Making Peace or Fueling War in Africa

Daniel Volman and William Minter | March 13, 2009

At the end of President Barack Obama's inauguration ceremony, civil rights leader Rev. Joseph Lowery invoked the hope of a day "when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, when tanks will be beaten into tractors." No one expects such a utopian vision to materialize any time soon. But both Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton have spoken eloquently of the need to emphasize diplomacy over a narrow military agenda. In her confirmation hearing, Clinton stressed the need for "smart power," perhaps inadvertently echoing Obama's opposition to the invasion of Iraq as a "dumb war." Even top U.S. military officials, such as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen, have warned against overly militarizing U.S. foreign policy.[1]

In practice, such a shift in emphasis is certain to be inconsistent. At a global level, the most immediate challenge to the credibility of change in foreign policy is Afghanistan, where promised troop increases are given little chance of bringing stability and the country risks becoming Obama's "Vietnam." Africa policy is for the most part under the radar of public debate. But it also poses a clear choice for the new administration. Will de facto U.S. security policy toward the continent focus on anti-terrorism and access to natural resources and prioritize bilateral military relations with African countries? Or will the United States give priority to enhancing multilateral capacity to respond to Africa's own urgent security needs?

If the first option is taken, it will undermine rather than advance both U.S. and African security. Taking the second option won't be easy. There are no quick fixes. But U.S. security in fact requires that policymakers take a broader view of Africa's security needs and a multilateral approach to addressing them.

The need for immediate action to promote peace in Africa is clear. While much of the continent is at peace, there are large areas of great violence and insecurity, most prominently centered on Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Somalia. These crises require not only a continuing emphasis on diplomacy but also resources for peacemaking and peacekeeping. And yet the Bush administration has bequeathed the new president a new military command for Africa (the United States Africa Command, known as AFRICOM). Meanwhile, Washington has starved the United Nations and other multilateral institutions of resources, even while entrusting them with enormous peacekeeping responsibilities.

The government has presented AFRICOM as a cost-effective institutional restructuring and a benign program for supporting African governments in humanitarian as well as necessary security operations. In fact, it represents the institutionalization and increased funding for a model of bilateral military ties—a replay of the mistakes of the Cold War. This risks drawing the United States more deeply into conflicts, reinforcing links with repressive regimes, excusing human rights abuses, and frustrating rather than fostering sustainable multilateral peacemaking and peacekeeping. It will divert scarce budget resources, build resentment, and undercut the long-term interests of the United States.

Shaping a new U.S. security policy toward Africa requires more than just a modest tilt toward more active diplomacy. It also requires questioning this inherited security framework, and shaping an alternative framework that aligns U.S. and African security interests within a broader perspective of inclusive human security. In particular, it requires that the United States shift from a primarily bilateral and increasingly military approach to one that prioritizes joint action with both African and global partners.

AFRICOM in Theory and Practice

Judging by their frequent press releases, AFRICOM and related programs such as the Navy's Africa Partnership Station are primarily focused on a constant round of community relations and capacity building projects, such as rescue and firefighting training for African sailors, construction of clinics and schools, and similar endeavors. "AFRICOM is about helping Africans build greater capacity to assure their own security," asserted Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Theresa Whelan in a typical official statement. AFRICOM defenders further cite the importance of integrating development and humanitarian programs into the program's operations.[2]

AFRICOM releases a steady stream of photographs and stories highlighting community relations and similar projects. In this picture, a Ghanaian, Cameroonian and U.S. sailor load donated Project Handclasp materials for a community relations project in Sekondi, Ghana, as part of an Africa Partnership Station (APS) initiative, February 26, 2009.

Source: http://www.africom.mil
U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class David Holmes

Pentagon spokespeople describe AFRICOM as a logical bureaucratic restructuring that will ensure that Africa gets the attention it deserves. They insist AFRICOM won't set the priorities for U.S. policy toward Africa or increase Pentagon influence at the expense of civilian agencies. Testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in August 2007, Whelan denied that AFRICOM was being established "solely to fight terrorism, or to secure oil resources, or to discourage China," countering: "This is not true."

But other statements by Whelan herself, by General William "Kip" Ward, the four-star African-American general who commands AFRICOM, and Vice-Admiral Robert Moeller, his military deputy, lay out AFRICOM's priorities in more conventional terms. In a briefing for European Command officers in March 2004, Whelan said that the Pentagon's priorities in Africa were to "prevent establishment of/disrupt/destroy terrorist groups; stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction; perform evacuations of U.S. citizens in danger; assure access to strategic resources, lines of communication, and refueling/forward sites" in Africa.[3] On February 19, 2008, Moeller told an AFRICOM conference that protecting "the free flow of natural resources from Africa to the global market" was one of AFRICOM's "guiding principles," citing "oil disruption," "terrorism," and the "growing influence" of China as major "challenges" to U.S. interests in Africa.[4] Appearing before the House Armed Services Committee on March 13, 2008, General Ward echoed the same views and identified combating terrorism as "AFRICOM's number one theater-wide goal."[5] Ward barely mentioned development, humanitarian aid, or conflict

resolution. U.S. official discourse on AFRICOM doesn't engage with the parallel discussions in the United Nations and the African Union about building multilateral peacekeeping capacity. Strikingly, there was no official consultation about the new command with either the United Nations or the African Union before it was first announced in 2006.

