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# SUBSAHARIAN AFRICA - THE ETERNAL STONE ON THE CHESS TABLE OF WORLD GEOPOLITICS

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**Abstract:** Since its inception, the 21st Century has been announced to be one of the great global spaces, interference and interconnection. These spaces make a huge mix of races, ethnicities, cultures, blend that brings with it eclecticism, hybridization and transmutation.

The interest of the world states for these spaces, among which we nominate the entire African continent, has been and remains determined by the configuration of global geopolitics at various milestones on the scale of the time travelled and the strategic value of the energy and mineral resources in the sub-continent of this continent. This value, in an exhaustive approach, obviously has to be related to a much greater diversity of types of resources than those of our subject, mentioned in the title.

In a 1990 document on the National Security Strategy drafted by the Presidential Administration under the mandate of President Bush senior, it was noted that for the greater part of the century, the United States considered it vital for the interests of foreign and national security policy to prevent any power or group of powers to dominate "Eurasia landmass."

This statement represents an adaptation of American foreign policy in the early 1990s to Halford Mackinder's geopolitical paradigm "Heartland Theory," 1) elaborated almost 100 years ago. I recall that, according to him, the power that controls the great pivot - Central Asia, in the end, in international politics, it will appear as the most powerful state in the world.

**Keywords:** Sub-Saharan Africa, sub-Saharan pivotal area, globalization, silk road, Eurasia, Sub-Saharan geopolitical pivot, negricity and pan-Africanism, Sub-Saharan Islam, terrorism

**JEL Classification:** F5, G18

## 1. Instead of introduction, a brief insight into the history of geopolitical theories

The main orientations in the geopolitics field affirmed and consecrated in time, as "founding parents" in the domain, personalities belonging to the elite of the English, German, French, Anglo-American school and even the Romanian school. Without interpreting that I would bring any harm to their personality, but for reasons of space, I will briefly refer only to a few

assertions of those who facilitate my detailed approach to the subject matter of this material.

I would like to point out that, as far as English school is concerned, it is unanimously appreciated that the work of the geographer and British political scientist Sir Halford John Mackinder (1861-1947) <sup>1</sup> is a strategic interpretation of the geography of the world. In 1904, according to his theory of global domination, he considered that a pivotal area is defined by four essential criteria, namely:

- (1) the huge dimensions of the territory;
- (2) the central position at the junction of the trade routes;
- (3) the possibility of attacking and being attacked from all directions;
- (4) the huge wealth of resources.

These attributes of the pivotal area give the state or unions of states disposed on the same vast territory the ability to strengthen their power and then to control the world. Therefore, these geographic qualities transform the pivotal area into a top geopolitical stake in the global power equation.

Also noteworthy is that in 1904, Mackinder first exhibited the ideas of geopolitics in the communication titled "The Geographic Pivot of History," presented to the Royal Society for Geography. Based on the above criteria, the British geographer has reintroduced the concept of geopolitics into international politics through the Heartland Theory. The central idea of his lecture was that universal history and world politics were heavily influenced by the vast space within Eurasia, and the domination of this space is the foundation of any attempt to dominate the world. He argued that in the industrial age, the natural resources of Central Asia - the "big pivot" - are so vast that they will serve as a geostrategic tool for the state controlling it to become the "empire of the world." These ideas were developed in the study "Democratic Ideas and Reality: A Study on Reconstruction Policies." He added the Heartland concept, saying it could be applied to other areas, depending on geostrategic interests, anticipating the emergence of the Western, Euro-Atlantic bloc. The Atlantic was described as the "Midland Ocean" with four subsidiary maritime areas: the Caribbean, the Arctic, the Baltic and the Mediterranean, outside of which the "Great Ocean" consists of the South Atlantic, the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean, and France becoming "At the end of his article and his work, Mackinder made a plea for" from balanced allocation of resources between global spaces for prosperity and economic specialization ", the only way to a lasting peace, Africa being seen from the geostrategic point of view as a giant.

As far as the Sub-Saharan Zone is concerned, from the same distant historical perspective, it is recalled that Mackinder, describing it, called it "The Southern Heartland," a syntagma issued in 1904.

Undoubtedly, Mackinder is unanimously considered as the author of the most sustainable and influential geopolitical theory. It is known that initially his scientific approaches have been strongly motivated by the fate of Great Britain. He later had the capacity to understand that he had to gradually adapt to the geopolitical changes he had made in the past, such as the analysis and evolution during the Second World War, as well as the consequences of the Bolshevik Revolution.

Thus, Mackinder's great merit lies in the fact that, wishing to demonstrate the validity of his ideas, he had the guts to adapt them to all the geopolitical changes as each major event produced during his life, until 1947, the year of his death.

Throughout his work, it appears that Mackinder's observations are not limited to the configuration of borders or power spheres, but cover a broader spectrum, starting with political realities, then including the nature of dominant resources at a given moment, as well as security paradigms active at the international system level.

In the same historical context, we must also recognize that the analyzes and conclusions formulated by the "founding fathers" of the 20th century geopolitics, apart from Mackinder's, can be listed as those of Karl Haushofer (2) and Nicholas John Spykman (3) view of the African space that interferes with the Sub-Saharan Area. Without stoking or omitting the ideas of the Austrian count, Richard Nickolaus von Coudenhove-Kalergi (4) has studies about the future of Europe where colonial powers came from.

American by adoption, John Spykman published two important works during World War II: "America's Strategy in World Politics" (1942) and "Geography of the Peace". The starting point of the analysis is the "purely geographic" assessment of the overall contours of Eurasia, but the same geo graphical reality is read differently, Mackinder insists on the central area of Eurasia, surrounded and sheltered by the mountains and the frozen ocean , Spykman accepts in part the analysis, saying that "we can continue to call the central plain of the Heartland continent, but focus our attention on what is beyond the mountains, between the mountains and the sea, so the American author emphasizes the importance of the land that surrounds the "supercontinent", placed between the mountains and the sea. To set the new assessment, he uses new concepts. What at Mackinder was "inner crescent" (the inner ring) at Spykman becomes "rimland" (the shore). And what the English author was "outer crescent" (the outer ring), the American one becomes "off-shore" maritime names), names considered to define geographic reality more clearly. In addition, Spykman also speaks of a "peripheral maritime motorway" made up of the "Mediterranean seas" of the various coastal regions of the continent, linking everything to a "maritime belt".

From the succinct comparative analysis of the two scientists' conclusions, we retain three conditions established by Meckinder to dominate the pivotal area and then to the whole world, launching in syntax a slogan that definitively devoted itself to the field: "Whoever masters Eastern Europe masters the heart of the world; Whoever masters the heart of the world masters the World Island; Who Owns the World of the World rules the world ".

In fact, all the assertions and conclusions of these "founding fathers" of geopolitics mentioned here or not remain valid and can be updated at the level of the concepts and scientific instruments that emerged after the Second World War, being almost entirely available even up to today.

