AF/PDPA

* **Guinea** – starting to see very similar things in norther CDI and Benin in this space. Maybe not as democratically friendly. Maybe outsized impacts in this space.
* **Ghana** has a long history of conspiracy theories about our bases there. Worry about military bases and takeover.
* Big dichotomy anglophone/francophone. French may not be doing the right things. They are a partner but can be pretty problematic. Not always doing the right thing.
* If there is any implication
* Germans actually have a lot of influence. Could we flop out the French for a better partner, better NATO partner.
* Why are some of these countries leaning on Russia? Might be more in line with the German model. Even the US voice may have a limited runway.
* Couple issues – gauging what does sovereignty mean. And economic impact of the regrouping of ECOWAS. How people view what is to blame for day to day degredation of economic circumstances.
* Toxicity of French. And for military really important question. Historically the French know more and it has been convenient to rely on them. But has the military really understood the toxicity issue and have the developed alternative sources of understanding information.
* Reality is how people see there circumstances and how it can change. With the youth population. The security and the econ security possibly way more important to them than democracy. Maybe be misjudging some of these other values and ideals. Need someone to blame for that.
* What is the perception of US military engagement in those countries. And how is the perception of European competition playing out. And Libya – Italians and French at loggerheads. Germans want access to liquid natural gas. Is there a nuance between them. OR is it seen as one blob. And other actors. Turks. How would that be perceived versus western or Gulf states. Some of these others are also eroding our ability to do work in the ways. Turks building very specific types of schools. Active but in a competitive sense. Makes it destabilizing. Is there a difference of perception between Army/Navy – in Guinea – navy was able to have an influence on piracy. So may be able to utilize Navy, not Army, if better seen. See if there is a bifurcation.
* Effort with AFRICOM on messaging with military efforts. So any perception or insights on previous examples. FLINTLOC – one coming up in Southern Africa.
* Lots of programming – posts will give the best sense. Some regional efforts – ICFJ. Have been looking at a regional space – at their max. One regional effort that just started in Africa, digital DCN network. ECA program which really is focused on using local actors that are specializing in disinformation to run their own program.
* Pre-bunking – a lot out there that questions whether prebunking is effective. What we conclude is that positive messaging and enlarging that space is probably more effective. And we have “Here for you” program to aggregate everything the US is doing to enlarge the space. Benefit of the doubt when there is accurate information in that space. Have expended to 8 countries, PR initiative in that space – put it out there as a counterweight to inevitable misinformation campaigns that actors may interact in the
* Local actors often engaged for financial reasons. Ecosystem driven by economics and not ideology. Some being paid by malign state actors, and some just want to make money.
* Mozambique – deep fake – with Pres Trump weighing in on the specifics of the election. Perfect example of the economic factors.
* Fine tuning messaging. What can be done. Expanding engagement. Staffing up our Embassies that do this work. Bolstering their budgets. 1/3 or our embassies in Africa only have one PD officer. Not really serious if we only have one PD Officer.
* We need to be serious in our investments if we are going to have an impact. Why pretend it is a priority if we aren’t going to finance it as priority.
* AFRICOM’s MISO budget is $68million. They want to work with us and we don’t have the capacity.
* Since the defense secretary signed memo requiring COM signature on things – has been well received in AF and has worked well, smoothly. AFRICOM J39 – his deputy was here 6 weeks ago, director was just here. Coordination can happen.
* AF doesn’t have a permanent Stratcom team. Hopefully AF will have a stratcom team