In practice, AFRICOM, which became a fully independent combatant command on October 1, 2008, with its headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany, is built on the paradigm of U.S. military commands which span the globe. Although AFRICOM features less "kinetic" (combat) operations than the active wars falling under CENTCOM in Iraq and Afghanistan, its goals and programs are more conventional than the public relations image would imply. The Pentagon now has six geographically focused commands—each headed by either a four-star general or admiral—Africa (AFRICOM); the Middle East and Central Asia (Central Command or CENTCOM); Europe and most of the former Soviet Union (European Command or EUCOM); the Pacific Ocean, East and South Asia (Pacific Command or PACOM); Mexico, Canada, and the United States (Northern Command or NORTHCOM); and Central and South America (Southern Command or SOUTHCOM), as well as others

Source: http://www.nau.usace.army.mil/where/areaop.php

with functional responsibilities, such as for Special Forces and Nuclear Weapons.

Before AFRICOM was established, U.S. military operations in Africa fell under three different commands. EUCOM handled most of Africa; but Egypt and the Horn of Africa fell under the authority of CENTCOM (Egypt remains under CENTCOM rather than AFRICOM); Madagascar and the island states of the Indian Ocean were the responsibility of PACOM. All three were primarily concerned with other regions of the world that took priority over Africa, and had only a few middle-rank staff members dedicated to Africa. This reflected the fact that Africa was chiefly viewed as a regional theater in the global Cold War, as an adjunct to U.S.-European relations, or—in the immediate post-Cold War period—as a region of little concern to the United States. But Africa's status in U.S. national security policy and military affairs rose dramatically during the Bush administration, in response both to global terrorism and the growing significance of African oil resources.

The new strategic framework for Africa emphasizes, above all, the threat of global terrorism and the risk posed by weak states, "empty spaces," and countries with large Muslim populations as vulnerable territories where terrorists may find safe haven and political support. This framework is fundamentally flawed. No one denies that al-Qaeda has found adherents and allied groups in Africa, as evidenced most dramatically by the bombings of U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998. But Islamist ideology has had only limited impact among most African Muslims, and even in countries with extremist Islamist governments or insurgent groups (such as Algeria, Sudan, and Somalia), the focus has been on local issues rather than global conflict. Counterinsurgency analysts such as Robert Berschinski[6] and David Kilcullen[7] have warned that "aggregating" disparate local insurgencies into an all-encompassing vision of global terrorism in fact facilitates al-Qaeda's efforts to woo such groups. Heavy-handed military action such as air strikes that kill civilians and collaboration with counter-insurgency efforts by incumbent regimes, far from diminishing the threat of terrorism, helps it grow.

While AFRICOM may be new, there's already a track record for such policies in programs now incorporated into AFRICOM. That record shows little evidence that these policies contribute to U.S. or African security. To the contrary, there are substantial indications that they are in fact counterproductive, both increasing insecurity in Africa and energizing potential threats to U.S. interests.

Examining the Record: Somalia

The most prominent example of active U.S. military involvement in Africa has been the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA). Speaking not for attribution at a conference in early 2008, a senior AFRICOM official cited this task force, which has taken the lead in U.S. engagement with Somalia, as a model for AFRICOM's operations elsewhere on the continent. In October 2002, CENTCOM played the leading role in the creation of this joint task force, designed to conduct naval and aerial patrols in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the eastern Indian Ocean, in order to counter the activities of terrorist groups in the region. The command authority for CJTF-HOA was transferred to AFRICOM as of October 1, 2008.

Based since 2002 at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti, the CJTF-HOA is comprised of approximate 1,400 U.S. military personnel—primarily sailors, Marines, and Special Forces troops. Under a new five-year agreement signed in 2007, the base has expanded to some 500 acres. In addition, the CJTF-HOA has established three permanent con-

tingency operating locations that have been used to mount attacks on Somalia, one at the Kenyan naval base at Manda Bay and two others at Hurso and Bilate in Ethiopia. A U.S. Navy Special Warfare Task Unit was recently deployed to Manda Bay, where it is providing training to Kenyan troops in anti-terrorism operations and coastal patrol missions.