## **2. The Sir H.J. Mackinder model in the geopolitics of the 21st century**

It seems an impetus to the bottom of empirical knowledge in a modern society to recall the appreciation that geographically Sub-Saharan Africa is the area of the African continent that is south of the Sahara. However, I take this risk and allow me to recall, however, that such a positioning has some particularities less conveyed in the public space of our country and not only. For example, according to the UN, this Sub-Saharan Area is made up of all African countries that are wholly or partly south of the Sahara. [2]

It contrasts with North Africa, whose territories are part of the League of Arab States, countries belonging to the Arab world. But Somalia, Djibouti, Comoros and Mauritania geographically are in sub-Saharan Africa, but they are Arab states and are therefore part of the Arab world. Then, it is good to recall from a politico-administrative and historical point of view that the 51 states that make up Sunshine Africa are divided into four regions:

- (1) East Africa - divided into two areas of the Horn of Africa and East Africa;
- (2) West Africa;
- (3) Central Africa;
- (4) South Africa.

Sahel is the geographical area that delineates the Sahara desert of tropical savannah. This division respects the regional particularities of historical, linguistic, administrative, being officially recognized by the UN. Personally, this is a useful division because today it facilitates analytical approaches to space from different perspectives, such as: the unitary and distinct assessment of the Zone in relation to the northern part of Africa, the impact of their complementarities on the global power equation in interference with Euro-atlantic security (a problem that is less approached by analysts and politicians) and, in relation to the development stage of the countries that make up it, streamlines the implementation of international humanitarian support programs and progress.

As a result, bringing Mackinder's model to the present day of life is generally welcomed and necessary, especially by the political decision-makers of the world's major powers to identify the whole spectrum of vulnerabilities and threats globally. And with regard to the pivotal character of Sub-Saharan Africa, it is also necessary to understand their implications for Euro-Atlantic security, as well as the formulation of a realistic, coherent, explicit and pragmatic foreign and security policy.

Thus, for the Sub-Saharan Pivot Zone, with many novelty elements, which until this date in the literature of our country have not been noticed, at the beginning of this year 2017 appeared "The Shadow Player; the pivotal character of Sub-Saharan Africa and its implications for Euro-Atlantic security "(5), signed by Alba-Iulia Catrinel Popescu.

The author tries and, in my opinion, manages with great courage and success to answer a series of unresolved questions that he has formulated. In order to understand the necessity of my statements made at the beginning of this subchapter, as well as the complexity of the problem in question, I still present a series of exciting questions, which are unknown in a system of power equations as they were formulated by the author, as follows: What is the place of Sub-Saharan Africa in the current global security equation? Is this space a unitary and distinct geopolitical area? How significant is the geostrategic value of Sub-Saharan Africa and what is its impact on Euro-Atlantic security? Is Sub-Saharan Africa the Southern pivotal area, "The Southern Heartland," as described by Halford J. Mackinder, or is it just a space of marginality, of no strategic importance, a ruined space under the burden of anachronism and inadaptability? Is Sub-Saharan Africa the victim of its own wealth and its Eurasian neighbourhood, which has transformed it into a large belt of ruins "The Big Shatterbelt", such as the belief of Saul Bernard Cohen? (6) Is Sub-Saharan Africa the "shadow player" world order? It is easy to see that most of the answers are suggested in a skilful way of formulating questions based on perceptions formed in direct contact with the realities experienced by the author in the midst of the events, following a long activity in the area.

The answers as a whole allow to identify the so-called "great belt of ruins" (7), the vulnerabilities of the African continent, and to assess the geopolitical crises existing in the Sub-Saharan Pivot Zone.

In a far-reaching scientific and investigative approach to the phenomena of human, political, economic, social, demographic, religious, linguistic and other developments related to local traditions, the author, analyzing the crises in which the Sub-Saharan geostrategic pivot, considers that their implications also affect Euro-Atlantic security. In this regard, it identifies the specificity of some important issues drawn from the configuration, causes and character of the conflicts in this area (eg the Republic of Angola), weak states and failed states, economic crises, food resources, drinking water and agro-industrial utility (RF Nigeria), demographic, humanitarian, social (South Africa), as well as the proliferation of illegal cross-border migration, terrorism and maritime piracy. In his opinion, the forms and magnitude of these crises are to a great extent neglected, some being even decisive about European security, as was the migrants' crisis to the centre of Europe, or international terrorism, and information unknown to the general public, presented in another recent paper entitled "What Hides behind Boko Haram?" (8) From reading this book, we find out how Nigeria, once a stable country, confessional groups take advantage of poverty, ethnic and religious conflicts, lack of education, despotism, corruption, injustice to channel the frustrations and hatred of people on the lines of global crime and violence. To manifest themselves, they only need a radical minority or a small nucleus can radicalize it.

Today's context in Europe is dominated by many extremely favourable situations for the success of terrorist attacks. In particular, in 2015, "the EU has already entered the era of insecurity", both because of its own serious weaknesses, the collateral and direct effects produced by domestic factors in countries with terrorist potential, as well as the external interventionist factors of a political and military nature on Arab and African countries. The summation of all these factors triggered the immense and unprecedented wave of population migration from these countries to the centre of the old continent.

In fact, with regard to European security as a whole, in my opinion, not only migration is the factor that influences it. This was the drop of water that filled the glass. I recall that, although there have been many attempts by leading political leaders and senior EU officials to minimize the destabilizing role of Euroscepticism, it has become a reality materialized in Brexit, a first stage of the consequences resulting from a maladministration and unrealistic (see the 13 September speech by Jean Claude Juncker, President of the EC). However, it is unofficially acknowledged that the Union is in a state of serious security instability and to which the reactions of national political decision-makers are different, ambiguous, even contradictory and obvious opposition. In this regard, I mention the overly conciliatory position of the EU managerial staff towards Russia's imperial aggressive foreign policy and, on the other hand, with the same effect, the deviant attitudes of Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and the ever-changing candidate - Turkey .

In the context of the realities of international geopolitics and current opinions in the public space, it is clear that based on another Mackinder principle, it follows that the present and the future of international relations can be discerned and evaluated taking into account geographical realities, the strategic ore resources of the Sub-Saharan Pivot Zone.

Thus, it is worth noting that entirely different theory regarding the possibilities of domination of the Eurasian continent, including in Heartland the Asian mountain areas

hardly accessible to maritime powers, as well as the river basin that flows into the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea. In this new configuration, which obviously included Germany and Russia, Mackinder stressed that a unification of these two poles of power would attract a lethal danger to Great Britain, which was reiterated much later in 1994, by reputed American visionary politician Henry Kissinger, which he extended to "the danger that he would represent throughout Europe" (9) and, in my opinion, even on the scale of international security. Unfortunately, the realities of today's European geopolitics begin to confirm the validity of this prediction, which is based on the political situation of Europe that existed around the outbreak of the Second World War.

### **3. Dualism "wealth - poverty" or "curse for Sub-Saharan Africa"**

Africa's natural resources are among the most diversified and spread in almost all of its countries, from energy, to natural mineral resources of strategic importance and ending with other types of resources such as water, wood, cultivated land. In such a huge territory where there are a large number of states, even if, for example, Sub-Saharan Africa is pivotal, unitary and distinct, a top ranking of all these categories of resources is not relevant. According to the subject in question, we will refer to some aspects that are considered to be significant in terms of energy resources: such as oil and gas, which mainly have Maghreb and Nigeria.

