Interviewer: Khrystyna

Participant country: Portugal

1. First Impressions: What struck you as most interesting and insightful about this interview?
   1. The programs for young military are building trust as they are future generals. It is better to have them spend a year in Lisbon, then in Moscow.
   2. Engagement of countries that have obligations to former colonies and those that are not is drastically different.
   3. Because of instability, some programs have to be implemented several times, starting from scratch after a coup or a revolution. You never know if you are not training the next militant or a pirate.
   4. Africa is a battlefield for many countries and has been even for a long time. But it is often disregarded (threats in the Pacific, Eastern Europe are seen as more important).
2. What existing information threats did the participant identify? (list)
   1. Radicals, armed groups gain control over the entire communities, spreading terror [talked about it indirectly].
   2. Portuguese soldiers are targeted – making their families worry about their safety when they participate in cooperation programs.
3. What was the most insightful in participant’s description of threats from China?
   1. China has patience, resilience and resources for long-term investments.
   2. China provides direct assistance such as building infrastructure (bridges, harbors), which the West cannot do.
   3. Everything China does in the region is legal (they sign agreements, get approval from the leadership).
   4. It is difficult for China because of differences in culture, language etc.
4. What needs did the participant identify?
   1. Engagement with the military, especially young – training, fellowships.
5. What support did they identify that they would like to see from the US?
   1. NA.

### Interview with PORTUGAL (at ALFS)

**Overall take on information threats.**

* I do not have a broad picture, but I can speak to what Portugal is doing. On the military side, we had a long presence in Africa, mainly in Portuguese-speaking countries such as Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe. We have a large cooperation in different areas: military, cultural, research and development, and agricultural. Different ministries in Portugal are doing that.
* On the military side, we have had a presence since the 80s on a regular basis. We have officers, NCOs, and soldiers here to support the training. We held them transform. We support the Ministry of Defense, Joint Chief of Staff. We do it in a bilateral way. We are engaged in institution-building. We have permanent [staff?] like advisors in MoDs of these countries. We are doing this because Portugal has cultural obligations to our former colonies.
* On our operations. we have been present in Africa since stabilization made by the UN in 1958 – in Mozambique and Angola. We are joining efforts in the area because we have obligations.
* In the 90th and the beginning of the 21st century, a lot of UN operations were taking place.
* Around 2010-2015, things changed slightly—plots [?] took place in Africa, revolutions, armed groups started to show up, the militia of the insurgents, and Islamic radicals. It is mainly in the Sahel. It is like a belt from the Gulf of Guinea to the Gulf of Aden, where a lot of conflicts started to grow up.
* UN is not involved in combat. So, we needed to create conditions to normalize the situation in these countries. It changed a lot for Portugal. Sahel is just South of Europe. So, the security situation in Sahel has a direct impact on our security.
* Portugal also started to participate in coalitions. With France, we are creating units capable to fight insurgent groups, create security conditions inside the country.
* About the situation now. Till 2020 – frustrated – Niger, Chad – failure of the efforts of these coalitions by the EU.
* We are present in the Sahel region. We are not bilateral there but involved in the EU mission providing training. Also, CAR, Somalia. But we are facing the still point there – not much progress.

**What are the perceptions of your efforts here?**

* We need to understand that African countries are huge. There is globalization like everywhere else. But globalization in Europe is different from globalization in Africa. There is a different way that news spreads here. So, we need different efforts to create stability. Part of the population does not benefit from it. They don’t see it. Africa is huge. There is a lot of migration. People are going to different places and bring information. They don’t know. When we have the ability to launch peace support or crisis response, people who are involved in conflict have a good perception of this.
* Western countries provide support – got involved in some conflict. But revolutions spoil it, and we have to start from zero. We have to realize that the problem now in Sahel – security challenges taking place all at the same time. It is hard to cope with all of them together. We are making an effort to cope with all the challenges at the same time, but it is difficult. You have local policies sidelining – they don’t want to be supported by the West.
* Challenges:

1. Climate change has a big effect on the movement of the population. If people are moving toward the South, there is a conflict with people who are already living down there. There is a mass of migrants trying to reach better places where they would be safe.
2. Armed groups, criminals – they extract resources, conduct human trafficking. It is a business. They impose their own authority over the national authority. If the territory is totally controlled by the insurgents, there is no rule of law, no policies, you cannot enforce court decisions.
3. Islamic radical groups. They are like a multinational corporation now. They pose a lot of pressure on the government because they offer security and stability to some populations.
4. Political instability – does not create conditions to have big reforms. There are very frequent changes in the regimes and policies.