The CJTF-HOA provided intelligence to Ethiopia in support of its invasion of Somalia in December 2006. It also used military facilities in Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya to launch air raids and missile strikes in January and June of 2007 and May of 2008 against alleged al-Qaeda members involved in the Union of Islamic Courts in Somalia. At least dozens of Somali civilians were killed in this series of air attacks alone, and hundreds wounded. These were only a fraction of the toll of the fighting during the invasion, in which hundreds of civilians were killed and over 300,000 people displaced by mid-2007. By the end of 2008, over 3.2 million people (43% of Somalia's population), including 1.3 million internally displaced by conflict, were estimated to be in need of food assistance. The U.S. air strikes made U.S. backing for the invasion highly visible.

Air Force AC-130 gunships struck al Qaeda targets in Somalia on January 8, 2007, according to news reports. The reports said the AC-130 attacks hit an area called Ras Kamboni, a heavily forested area near the Kenyan border.

Source: U.S. Air Force (http://www.af.mil)

These military actions, moreover, represented only part of a broader counterproductive strategy shaped by narrow counterterrorism considerations. In 2005 and 2006, the CIA funneled resources to selected Somali warlords to oppose Islamist militia. The United States collaborated with Ethiopia in its invasion of Somalia in late 2006, overthrowing the Islamic Courts Union that had brought several months of unprecedented stability to the capital Mogadishu and its surroundings. The invasion was a conventional military success. But far from reducing the threat from extremist groups, it isolated moderates, provoked internal displacement that became one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, inflamed anti-U.S. sentiment, and even provoked the targeting of both local and international humanitarian operations.

In short, Somalia provided a textbook case of the negative results of "aggregating" local threats into an undifferentiated concept of global terrorism. It has left the new Obama administration with what Ken Menkhaus, a leading academic expert on Somalia, called "a policy nightmare."[8]

Examining the Record: The Sahel

Less in the news, but also disturbing because of the wide range of countries involved in both North and West Africa, is the U.S. military involvement in the Sahara and Sahel region, now under AFRICOM. Operation Enduring Freedom Trans Sahara (OEF-TS) provides military support to the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP) program, which comprises the United States and eleven African countries: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal. Its goals are defined on the AFRICOM web site as "to assist traditionally moderate Muslim governments

and populations in the Trans-Sahara region to combat the spread of extremist ideology and terrorism in the region." It builds on the former Pan Sahel Initiative, which was operational from 2002 to 2004, and draws on resources from the Department of State and USAID as well as the Department of Defense.

Operational support comes from another task force, Joint Task Force Aztec Silence (JTFAS), created in December 2003 under EUCOM. JTFAS was specifically charged with conducting surveillance operations using the assets of the U.S. Sixth Fleet and to share information, along with intelligence collected by U.S. intelligence agencies, with local military forces. Among other assets, it deploys a squadron of U.S. Navy P-3 Orion maritime patrol aircraft based in Sigonella, Sicily.

U.S. troops deployed in Operation Flintlock 2004 conduct training exercise in Niger.

Source: U.S. European Command (http://www.eucom.mil)

In March 2004, P-3 aircraft from this squadron and reportedly operating from the southern Algerian base at Tamanrasset were deployed to monitor and gather intelligence on the movements of Algerian Salafist guerrillas operating in Chad and to pass on this intelligence to Chadian forces engaged in combat against the guerrillas. In September 2007, an American C-130 "Hercules" cargo plane stationed in Bamako, the capital of Mali, as part of the Flintlock 2007 exercises, was deployed to resupply Malian counter-insurgency units engaged in fighting with Tuareg forces and was hit by Tuareg ground fire. No U.S. personnel were injured and the plane returned safely to the capital, but the incident signaled a significant extension of the U.S. role in counter-insurgency warfare in the region.

These operations illustrate how strengthening counterinsurgency capacity proves either counterproductive or irrelevant as a response to African security issues, which may include real links to global terrorist networks but are for the most part focused on specific national and local realities. On an international scale, the impact of violent Islamic extremism in North Africa has direct implications in Europe, but its bases are urban communities and the North African Diaspora in Europe, rather than the Sahara-Sahel hinterland. Insurgencies along the Sahara-Sahel divide, in Mali, Niger, and Chad, reflect ethnic and regional realities rather than extensions of global terrorism. The militarily powerful North African regimes, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya, have very distinct experiences with Islamic extremism. But none have a record of stability based on democratic accountability to civil society. And associating all threats to security in Nigeria with the threat of extremist Islam is a bizarre stereotype ignoring that country's real problems.