From a commercial point of view, African oil fields are more cost-effective, with some advantages in terms of cost and composition, such as: offshore location, in territorial waters, shelter from potential conflicts or other acts of violence; easy and inexpensive transport that does not require the use of pipelines; low sulphur content which involves low refining costs.

In the ranking of African-rich oil states, Nigeria occupies the second place after Libya, with deposits of 36.2 billion barrels of oil. The management of this resource belongs to the state-owned oil company "Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation", which operates in cooperation with major transnational operators such as ExxonMobil, Chevron, Conoco Phillips, Total Finna Elf, Agip and Addax Petroleum. The crude oil is exported to the United States in raw, unprocessed form. For this reason, the Nigerian petrochemical industry is almost non-existent; the transport infrastructure is also insufficient, under the pressure of internal secessionism. In addition, the transport of crude oil through various forms is permanently exposed to terrorist attacks of an ethnic nature.

In addition to deposits already in operation, the existence of new hydrocarbon deposits in the Chad Lake area, previously estimated by the United States Geological Surveillance Agency, was officially confirmed in 2013. , with a volume of 2.32 billion barrels of oil, 14.65 trillion cubic meters of natural gas and 391 million barrels of liquid natural gas. These resources are spread over a large area of land in northern Cameroon, north-eastern Nigeria, southern Niger, southern Algeria, and western Chad.

Chad is an oil exporting country. Currently, it operates a 1070 km long oil pipeline run by Exxon Mobile, Petronas and Chevron, in cooperation with the governments of Ndjamená and Yaoundé, which link Cameroon to Chad. This oil is transported to Cameroon and stored in a reservoir located in Kribi port, where it leaves with oil tanks at refineries in the French port of Le Havre.

It is noteworthy that, in the field of extraction of energy and mineral resources, the "Law of capture" (12) which confers ownership rights to a deposit to the first legal or natural entity

performing successful drilling operations. Under this law, companies operating in cooperation with states bordering Lake Chad (other than Nigeria) have become owners of Nigerian hydrocarbon deposits as a result of remote border access to border resources. And, trading companies, otherwise interested in investing in northern Nigeria, are now operating in neighbouring nations.

Mineral reserves across Africa occupy the first and second places in bauxite, cobalt, diamonds, phosphate rocks, platinum group (PGM), vermiculite and zirconium. (13) There are other minerals present but in smaller quantities. The share of 2012 world production in African soil was bauxite, 7%; 5% aluminium; chromium 38%; cobalt 60%; copper 9%; gold 20%; iron ore 2%; 1% steel; lead 2%; manganese 38%; zinc 1%; cement 4%; natural diamond 56%; Graphite 2%; 21% rock phosphate; coal 4%; mineral fuels (including coal) and 12% oil; uranium 18%. (14) With regard to Sub-Saharan Africa, the abundance of natural resources has been at the heart of many debates, especially as regards the level of development in the region as compared to other parts of the world. This Zone of Sub-Saharan Africa possesses a large volume and diversity of natural resources, with an important share of the entire African continent. Statistics say the variety of natural resources found in this area is estimated to be much larger than any of the other continents.

Despite the abundance, economic development has been marginal to other resource rich countries around the world. This brief description of the natural resource situation, adding here and the other types mentioned above, highlights the so-called "curse for sub-Saharan Africa" (15)

The term used here refers to the phenomenon where countries with abundant natural resources grow more slowly than those without such abundance. He suggests the imperative necessity of taking measures to return to normal and avoiding the attribution of this unfavourable appreciation. Theory belongs to Jeffrey Sachs (16) and Andrew Warner (17) who in 2001 published the results of empirical research on the growth rate of resource-rich economies, nominating states with a high volume of natural resource exports to GDP in 1971, but who had abnormal growth rates between 1971 and 1989.

For example, with unmatched mining wealth and considerable agricultural potential, South Africa is a world leader in mining. This is the largest producer of gold and platinum. It produces 10% of the gold and holds 40% of the world's known resources. It is famous for the richness of mineral resources, which is a major part of the world's resources and production. The diamond industry in South Africa also ranks fourth in the world. This country owns 80% of global manganese resources, 72% of chromium, 88% of platinum metals, 27% of vanadium, and 7% of uranium. But the fact that it has such a great wealth of raw materials, some of which are of strategic importance and has an unmatched level of development in the whole African continent, yet some 38 million inhabitants live in conditions of underdevelopment. They do not benefit from electricity or drinking water and have no access to education and health. As a result, unfortunately, South Africa is characterized by its dualism: wealth-poverty.(18)

As a common economic feature in sub-Saharan Africa at the level of 2014, it is noted that the average per capita GDP was \$ 1699, and the average per capita GDP per capita was \$ 3,423. Data provided by the World Bank reveals the low uniformity of P.I.B. in Sub-Saharan states in 2012-2014, with values on the left side of the global reporting range - \$ 31.82 million to \$ 17.42 trillion. (19)

In 2016, real GDP growth in Sub-Saharan Africa is appreciated as the weakest in relation to the global financial crisis of 2008-2009, due to weak performance in the economies of South Africa and Nigeria. As a rule, these two countries together represented about half of Sub-Saharan Africa's GDP (20).

Although oil and mining economies have been affected by the slowdown in the growth rate of the extracted mass, most of the francophone oil-importing economies such as Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal have managed to achieve strong growth rates of over 6%. The slowdown in Africa was not uniform.

Exploitation of natural resources for commercial purposes has serious socio-economic implications for communities directly affected by the exploitation process and for the nation as a whole. In the opinion of most analysts in the field, the negative impact would include: loss or erosion of indigenous and cultural identity of local communities; the violation of the rights to land belonging to communities that are given too little or no compensation; conflicts related to ethnic rivalry and land ownership; forced labour, child labour; unfair salaries and even lack thereof; freedom of association, among many other violations of the right to work; environmental degradation and pollution of drinking water, land and depletion of resources; corruption between investors and governments, camouflaged by a lack of transparency with closed door mining agreements and concessions; violent clashes between communities, regions, and countries due to the incorrect distribution of earnings and the impact of resource extraction and use, as well as other indirect factors such as influx of undocumented migrants.

Unfortunately, we find that even in the European states that have unleashed communism, in their legitimate option of moving to a market economy, in a vast process of reforms that are absolutely necessary but pushed by a process of forced globalization, they begin to some of these consequences appear, presented above.

#### **4. Europe Strategies and the Battle for the New Africa**

The Sub-Saharan Zone, although considered to be a unitary and distinct geopolitical area, yet considered anthropologically, sociologically, ethnically, linguistically and religiously, and due to tribalism and clans that still dominate community life, it was little permeable to the influences of globalization. In addition, the shortcomings stemming from the arbitrary tracing of inter-state borders after the collapse of colonialism are still evident today.