* All these challenges are taking place at the same time. They create a huge pressure over the Western, particularly Southern European countries. This is our near abroad, and there is no security. They are very close, and they just cross – and they are in Europe. Then they are in the Schengen space.
* All these challenges are happening at the same time. Regimes in Europe don’t have, unfortunately, the means to be very effective. We cannot come here with the militia and give security to the president in return for extracting the gold. But this is the main thing regimes in Africa want. They want to keep the power and have security for their regime.
* Other competitors are looking into Africa. Some of them don’t have the same obligations. Russians were a threat in Africa before they became a threat to Ukraine. They were present in the field. They had their businesses going against European interests before the war.
* All these challenges come at the same time. you cannot impose operations if the government doesn’t want. For example, in Chad, they have regime with colonels. They don’t want international support.

**How about China?**

* What is taking place here is that China has a lot of resilience to operate in Africa. They have resources to invest, and they can wait a long time to break even. They have patience. They need support from these countries to vote with them in the UN.
* China is not a security challenge. By itself, it does not pose a security challenge. They put a lot of investments. The West has been here for a long time. China is appearing here, trying to grow its interests.
* Africa is a stage of competition. We tend to forget it. there is a competition in the Pacific, in Eastern Europe. But also, in Africa.

**Can you give an example?**

* It happens in different areas. Even here in Ghana. They show their investments. They can offer infrastructure and financial support to build infrastructure. They bring everything – technology, manpower from China. They offer to build a bridge, harbor, and even barracks for the military. To do that, they bring everybody from China. And everything, including bricks, air conditioning – I’ve seen that.
* They are very competitive. West doesn’t have the dynamics and flexibility to create this infrastructure.

**How about information?**

* There is no evidence of misinformation between China and the population. They are able to do business with leadership. They offer programs back in China. I don’t see too much connection.
* It is not easy for Chinese. It is a different culture, master the language. There is no evidence of a good relationship between the Chinese and the population. They just bring their factories with their knowledge. They do business here. It is all legal. When they want to do business, they reach agreements [with the government]. Chinese are interested in regaining Chinese investments.

**Anything directed against your engagements or Portugal?**

* We have had programs since the 80s directed to specific countries – Cape Verde, San Tome, Guinea Bissau, and Mozambique.
* We are engaged in institution-building. We are putting our advisors in their staff to write the law, change the architecture.
* We have a project in Mozambique – institution-building of General Staff.
* NCO school in Mozambique, cooperation with military academy – those are our projects.
* It requires a presence of Portuguese professors together with locals to organize the courses, write syllabus, teach the courses.
* Also in Mozambique, we are involved in special courses creation. We have special forces schools. We do it in the 80s. We received their students coming to our countries – military students are coming to study at our academy. This is also a way to gain confidence in leadership. They will become Generals with time. it is better to have their students come to Lisbon than to Moscow.
* Other countries are also offering opportunities.
* We are working government to government. We review the programs every year. If they achieve their goals, we move to a different project.
* These opportunities locally – sometimes we compete with other countries. American, French – coordinate in order not to duplicate efforts.

**What else can be done?**

* In this triangle – what is desirable (idealistically) – what has to be done – what is done – there is a big gap between the edges.
* If there is no stability, you end up doing the same thing many times. For example, the EU has been in Somalia since the 2010s. they started to train Somalia infantrymen. They wanted to create an army. It was in Uganda. Guys were taken from Somalia to Uganda. It was a decade or more ago.
* What happened there – a lot of changes in Somalia. Many soldiers we trained can now be pirates. We were training the ones who were not a threat. It is a dilemma.
* We want to do something. But you are not sure if you are creating a problem or enlarging the problem. The idea is good, with ethics and morals. It was a technical training – basic to train forces to stabilize, bring security. But you end up in a situation where it is difficult to do vetting. You train infantrymen, you believe that it is a good product of our operation. You don’t know if you are training good guys. You can try to check their ID, but if won’t know if it’s not fake. You don’t know all who are training in NATO training.

**How about disinformation?**

* As soon as there are other competitors, they are interested.
* There are two different levels. First, it is competitors who have the resources and knowledge to launch the campaigns. Second, local armed groups try to influence the local population. They use terror – you pay toll if you want your children to go to school.
* Evidence of some operations – they targeted the social media of Portuguese soldiers. They spread false messages about Portuguese soldiers. It is happening in CAR, Niger.

**What’s the goal of such campaigns?**

* The disinformation campaign is one dimension of the warfare. Disinformation is here to stay. It is like Coca-Cola. It is a part of their business.
* We have operational challenges, political challenges, how the government behaves.
* International agreements – whether they believe in Western involvement in Africa. It is not more pronounced. It did not become an operational challenge.

**But you don’t have evidence to attribute?**

* You know it; its public. Former Wagner operating together with African government. They are sustaining their government. They attack the social media of the soldiers. They want to scare their families back home. they want to think that they are in danger by being there.