In his November 2007 paper on AFRICOM, cited above, Berschinski noted that the United States and Algeria exaggerated the threat from the small

rebel group GSPC (Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat), officially allied with al-Qaeda. A scary, if geographically inappropriate, headline in Air Force Magazine in November 2004, heralded the threat from a "Swamp of Terror in the Sahara." The emphasis on counterinsurgency, Berschinski argues, has disrupted traditional trade networks and allowed local governments to neglect the need for finding negotiated solutions to concerns of Tuareg areas and other neglected regions. In the case of Mali, Robert Pringle—a former U.S. ambassador to that country—has noted that the U.S. emphasis on anti-terrorism and radical Islam is out of touch with both the country's history and Malian perceptions of current threats to their own security.[9] The specifics of each country differ, but the common reality is that the benefits of U.S. collaboration with local militaries in building counterinsurgency capacity haven't been demonstrated.

Cases to the contrary, however, aren't hard to find. In Mauritania, General Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz overthrew the elected government in August 2008, leading to sanctions from the African Union and suspension of all but humanitarian aid from France and the United States. U.S. aid to Mauritania for the 2008 fiscal year that was suspended included $15 million in military-to-military funding, as well as $4 million for peacekeeping training—and only $3 million in development assistance. More generally, the common argument that U.S. military aid promotes values of respect for democracy is decisively contradicted by what resulted in Latin America from decades of U.S. training of the region's military officers. If democratic institutions are not already strong, strengthening military forces is most likely to increase the chances of military interventions in politics.

Potential Threats

With at least a temporary withdrawal of Ethiopian troops and the election of moderate Islamic leader Sheikh Sharif Ahmed as president of the transitional Somali government, there is at least the option of a new beginning in that country. But no one expects any quick solution, with all parties internally divided (including the insurgent militia known as Al-Shabaab) and international peace efforts distracted by multiple agendas. There will be a continuing temptation to continue a narrow anti-terrorist agenda, even if this path is now more widely recognized as self-defeating.

In the region covered by Operation Enduring Freedom Trans Sahara, the conflict in Chad, where the World Bank abandoned efforts to ensure accountability for oil revenues, is still intimately tied with the larger conflict in Darfur to the east, as well as with the legacy of Libyan intervention. Although the United States has deferred to France in active military and political involvement in Chad, it has also supported President Idriss Deby, who has been in power since 1991 and changed the constitution in 2005 to allow himself another term. Despite attacks by rebels on the capital in February 2008, Deby retained control with French military assistance. In northern Niger, uranium resources threaten to provide new incentives for the conflict with the Tuareg minority reignited there and in Mali since 2007. Mali is generally seen as one of West Africa's most successful democracies, but it's also threatened by Tuareg discontent which requires a diplomatic rather than military solution.

Of particular strategic importance for the future is Nigeria, where U.S. military concerns of anti-terrorism and energy security converge. As Nigeria specialists Paul Lubeck, Michael Watts, and Ronnie Lipschutz outline in a 2007 policy study, the threat to Nigeria from Islamic extremism is wildly exag-

gerated in statements by U.S. military officials.[10] In contrast, they note, "nobody doubts the strategic significance of contemporary Nigeria for West Africa, for the African continent as a whole, and for the oil-thirsty American economy." But the solution to the growing insurgency in the oil-rich Niger Delta isn't a buildup of U.S. naval forces and support for counter-insurgency actions by the Nigerian military. The priority is rather to resolve the problems of poverty, environmental destruction, and to promote responsible use of the country's oil wealth, particularly for the people of the oil-producing regions.

Currently, U.S. military ties with Nigeria and other oil-producing states of West and Central Africa include not only bilateral military assistance, but also the naval operations of the Africa Partnership Station and other initiatives to promote maritime safety, particularly for the movement of oil supplies. In recent years, United States military aid to Nigeria has included at least four coastal patrol ships to Nigeria, and approximately $2 million a year in other funds, including for development of a small boat unit in the Niger Delta. According to the State Department's budget request justification for the 2007 fiscal year, military aid to the country is needed because "Nigeria is the fifth largest source of U.S. oil imports, and disruption of supply from Nigeria would represent a major blow to U.S. oil security strategy."[11] In fact, maritime security is a legitimate area for concern for both African nations and importers of West African oil. Piracy for purely monetary motives, as well as the insurgency in the Niger Delta, is a real and growing threat off the West African coast. Yet strengthening the military capacity of Nigeria and other oil-producing states, without dealing with the fundamental issues of democracy and distribution of wealth, won't lead to security for African people or for U.S. interests, including oil supplies. Likewise, a military solution can't resolve the issue of piracy in the Indian Ocean and Red Sea.

The threats cited by U.S. officials to justify AFRICOM aren't imaginary. Global terrorist networks do seek allies and recruits throughout the African continent, with potential impact in the Middle East, Europe, and even North America as well as in Africa. In the Niger Delta, the production of oil has been repeatedly interrupted by attacks by militants of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). More broadly, insecurity creates a environment vulnerable to piracy and to the drug trade, as well as to motivating potential recruits to extremist political violence.