As a result, in my opinion, such "apparent abandonment," in different historical moments, in relation to the interest in this area, can be considered as "strategic errors". However, the area of the Subsaharian Zone preserves its geopolitical character. And the cumulative effects of these errors in the African continental space in an international global context determines that today's interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary analysis of the Zone becomes very topical and relevant to a world at a time when unipolarism is challenged and gradually yields to trends, more and more pronounced, of asserting new centres of world power.

Therefore, the analytical model with which to best perform in this paper refers to the "Heartland theory" and evaluates the extent to which it has influenced politics during the bipolar world and is also influenced by modern politics.

For example, during the 1970s, the oil shock induced by the Arab countries embargo during the Yom Kippur War of October 1973 highlighted the West's dependence on Arab oil as well as the power advantages conferred by the monopoly production and supply of crude oil. And

after the end of the Cold War, oil crises and economic downturns, the 2008 barrel oil price peak reached \$ 147.5 at the beginning of this year and collapsed to \$ 40 by the end of the year. (21) As demand was secured by technological dependence on hydrocarbon processing, control of sources and energy supply became a general national security objective.

At the same time, referring to the same strategic impact of hydrocarbon resources, we could detail it, for example, in a relevant case study on the Republic of Sudan.

Since the established methodology of such a study is much more complex and does not require an exhaustive approach to the situation in Sudan, I will only draw attention to those aspects which, in my opinion, will be sufficiently conclusive for our subject.

So, finding a state with a very large territorial expansion, Sudan was one of the richest African states in strategic deposits, natural gas and oil. From the demographic point of view, it was marked by ethnic, racial and confessional heterogeneity, concentrated on groups with a compact Negro, Christian and animist population. (22) But the historical, political and administrative dominance of Arab-Muslim ethnicities generated disparities in the distribution of inter- regional. Thus, the inherent internal tensions have intensified, stimulated by the area's gross potential and subsurface wealth. These tensions have degenerated into civil wars and regional conflicts, some of them continuing to the present (in the Darfur and Abyei regions).

The neo-colonialist process of attracting African territories into their own sphere of influence, marking "a new race for Africa", began in the 1990s, with the disintegration of U.R.S.S. and with a clear lack of US interest for the former European states unleashed by communism. The American control void and the weakness of the former colonial powers allowed China, India, Japan, Israel, Australia and later Iran, Saudi Arabia and South Korea to gradually penetrate the region. The motives of this attraction for the black continent clearly account for the tremendous wealth of the subsoil and the African soil.

From an American perspective, the global geostrategic stake is to preserve the status quo, which implies blocking Chinese influence on the African continent, while limiting Russia's actions. To this end, control of African shores becomes a strategic objective. In East Africa, military bases are fundamental to the geostrategic control of Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and the Indian Ocean, and the logistics support of operations in the Middle East.

## **U.S.A.**

The US interest in Sub-Saharan Africa has seen a downward trend since 1979, the year of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, events with major geostrategic impact that could not help sensing Washington by turning their attention to the area of these countries. Over time, the lack of US interest in Southeast Africa has facilitated China's entry into the area.

It was only during Clinton's administration in 2000 that the Law of Opportunity and Progress in Africa (GAO) was founded, (23) a trade agreement meant to restore the position of Americans as an important player in the area. The military presence was subsequently established by the establishment of the USAFRICOM Command. Then, in June 2012, the Obama administration released the US Strategy Paper on Sub-Saharan Africa (24).

From the perspective of the electoral debates of Donald Trump's presidential candidate, who is given the greatest chance of winning it, the implications for Sub-Saharan Africa

seemed insignificant. In the short term, the impact was relatively modest, including volatility in monetary and financial markets. In the medium term, the consequences of Donald Trump's isolationist tendencies seemed to be more felt by reductions in aid flows and a lesser focus on supporting democracy and human rights. Support for anti-terrorism initiatives appeared to be maintained, given the threat that terrorism posed to US security and national interests, but in general it was also possible to cool external relations as a whole.

In April 2017, at the 100th anniversary of setting up the White House, many media institutions analyzed the start of the presidency and its significance for the American people and for US foreign policy. Prior to the inauguration of the mandate, the Trump administration's views on Africa were relatively unknown, and its movements of 20 January 2017 did not leave much light on its attitude to this continent. However, he did not totally ignore Africa.

Thus, in the first 100 days, with regard to US foreign policy, President Trump has been in contact with several African presidents. Taking into account Donald Trump's less amiable relationship with the US media, there are no special issues from public information. As a result, according to the diplomatic protocol on the first talks at this level, the press informed in general terms that the future of relations between these countries and the United States was discussed and that the readiness to cooperate in the security of the area was reiterated. Such talks were with President Muhammad Buhari of Nigeria, in addition, expressing his readiness to sell US aircraft to Nigeria to support the fight against the Boko Haram terrorist movement. The same note was made with President Jacob Zuma of South Africa and President Uhuru Kenyatta in Kenya, stating that talks was also under way to extend co-operation and trade. It is noteworthy, but with no particular significance, that President Trump specifically congratulated Kenyan counterpart on his country's efforts in combating al-Shabab and his contribution to the African Union mission in Somalia.

## **China**

Beijing is conducting extensive trade, assistance and investment in frequent travel to resource-rich countries, and has a consistent and almost unparalleled ability to provide low cost and cheap workforce for infrastructure projects. China has become the largest consumer and energy producer in the world. Although it relies on coal for much of its energy needs, oil consumption is the second largest in the world.

With the largest Asian oil exporter, China became a net importer in 1993 and exceeded the United States as the world's largest oil importer in recent years. In 2014, the International Energy Agency estimated that China will become the largest oil consumer in the world by the early 1930s.

The second largest source of Chinese imports after the Middle East is Africa, which receives 1.4 million barrels a day, or 22%. Angola was China's third-largest oil supplier in 2016. Other African oil suppliers include the Republic of Congo and South Sudan. Although China's growth has fallen to 6.7% in 2016 and is expected to continue to moderate, the country will remain a significant area of global energy demand growth.

Inevitably China's geopolitical competition with the US was determined by the South Sudan secession process, expressed in a proxy war 25) which opposed militias of non-Arab and non-Muslim rebels. Sudan's President Omar Ahmad al-Bashir, with a longevity in power in

1989, marches in the field, Marshal, a follower of the Egyptian president's doctrine, Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-1970) refused international oil exploration auctions in favor of Sudanese companies in cooperation with non-US partners, preferably Chinese. Thus, over time, China has penetrated strongly in the exploitation of the oilfields in Sudan and through "Oil Arms Program", about 80% of this country's oil production has reached China. In this way, we see that the strengthened and interdependent economic ties have transformed the Sino-Sudanese economic relationship into an important political lever for the Bashir regime. This explains why Beijing has vetoed the O.N.U.U Security Council. on the issue of sanctions against the Bashir regime as a result of the Darfur massacres or the sharing of royalties resulting from the exploitation of crude oil after independence by the Republic of South Sudan. (26)

China has proposed three maritime economic passages connecting Asia with Africa, Oceania, Europe and beyond, in an attempt to promote maritime cooperation under the Belt and Road 27 initiative. The initiative, proposed by President Xi Jinping in 2013, refers to the economic belt of the silk route that will link China to Europe through Central and Western Asia and the 21st century sea Silk Road stretching from southern China to South Asia and Africa. The Chinese government has urged the nations participating in the 21st century silk road to work together to maintain marine ecology, enhance maritime connectivity, promote maritime economics, protect sea security, deepen oceanography research, and enhance collaboration.

