion

This report looks at the need for establishing food security as a national security priority for the US, especially in fragile states such as the CAR, Somalia, and South Sudan. Each country contains unique political, economic, and agricultural challenges that will require a tailored approach. However, delivering food aid with the particular emphases of long-term investment,

⁵² *Modernizing the Food for Peace Program: Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, Senate*, 115th Cong., 1st sess., 2017, 9.

⁵³ Francis Ng and Alexander Yeats, "Open Economies Work Better! Did Africa's Protectionist Policies Cause its Marginalization in World Trade?" *World Development* 25.6 (June 1997): 889. [https://doi-org./10.1016/S0305-750X\(97\)00011-9](https://doi-org./10.1016/S0305-750X(97)00011-9).

⁵⁴ Bedassa Tadesse and Bichaka Fayissa, "The Impact of African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) on US Imports from Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)," *Journal of International Development* 20 (October 20, 2008): 920. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.1446>.

⁵⁵ CATO Institute, *Cato Handbook for Policymakers*, 8th ed. (Washington, DC, 2017), https://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/serials/files/cato-papers-public-policy/2017/2/cato-handbook-for-policymakers-8th-edition-79_0.pdf.

development in agriculture, and local government empowerment could mitigate the sources of conflict and assist in building the overall capability of recipient states to rule over their territories. The argument here is not that food insecurity is the *cause* of the political conflict that is prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa, or fragile states in general, but that it is an exacerbating factor in these conflicts. Some governments have thus made measures to merge issues of conflict and food. For example, in Uganda, their Ministry of Agriculture has been merged into their Military of Defense.⁵⁶

Including food issues in security strategy is essential to address instability that leads to greater problems like mass migration and heightened terrorist activity. President Trump's recent National Security Strategy's focus on rebuilding US military and his criticism of international aid means that food assistance will probably not be a policy priority. Nonetheless, it is recommended that the administration concentrate on filling vacancies in the State Department, especially in those states that are in dire need of humanitarian intervention. Diplomacy can work simultaneously with USAID's programs that reduce food insecurity, and it will also be important in further opening trade options between the US and Africa. Further, while the FFP program is needed to deliver assistance, it requires significant reforms including removing the CPFA and US food procurement mandates. This restructure relies on the cooperation of Congress, the President, and outside lobbying interests that include agriculture and maritime companies. The last group will be difficult to win over, but can be possible with properly framed incentives.

If the United States seeks to truly stabilize the world and promote freer markets abroad, both of which will benefit US security, it will eventually need to wean off developing states that rely on international aid. Countries have become so dependent on US programs like FFP that

⁵⁶ Johanna Mendelson Forman and Levi Maxey, Should Food Security be a National Security Issue? *The Stimson Center*, April 22, 2015, <https://www.stimson.org/content/should-food-security-be-national-security-issue>.

their economic systems have been restructured to wait on American food shipments to arrive. Therefore, the US should refocus its efforts on promoting free trade for food items and development in agriculture in recipient states, such as through Feed the Future. Furthermore, from an influence standpoint, the United States will need to monitor China's influence in Africa. The American challenger is motivated by African resources that power the Chinese economy. Good relations with China are attractive to the region because of Beijing's no strings attached approach, which makes Chinese assistance more appealing than US aid.⁵⁷ Despite the protectionist tendencies of the White House today, it does not seem that US humanitarian assistance is going anywhere. For that reason, American food aid needs to be exercised more effectively and applied in ways that are innovative for lasting change and a more secure world.

⁵⁷ Alden, "China in Africa," 156.

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