It doesn't follow, however, that such threats can be effectively countered by increased U.S. military engagement, even if the direct involvement of U.S. troops is minimized. The focus on building counter-insurgency capacity for African governments with U.S. assistance diverts attention from more fundamental issues of conflict resolution. It also heightens the risks of increasing conflict and concomitantly increasing hostility to the United States.

Continuity or Change

Will the Obama administration seriously reexamine the Africa policy it has inherited from its predecessors? Or will continuity be the watchword? The few indications we have so far, from campaign statements and Obama's choice of top officials, point to continuity. Yet the critical tests will be in practice, as African crises force their way onto the agenda even while the administration's energies are primarily focused on more prominent domestic and international challenges.

Patterns from the Past

During his presidential bid, Senator Barack Obama's statements signaled continuity with Bush administration policies on Africa, including security issues. Paralleling his prominent remarks on Afghanistan, the candidate's reply to a questionnaire from the Leon Sullivan Foundation in September 2007 noted that "there will be situations that require the United States to work with its partners in Africa to fight terrorism with lethal force," leaving open the door for attacks on Somalia.[12] In an article written for AllAfrica.com in September 2008, Witney Schneidman, deputy assistant secretary of state for African affairs in the Clinton administration and adviser on Africa to the Obama campaign, said the new administration "will create a Shared Partnership Program to build the infrastructure to deliver effective counter-terrorism training, and to create a strong foundation for coordinated action against al-Qaeda and its affiliates in Africa and elsewhere."[13] He added that the program "will provide assistance with information sharing, operations, border security, anti-corruption programs, technology, and the targeting of terrorist financing." Schneidman further argued that "in the Niger Delta, we should become more engaged not only in maritime security, but in working with the Nigerian government, the European Union, the African Union, and other stakeholders to stabilize the region."

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Even more significant a signal was Obama's choice of General James Jones (Ret.) as his national security advisor. As commander of NATO and EUCOM from 2003 through 2006, General Jones was an enthusiastic advocate of AFRICOM. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice, who is well-placed to be an advocate for multilateral approaches to peace in Africa, is nevertheless on record as having endorsed Bush administration air strikes on Somalia at the time of the Ethiopian invasion. And she has been a prominent advocate of direct bilateral U.S. military action in Darfur.

On February 9, 2009, Acting Assistant Secretary of State Phil Carter, speaking at the Pentagon's Africa Center for Strategic Studies, opened his remarks with the claim[14] that "the one foreign policy success of the previous administration is Africa." He outlined four priorities, beginning with "providing security assistance programs" to African partners, followed by promoting "democratic systems and practices," "sustainable and broad-based market-led economic growth," and "health and social development." Although he prefaced his list of priorities with a reference to support for ending conflict in Africa and "African solutions to African problems," it's telling that the description of the security priority includes military capacity-building and AFRICOM operations, but no mention at all of diplomacy.

Such indications do not give great confidence in any major shift in security strategy. Nevertheless, there are also signals that U.S. officials, including some in the military and intelligence community, do recognize the need to give greater emphasis to diplomacy and development. The initial U.S. welcome to the election of moderate Islamist Sheikh Sharif Ahmed as president of Somalia is potentially an indicator of a new approach to that complex crisis. Incoming Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair told the Senate in his first annual threat assessment that "the primary near-term security concern of the United States is the global eco-

nomic crisis."[15] Blair's survey covered traditional security threats, including "extremist groups using terrorism," but also stressed the need for the United States to not only deal with "regions, regimes, and crises" but also participate in developing new multilateral systems.

Changing Priorities

For Africa in particular, realities call for a different ordering of priorities, recognizing the significance of less conventional threats and the inadequacy of narrow military responses. In a report released in February this year, TransAfrica Forum called for a new policy framework based on "inclusive human security."[16] Such a framework would require fundamental shifts in thinking, stressing multilateral cooperation over unilateral initiatives, a broad range of threats than only those from violent enemies, and investment in basic economic and social rights over blind trust in the market.

U.S. Africa policy based on such a framework would look very different than that outlined by Assistant Secretary of State Carter as the inheritance from the Bush administration, even if containing many of the same elements. In the economic and development arena, it should build on the example of the response to AIDS, both multilateral and bilateral, to address African needs in health, education, food, economic infrastructure, and the environment, with all countries paying their fair share. The United States should open a genuine dialogue about trade and development policy, instead of imposing rigid free-market policies that are systematically biased in favor of rich countries. And the administration should draw on the insights and contributions of the large community of recent African immigrants to the U. S., many of whom are engaged in family and community projects to help their countries.

Within the arena of traditional security issues, the United States should minimize bilateral military involvement with Africa, which risks sucking the U.S. into local conflicts, in favor of multilateral diplomacy and peacekeeping, including paying U.S. peacekeeping arrears at the UN. It should take care not to aid repressive regimes or to prioritize military-to-military relationships, in favor of dialogue not only with incumbent governments but also civil society. In short, it should shift from an emphasis on counter-insurgency and building Washington-centered networks of influence with African military establishments to an emphasis on U.S. participation in multilateral efforts to enhance African security.