At the same time, by the end of 2015, China made its decision to establish its first overseas military base in the state of strategic importance, Djibouti, one of Washington's most important listening posts for the Arab world and Africa. Placed at the junction between Aden Bay and the Red Sea, Djibouti hosts Camp Lemmonier, the Pentagon's main intelligence gathering point for the Arab world and maritime routes of strategic importance. The US base houses 4,500 soldiers and has become one of Washington's main listening posts since the attacks of September 11, 2001. In August 2017, China has inaugurated its first military base abroad. Being located on the territory of the African state of Djibouti, Beijing presents it as a logistical facility used to replenish vessels that take part in humanitarian and peacekeeping missions off the coasts of Yemen and Somalia.

As can be seen from the above-mentioned reports, currently the major geostrategic players trained in the "new race for Africa" are only the U.S. and China. However, they are settled by a number of important players such as the Russian Federation and former colonial powers France and the United Kingdom, Japan and, to a lesser extent, India.

### **The Russian Federation**

On the same occasion and in the same political diplomatic framework at the UN, the Russian Federation joined the veto used by China on the issue of the Bashir regime. In this way, Moscow speculated the instability in Sudan for its own benefit, gaining the cooperation of the Bashir government and its share of the Sudanese hydrocarbon exploitation projects.

Attractions of sub-Saharan African energy reserves for producers in Russia and elsewhere are clear. An apparent lack of interest from Russia in Sub-Saharan Africa over the past years masks persistent strategic key factors for Moscow to restore the lost influence in the region. Faster concerns about foreign policy have temporarily interrupted a Moscow-based relational process, well developed during the Soviet period, to ensure access to mineral and

energy resources that are crucial to Russia's economic and industrial interests as well as to existing and new markets for military contracts.

Russian political priorities in Africa provide both challenges and opportunities for the US in areas such as nuclear non-proliferation as well as the energy security of the United States and its European allies. These priorities indicate that the Russian development of South African key resources is closely monitored. Russia's trade with the region is likely to be significantly underdeveloped, with the exception of arms trade, which Russia should vigorously defend when its markets are being challenged, including the prospect of changing regimes or international sanctions. At the same time, however, Russia and the United States have a common interest in restricting the freedom of movement of terrorist organizations in non-governed or easily governed African areas, which opens the potential for cooperation between AFRICOM's initiatives and Russia's presence in the region of Africa.

It is generally appreciated that Russian diplomatic and economic activity in South Africa should remain a constant concern of US decision-makers due to its direct relevance to facilitating the achievement of strategic goals of the United States.

These US concerns are generated by estimates by the US Department of Energy Information that could enter Russia's penetration intentions in the area. Thus, recent research suggests that the oil and gas reserves of Angola may be higher than originally estimated. Four geological provinces in East Africa were evaluated for undiscovered, technically recoverable oil and gas as part of the US oil and gas global assessment. Average volumes averaged 27.6 billion barrels of oil, 441.1 billion cubic meters of natural gas and 13.77 billion barrels of liquid natural gas. Estimates of the likely industry and "possible productive reserves" are about 35 billion barrels of crude oil and 151 billion cubic meters of gas. At the same time, it is estimated that the sub-Saharan region as a whole could have a potential of undiscovered resources in the volume of 72 billion barrels. It is also expected that global oil imports from Sub-Saharan Africa by 2020 will total 15-20%, which means a production of about 2.5 million barrels per day. This represents about one-fifth of the undiscovered potential of the Middle East. Although there is no consensus as to when the production of Russian crude oil will peak, lower African production costs are attractive compared to the increased Russian energy for short and commercial energy security reasons. As a result, significant investments from Russia will be needed to explore, extract and export the energy resources of the untapped countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Investments in the exploration, production and development of the oil and gas export infrastructure depend on the security and stability of the invested country. In many Sub-Saharan African countries, civil wars have been a problem for investments in energy exploration, especially oil and / or gas demand, such as the situation in Angola and Sudan. In sub-Saharan Africa, the favourable waves created by oil wealth have contributed to a large extent to the widespread corruption and abuse of foreign governments in Africa.

Revenues from oil exports account for much of the gross domestic product, e.g. 40% in Nigeria and 85% in Equatorial Guinea. Most of these incomes are not resumed in the economy, maintaining poverty and instability in Sub-Saharan Africa, and creating an unstable investment environment. This raises major concerns and concerns about Russia's involvement in African energy projects.

## Conclusions

- The basic idea of the present material has partially capitalized on Mackinder's geopolitical theories, trying to demonstrate the validity of their theories to the realities of our time through concrete examples selected from the international political situation.
- Applying these theories to sub-Saharan Africa is not a coincidence. By placing it on the political map of the world, its immense geographic scope, and its energetic and mineral resources of strategic importance, this area becomes the strategic target of the great powers in the world war of resources now under way, and open, stimulating appetite for power and other states.
- This war transforms the old world order based on the principle of monopoly established just after the disintegration of the former USSR into a fierce struggle to enter a multipolar world.
- Candidates in the struggle for the podium of the prize-winners appear to be the US, even if the statements of the current US president are the adherent of an isolationism considered by his oppressive political opponents, however, at the end of all his statements he uses the phrase "America first", becoming the White House slogan. For the time being, second-tier China aspires at a fast pace, based on a surprisingly large economic potential. The same second place is claimed by Russia, which seeks to regain the position of the former USSR at all times at the mass of world-wide decisions. To this end, the current political leadership in the Kremlin promotes a traditional imperial aggressive foreign policy.
- The present material did not intend to give punctual answers to the questions that are required of the realities we are living in the process of moving to a new world order. In its contents are presented questions taken from current Heartland scholars and global domination to correctly understand the dynamics of international geopolitics and the place and role of each country on its probable trajectory.

## List of bibliographic notes

- 1) Sir Halford John Mackinder was a geographer, academician, English politician, first director of the Reading University's College of Extension (who became the University of Reading), and director of the London School of Economics, considered to be one of the founding fathers of geopolitics and geostrategic. His reference work: *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A study in the Politics of Restructuring, and Heartland Theory*, National Defence University Press, Washington D.C., Constable Publisher, Londo, "The Geographic Pivot of History";
- 2) Karl Ernst Haushofer (August 27, 1869 - March 10, 1946) was a German general, geographer and politician. Through his student Rudolf Hess, Haushofer's ideas influenced the development of Adolf Hitler's expansionist strategies, although Haushofer denied direct influence on the Nazi regime. Haushofer has developed Geopolitik from various sources, including the writings of Oswald Spengler, Alexander Humboldt, Karl Ritter, Friedrich Ratzel, Rudolf Kjellén, and Halford J. Mackinder;
- 3) Nicholas John Spykman (October 13, 1893 - June 26, 1943), an American political scientist who was one of the founders of the classical realistic school in American foreign policy, was conveying Eastern European political thinking to the United States. A serious International Relations Teacher, taught at Yale University's International Studies Institute, one of his main

concerns, made his students educated geographically - geopolitics was impossible without a geographical understanding. His work on geopolitics and geostrategic made him known as the "god of detention."

