



# JEAN-DAVID LEVITTE

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I am stubbornly optimistic. And we all have a hand in two conflicts that have been dominating the headlines: one in Mali and the other in the Central African Republic. If we look in the rearview mirror and see how far we have come, there is cause to be extremely optimistic. And to travel the road from south to north, let's remember on this day as we say a final farewell to Nelson Mandela, that apartheid still existed in South Africa a generation ago and Namibia was not yet free. After Portugal's failed attempts to decolonize, brutal civil wars inflicted atrocities on the people of Mozambique and Angola. And it was only 10 years ago when Savimbi was ousted that Angola was able to pull itself out of never-ending tragedy and begin its most impressive recovery. And if things continue in Central Africa, how can we not compare it to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the massacres in Burundi, the fall of Mobutu, who unleashed the first pan-African war, a crisis between nine countries with very likely 3 million victims – in addition to the genocide in Rwanda.

And if I look at Western Africa, naturally Biafra comes to mind, but so do the brutal civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia where children were murdered, hands were cut off with machetes, and so on.

And if we look at the Horn of Africa, at the civil war in Sudan that lasted decades and split the country, the civil war in Ethiopia that resulted in the new nation of Eritrea and finally the total collapse of government in Somalia. I bring all of this up as a measure of the road we have travelled towards greater stability, and it is quite an extraordinary path.

Democracy has begun to take root and elections are on the rise. Perhaps they are not perfect, but these are processes that develop slowly and every election brings us one step closer. I was very moved by the recent development in the Democratic Republic of Congo where a new armed movement called M23 set out to take over the eastern part of the country and the situation was resolved. It was resolved with three significant signs of progress. The first is that the United Nations deployed MONUSCO, a formidable force, and at France's initiative it created a very aggressive response force of highly skilled troops from South Africa and Tanzania who made important military advances. This is new.

The second sign of progress is that President Obama personally called President Kagame and said to him, "Do not intervene." And he replied, "But I am not intervening." "Excellent! "You are not intervening." This is new.

And the third new development is that the Congolese army is building itself up again. Now that it is finally equipped and has leadership it can fight alongside the UN peacekeeping force. And even in that country we are seeing slow progress, but it is steady progress.

Today, if we look at what still needs to be done, there is the Sahel Belt stretching from Nouakchott to Mogadishu and, like you were saying Jean-Michel, Islamic terrorism is starting to take root there along with the implications that has on security. And so we had to take action in Mali, and we did, but the road ahead is still long. And then in Somalia, we can see the extent to which the crumbled society has paved an even harder and longer road – this is the road to rebuilding a nation little by little, one that is worthy of that name.

And the second conflict is the very threat of destroying what remained of the foundations of government in the Central African Republic. So yet again, given the urgency of the situation, France was right to intervene. But it must have support. And I think with the French president's summit that you brought up, Jean-Michel, and the European Union's summit next week, there is momentum. This momentum started – and this is another very positive point – because the African Union is willing to take responsibility for its own security issues, a job that is incumbent upon Africans. Europe needs to help Africa fulfil this desire. France and the United Kingdom have done their part and now all of Europe must come together and help the Africans train quick-response forces that can resolve any emergencies that arise. All of this forms the third pillar under the aegis of the United Nations with a Security Council that improves its deployment of UN troops, a more highly trained UN peacekeeping force that supports African troops.



That is why I think we have come a very long way. We face new challenges in the Sahel Belt. And we made the right choice to address those challenges because, more than the rest of the Western world, Europe was the region being threatened by Islamic terrorism from the Sahel region. But we have to rebuild the Malian state and rebuild the Malian army. This, too, will take some time.

**Jean-Michel Severino, CEO, Investisseurs et Partenaires (I&P)**

Hence, an optimistic outlook. Jean-David focuses on new developments in the state of insecurity while observing there have been major improvements, and above all his key message is about the capacity of the African Union and the United Nations to tackle this hostility.