In theory, AFRICOM's activities, as well as related peacekeeping training programs administered by the Department of State, should be integrated within overall U.S. policy, including diplomatic action on African crises and collaboration with African, European, and United Nations partners in peacekeeping operations. In practice, as the Henry L. Stimson Center's Victoria Holt and Michael McKinnon have said, the United States has been ambivalent about multilateral action, under both the Clinton and Bush administrations.[17] Democrats and Republicans alike have approved and supported United Nations and African Union peacekeeping missions. But the United States is still regularly from $700 million to $1.5 billion in arrears on peacekeeping dues owed the United Nations.[18] And it failed to respond even to urgent requests for essential logistical support, such as helicopters for the mission in Darfur. Coordination of diplomacy with support for peacekeeping has been weak even within the U.S. government, while the U.S. military remains opposed to U.S. participation in multilateral operations that are not commanded by U.S. officers.

The most innovative U.S. program to support multilateral peacekeeping has been Africa Contingency Operations and Assistance (ACOTA), administered by the State Department, and part of the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) decided by G8 leaders in 2004. This program has trained some 45,000 African peacekeepers since 2004, with a training package and "train-the-trainer" components that are said to be based on UN standards. Yet there is no evidence that this program is integrated into a broader strategy of U.S. diplomatic priorities in Africa or capacity building in collaboration with the United Nations. As a bilateral training program under exclusive U.S. management, when the United States is also engaged in bilateral counter-insurgency training and operations with many of the same countries, it inevitably raises questions about the real priorities in military-to-military relationships.

The United States does have resources, particularly logistical and financial, that are relevant for peacekeeping operations, and has the responsibility to make its fair contribution as a leading member of the international community. But ensuring that these actually contribute to peace requires a new framework, giving priority to multilateral diplomacy and peacekeeping over bilateral programs.

Elements of a New Security Framework

Moving to a new framework isn't a matter of finding new formulas to replace the inherited emphasis on building counter-insurgency capacity against terrorism and threats to natural resources. There's no one prescription for those countries now facing violent conflicts, much less for the wide range of issues faced by over 50 African countries. Africa's serious problems, moreover, will not be solved from outside, either by the United States or by the "international community."

Nevertheless, it's important to ensure that U.S. Africa policy does no harm and that the United States makes a significant contribution to diminishing the real security threats on the continent. Once one recognizes that U.S. national security also depends on the human security of Africans, some essential elements of such a framework do become clear. To what extent they can be embodied into practice will depend not only on the internal deliberations of the new administration in Washington, but also on whether Africans working for peace and justice on the continent can themselves chart new directions and make their voices heard.

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(1) Prioritize long-term inclusive human security.

At a global level, National Intelligence Director Blair's threat assessment echoed the growing recognition that economic, environmental, and other "non-military" threats can only be ignored at our peril. The implications for Africa policy should be clear. The optimistic assumption that developing regions could be "delinked" from the global economic crisis has quickly been abandoned. While there may be no direct link between hardships deriving from economic, health, and environmental threats and the threats of violent conflict, ignoring such broader threats is a sure recipe for disaster. Investment in sustainable development, preserving the environment, democratic accountability, and broad access to basic rights to health, education, and housing between and within countries is not charity. It's only prudent. And solutions in Africa and in the United States are interconnected.

Take an example from only one sector: energy and global warming. The development of alternative energy sources in the United State can reduce the demand for oil, thus reducing the presumed need to support oil-producing regimes regardless of their human rights records. It's also essential to slow global warming, which is already having severe consequences for the environment in Africa, even though Africa produces only a small fraction of world's greenhouse gases. At the same time, the United States should support efforts to make both oil companies and governments accountable for the use of oil revenue, investing it both to benefit their citizens and to foster development sectors not so vulnerable to the boom and bust of the oil economy.

None of these measures are easy, of course. Nor are they a substitute for resolving open conflict in critical oil-producing regions such as the Niger Delta in Nigeria. But the fact is no other approach has a chance of being sustainable. Prioritizing counter-insurgency provides no short-cut. In such a context, providing U.S. military assistance is only to add fuel to the flames.

More generally, U.S. policy toward each region of the continent—including strategic countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo—must feature cooperation and dialogue on a wide range of issues affecting human security rather than prioritizing military-to-military relationships. As noted below, it is critical to foster new opportunities for both societies and governments to dialogue about solutions to common problems of human security.

(2) Pay Attention to Crises, but Avoid "One-Size Fits All" Approaches.