4) Richard Nikolaus Eijiro, Count of Coudenhove-Kalergi (November 16, 1894 - July 27, 1972), Austro-Japanese politician, philosopher and Count of Coudenhove-Kalergi. A pioneer of European integration, he was the founding president of the Pan-European Union for 49 years, which would be the EU's preliminary ideological foundation.

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7) An ancient 200,000-year ancient metropolis discovered in Africa about 240 km inside the continent, west of Maputo. They are the remains of an immense metropolis measuring about 2400 square kilometres, according to some conservative estimates. It is part of an even larger community of approximately 16,000 square kilometres and seems to have been built from 160,000 to 200,000 BC. Individual ruins are in large circles of stone. Many of them have been buried in the sand and are only identifiable by satellite or airplane and all have a belt configuration.

8) Popescu, Alba-Iulia, What is hiding behind Boko Haram? Top Forum Publishing House, Bucharest, 2016

9) Kissinger, Henry, Diplomacy, ALL Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010

10) Riches vs Poverty in South Africa. See strident differences in ...

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About wealth and poverty Doxology

<https://doxologia.ro/cuvinte-duhovnicesti/despre-bogatie-saracie>

11) Is Africa accursed? - From the impressions of a missionary...

[www.mission2malawi.com/ro/2013/10/este-africa-blestemata.html](http://www.mission2malawi.com/ro/2013/10/este-africa-blestemata.html)

12) The Capture Act is a common law in England adopted by several jurisdictions in the US which establishes a rule of non-liability and ownership of captured natural resources, including groundwater, oil, gas and hunting animals. The general rule is that the first person who "captures" such a resource owns this resource

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rule\\_of\\_capture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rule_of_capture)

13), 14) Natural Resources and Africa's Economy - Scribd

<https://ro.scribd.com/doc/92885821/Resursele-Naturale-Si-Economia-Africii>

Is Africa Cursed? - From the impressions of a missionary...

[www.mission2malawi.com/ro/2013/10/este-africa-blestemata.html](http://www.mission2malawi.com/ro/2013/10/este-africa-blestemata.html)

16) Jeffrey D. Sachs, Andrew M. Warner

Abundance of natural resources and economic growth

NBER Working document no. 5398 issued in December 1995 NBER Program: EFG IFM EEE, [www.nber.org/papers/w5398](http://www.nber.org/papers/w5398)

17) Jeffrey David Sachs (born November 5, 1954) is an American economist and director of the Columbia University Earth Institute, where he holds the title of university professor, Columbia's highest ranked faculty. He is known as one of the world's leading experts in the field of economic development and the fight against poverty. Sachs is Quetelet Sustainable Development Professor at Columbia International School of Public Affairs and a professor of health policy and management at the Columbia School of Public Health. Starting with 2017, he serves as Special Advisor to UN Secretary-General António Guterres on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), a set of 17 global targets adopted at the UN High-Level Meeting in September 2015; he held the same position within UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and before 2016 a similar counselling position with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

18) Riches vs Poverty in South Africa. See strident differences in ... [m.businessmagazin.ro/.../bogatie-vs-saracie-in-africa-de-sud-vezi-diferentele-striden](http://m.businessmagazin.ro/.../bogatie-vs-saracie-in-africa-de-sud-vezi-diferentele-striden); About wealth and poverty Doxology; <https://doxologia.ro/cuvinte-duhovnicesti/despre-bogatie-saracie>

19), 20) Sub-Saharan Africa - World Bank Data - World Bank Group <https://data.worldbank.org/region/sub-saharan-africa>

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23) The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA): <https://www.brookings.edu/the-african-growth-and-opportunities...>

24) U.S. Strategy Towards Sub-Saharan Africa - ObamaWhiteHouse.gov [https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/fact-sheet-new-layer ...](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/fact-sheet-new-layer...)

25) proxy war: a conflict between two states or non-state actors, in which no entity directly engages the other. Although this may include a stretch of armed confrontation, its main definition is based on two separate powers, using external conflicts to somehow attack the interests or territorial holdings of the other.

26) The South Sudan referendum took place from 9 to 15 January 2011 and was organized following the 2005 Naajsa Peace Agreement between the Khartoum Government and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement, which concluded half a century of rebellion (Sudan Civil War) bloody suppressed. According to the final results of the referendum, 99% of voters, inhabitants of southern Sudan, chose to separate from Sudan. Sudanese President Omar el-Bechir has ratified the outcome of the referendum and implicitly the independence of South Sudan.

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Figure no. 2

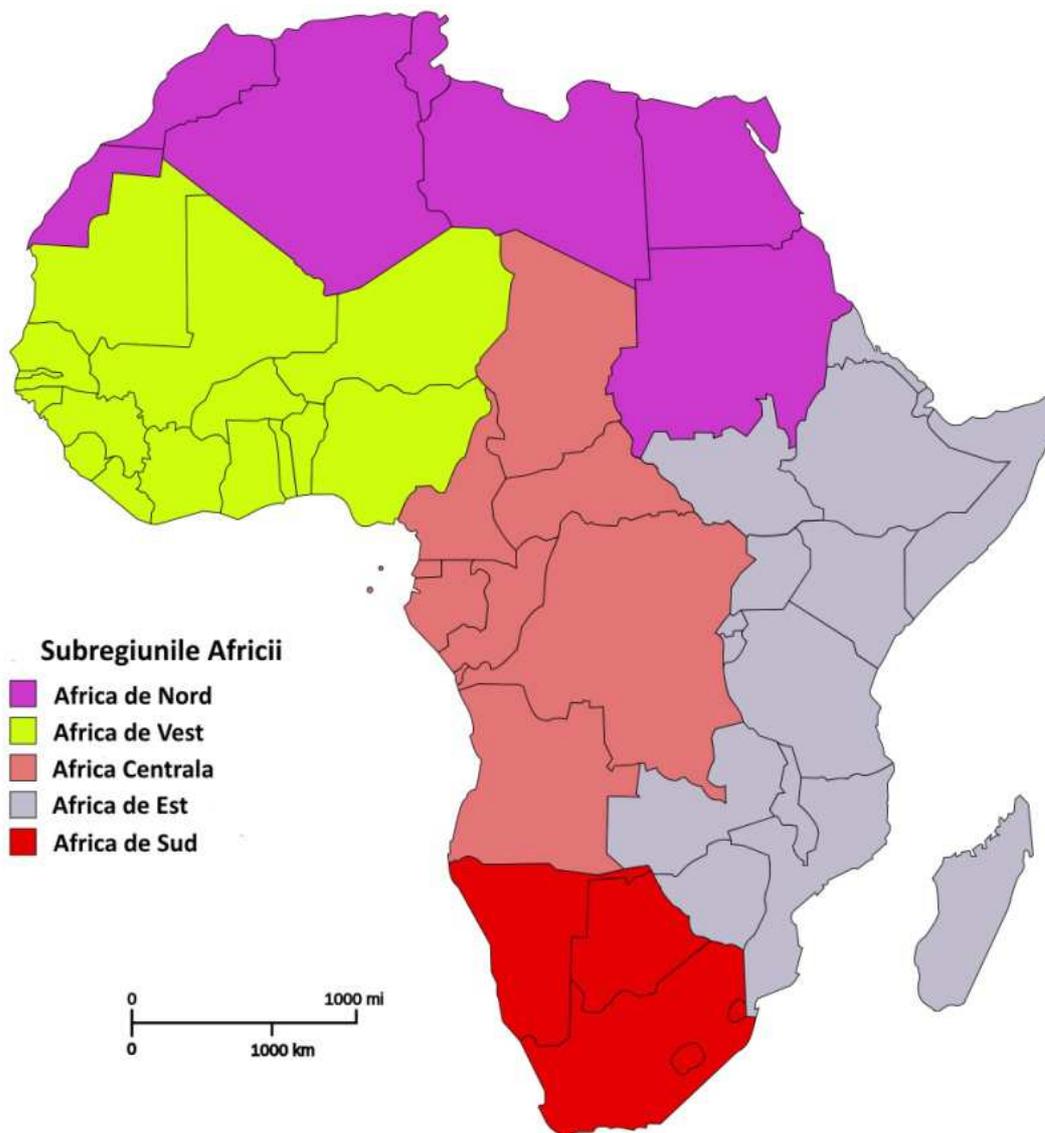
### Africa's political map



Source: Internet address: Africa Regions, U.N. Development Report, <http://www.mapsofworld.com/africa/regions/maps/africa-regions-map.jpg>, accessed on 09/10/2017

Figure no. 3

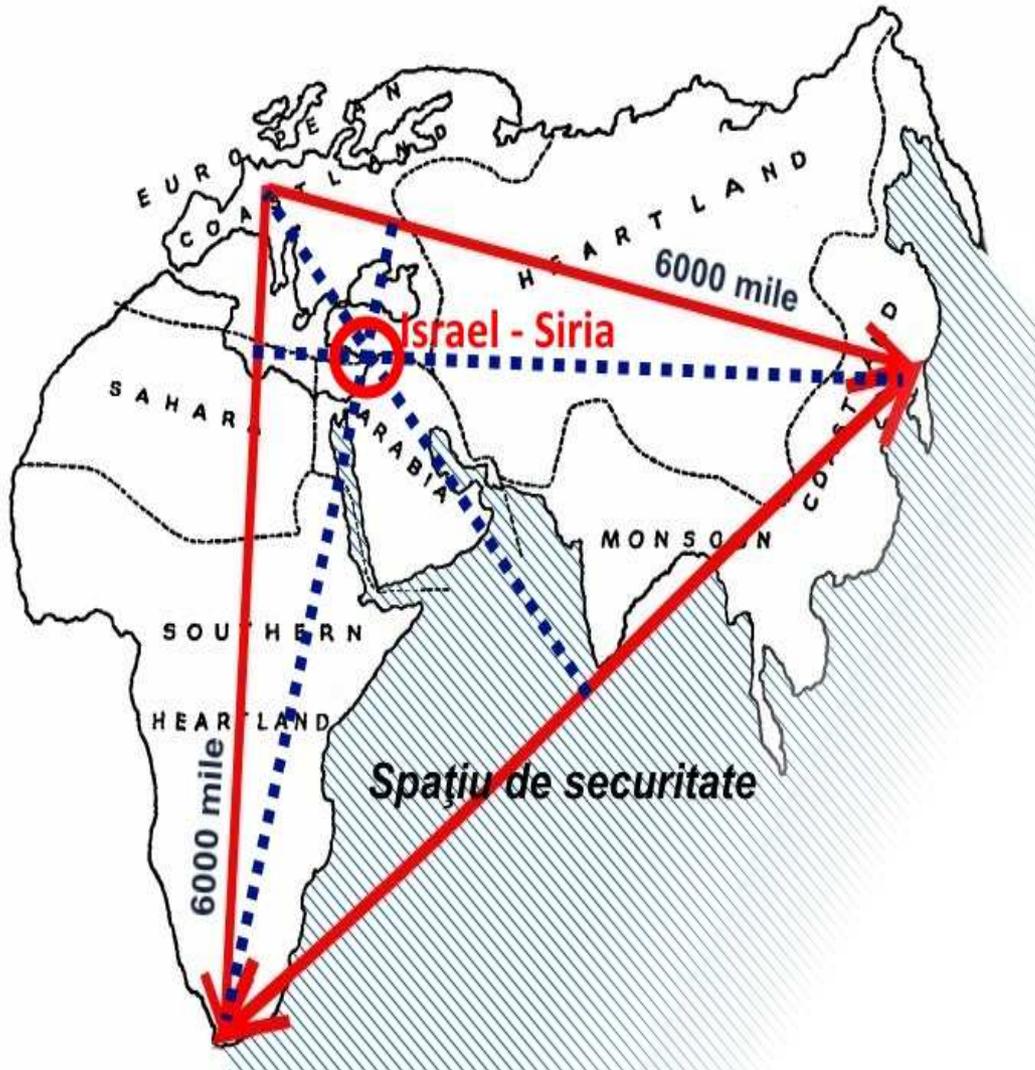
Regional Map of Africa



Source: Internet address: Africa Regions, U.N. Development Report, <http://www.mapsofworld.com/africa/regions/maps/africa-regions-map.jpg>, accessed on 10.06.2015