Governments don't have the luxury, however, of paying attention only to long-term structural issues. Immediate crises demand responses. Violent conflicts or failed states have consequences not only for the lives lost and the countries directly involved, but also for surrounding regions and for the continent as a whole. The costs of humanitarian response from the international community multiply in proportion to the delays in acting. And, as the surge of piracy in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Guinea has recently reminded the world, the consequences are economic as well as humanitarian. Within conflict zones, personal and collective investments in health, education, and infrastructure can be wiped out in a matter of months.

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The list of Africa's hottest crises is familiar: Sudan (including but not limited to Darfur), Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Zimbabwe. Others fester as well, out of the spotlight of the world's media: Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, and Uganda, to name only a few. In each case, it's not only the countries and their immediate neighbors that are involved. Other stakeholders, including regional African organizations, the African Union, the United Nations, and global powers such as the United States are called on to respond. And the responses—or failures to respond—matter. But no "one-size-fits-all" response can possibly make sense, and certainly not the AFRICOM model focused on building counter-insurgency capacity for Africa's armies.

In shaping the mix of diplomacy, pressures, humanitarian, and peacekeeping actions that have the best chances for success in any particular case, a unilateral U.S. approach is sure to be ineffective or counterproductive. But simply advocating "African solutions for African problems" is a rhetorical gimmick rather than a real alternative. African political leaders must be part of the solution, and, with very few exceptions, diplomacy must engage all parties to a conflict, including those most guilty of aggression or human rights abuses. But those states closest to the crises, and prominent in regional organizations, also have their own interests. Even when there is consensus, such as with the creation of the African Union mission to Darfur, the resources may be lacking, setting up such a solution for failure in advance.

And while the institutional capacity of the African Union for peacemaking is growing, like the United Nations its effectiveness depends on member states and on the political compromises among its leaders. The selection of Muammar Qaddafi of Libya as chair of the African Union for 2009, for instance, isn't likely to signal increased capacity for peacemaking.

But the time has long passed for anyone to take current African heads of state as the only spokespeople for the continent, or to focus hopes for change on replacing one leader with another. Finding the best way forward in responding to crises or to Africa's structural problems, must go beyond the top. Africa's resources for change and for leadership are also found in civil society, among respected retired leaders and other elders, and among professionals working both in governments and in multilateral organizations, including both diplomats and military professionals. The challenge for U.S. policy is to engage actively and productively in responding to crises, bringing U.S. resources to bear without assuming that it is either possible or wise for the United States to dominate.

(3) Build Institutional Capacity for Multilateral Peacemaking and Peacekeeping.

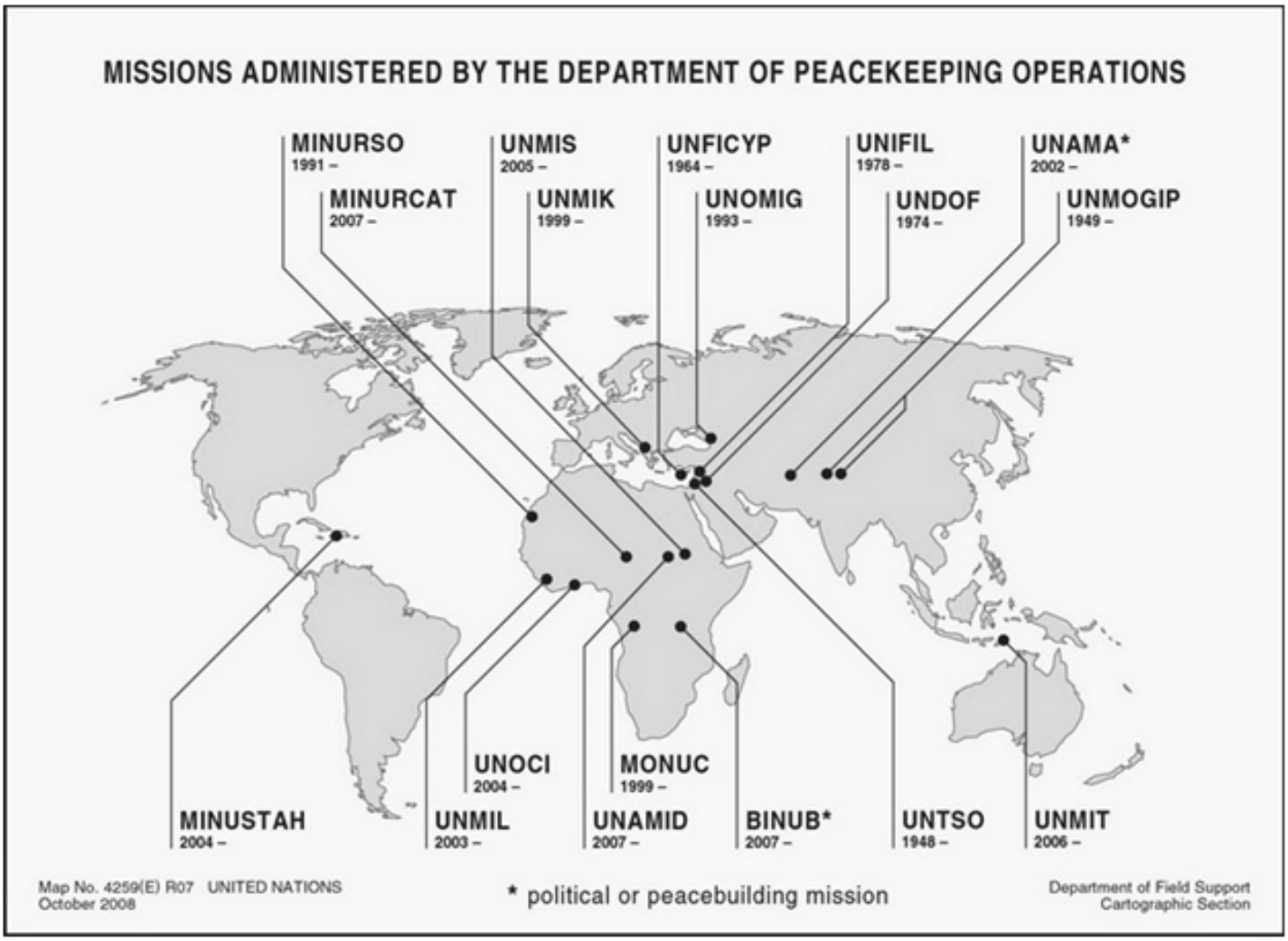
In contrast to the emphasis on building bilateral U.S. military ties with Africa, being institutionalized in AFRICOM, U.S. security policy toward Africa should instead concentrate on building institutional capacity within the United Nations, as well as coordinating U.S. relationships with African regional institutions with United Nations capacity-building programs. At the same time, it should work to ensure that both U.S. and United Nations policies and operations with respect to African crises are transparent and open to review by legislative bodies and civil society groups in Africa, in the United States, and in other countries that are involved.