Figure no. 4

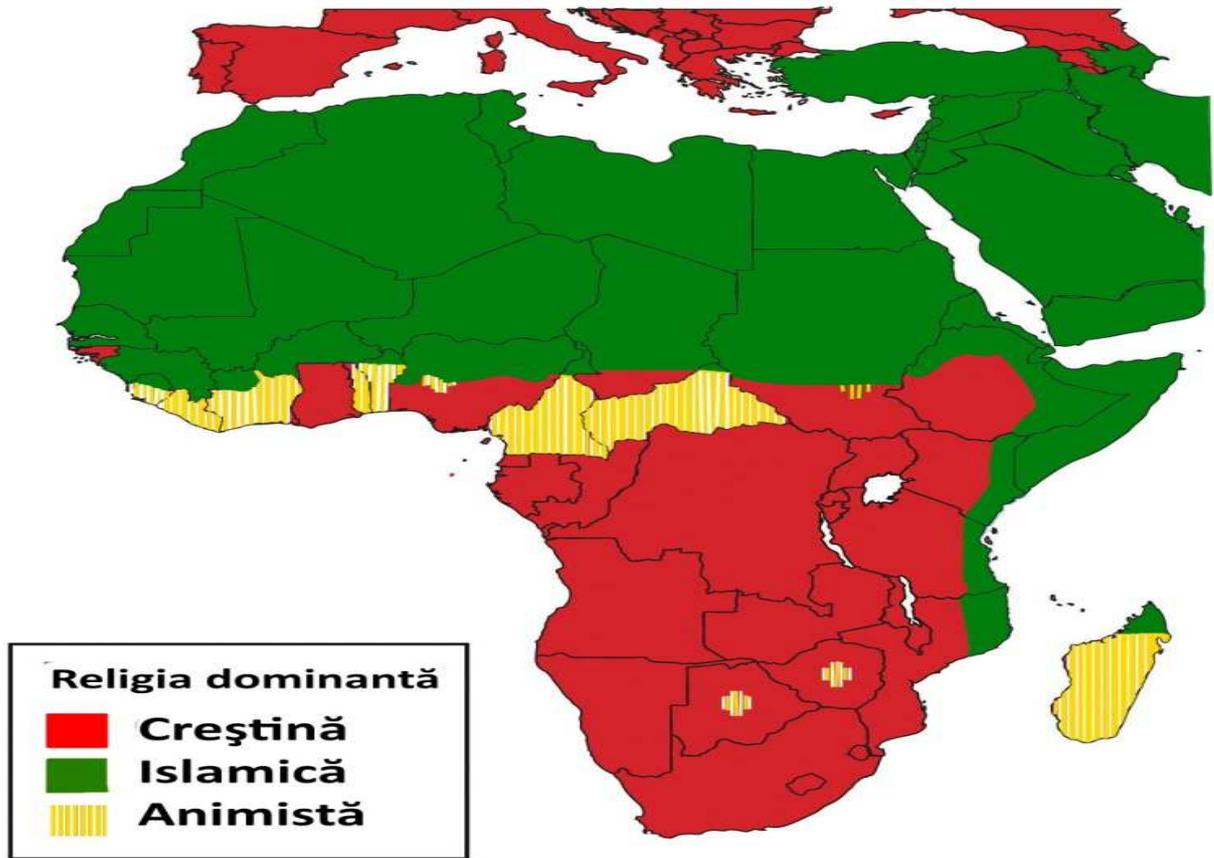
The African-Eurasian security area according to domination theory



Source: [http://materialeDidactice.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/M4\\_R\\_A-500x666.jpg](http://materialeDidactice.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/M4_R_A-500x666.jpg), accessed on 11.11.2016

Figure no. 5

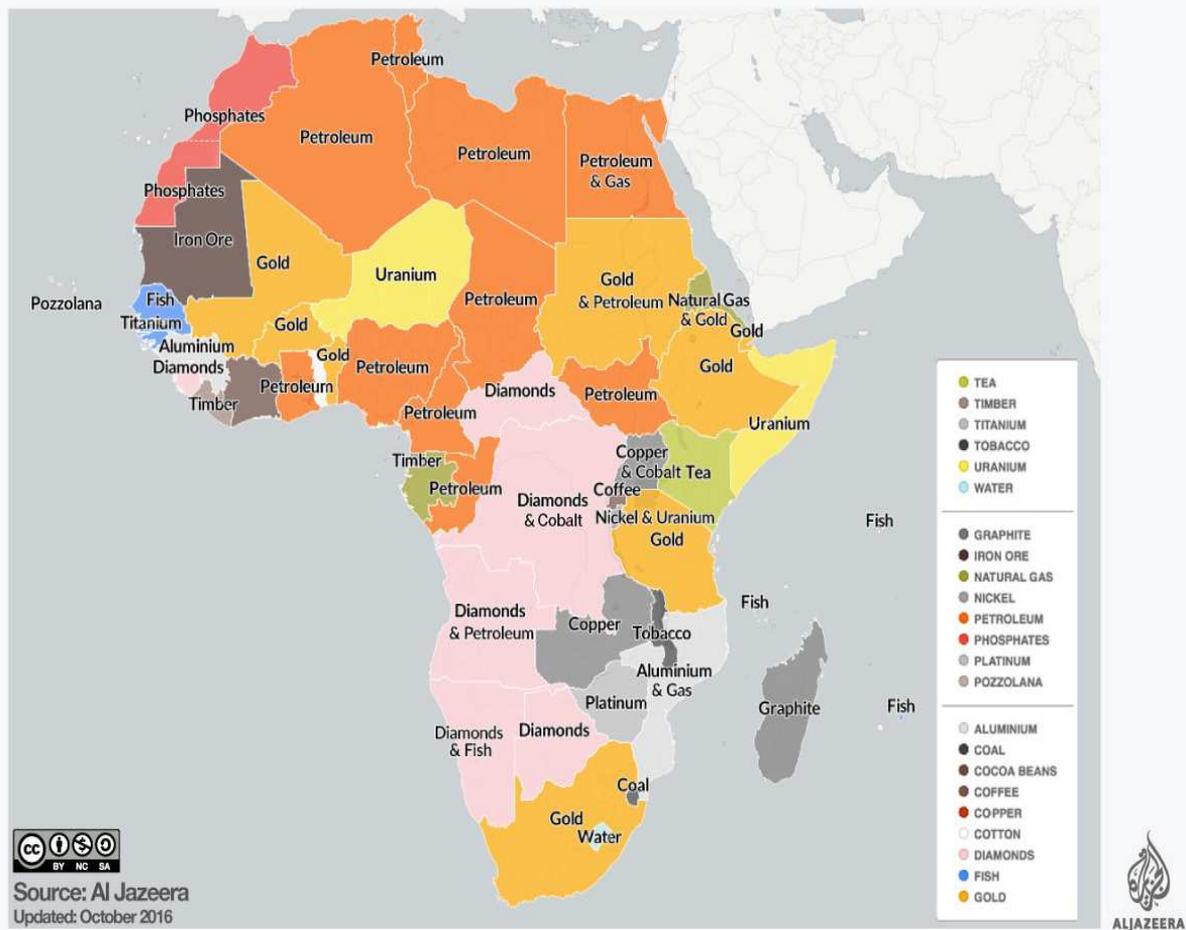
The distribution of religious confessions across Africa



Source: Internet address: Human Geography of Sub-Saharan Africa, [https://saylordotorg.github.io/text\\_world-regional-geography-people-places-and-globalization/s10-02-human-geography-of-sub-saharan-](https://saylordotorg.github.io/text_world-regional-geography-people-places-and-globalization/s10-02-human-geography-of-sub-saharan-)

Figure no. 6

# Mapping Africa's natural resources



Source: Current African Issues no.39 Natural resources in Sub-Saharan Africa: Assets and vulnerabilities, by Johan Holmberg

The location of future Chinese naval bases in indopacific space



Source: Internet address: Chinese paper advises PLA Navy to build overseas military bases, 08.01.2013, available at <http://www.china-defense-mashup.com/chinese-paper-advises-pla-navy-to-build-overseas-military-bases.ary-bases>.