This proposal for a new direction isn't based on any assumption that the United Nations has the answer to Africa's crises. On the contrary. In a statement on February 23, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Alain Le Roy, told the Security Council that the organization's peacekeeping efforts are overstretched and in several cases at risk of "mission failure."[19] Missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Sudan have mandates that far exceed their capacity, and the Security Council has just voted two new mandates for forces in Chad and in Somalia. "We face operational overstretch and, I would argue, political overstretch too," he added. "There is a constant strain now between mandates and resources, between expectations and our capacity to deliver."

Nevertheless, even governments as congenitally opposed to multilateralism as the outgoing Bush administration have found United Nations peace-

keeping to be an essential resource. UN actions will always be dependent on the willingness of member governments to cooperate, and vulnerable to indecision and bureaucratic delay. But it's long past time to strengthen the institution's capacity for peacemaking and peacekeeping. Public opinion around the world, and in the United States, has long favored increased responsibility and resources for the United Nations. Polls in late 2006 in 14 countries in different regions, for example, showed that majorities of 64% favored "having a standing UN peacekeeping force selected, trained, and commanded by the United Nations."[20] In the same poll 72% of U.S. respondents approved this option. While the stereotype persists among U.S. policymakers that the public is skeptical about the United Nations, polls consistently show strong public support, including for payment of dues in full (see Benjamin Page and Marshall Bouton, *The Foreign Policy Disconnect*, University of Chicago Press, 2006).

Building United Nations peacekeeping capacity implies not only financial resources, of course, but



As of January 31, 2009, there were 91,049 uniformed personnel on 16 United Nations peacekeeping missions, at an annual cost of about $7.1 billion. Of these, over 70%, or 65,270, were deployed on seven missions in Africa, including 18,411 in MONUC (Democratic Republic of the Congo), 15,179 in UNAMID (Darfur), 11.963 in UNMIL (Liberia), and 9,999 on UNMIS (Sudan). Of the total uniformed personnel on UN peacekeeping missions, the United States contributed 90, or less than 1/10 of one percent.

Source: http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/index.asp

also internal and external oversight to check possibilities for corruption and abuses, just as would be the case for governments in Africa or in the United States. The framework for inclusive human security released by TransAfrica Forum in February, for example, calls for new mechanisms to ensure civil society and legislative input and review of both U.S. government and multilateral agencies.

Despite the expectations for change, it is likely that shifts by the Obama administration in security policy toward Africa will only emerge piecemeal, if at all, after appointment of new mid-level personnel and policy reviews reportedly under way in every agency. The new president's popularity and the range of domestic and global problems he faces are likely to give the administration a large window of opportunity before disillusionment sets in. But events on the ground will not allow indefinite delay. It will soon become apparent, in Somalia, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and perhaps in other crises not now predictable, to what extent African hopes placed in President Obama will find answers in changes that make a difference for Africa.

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