Chapter 13

Eastern Africa as a “Second Front” in the Bush Administration’s War on Terrorism

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Introduction

The African continent is characterized by United States (U.S.) officials as an increasingly important “second front” in a global war on terrorism that has become the signature foreign policy theme of the Bush administration. Washington is especially focused on North and Eastern Africa, inclusive of the Horn of Africa, due to the geographic, cultural and religious proximity of these regions to the Middle East (the perceived epicenter of global terrorist activity that stretches from the Arabian peninsula to Pakistan) and the recognition that these regions constitute potential breeding grounds for further anti-American terrorist acts. The degree to which Africa’s geopolitical standing has risen is captured in an article that Princeton N. Lyman (former U.S. ambassador to Nigeria and South Africa and Director of African Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations) and J. Stephen Morrison (Director of the Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC), wrote for Foreign Affairs, the standard bearer of the foreign policy establishment (Lyman and Morrison 2004). The two authors agree with administration assessments that terrorist threats emanating from Africa will intensify in the absence of a proactive U.S. interventionist approach, but criticize the White House for lacking a serious, holistic approach to this important foreign policy challenge. Although one can and should debate the degree to which the Bush administration has seriously focused on Africa as part of its global war on terrorism, there is no doubt that this war has contributed to aggressive interventionist measures at both home and abroad, with significant implications for U.S. foreign policy toward Africa (Ellis and Killingray 2002; Kansteiner and Morrison 2004).

The Domestic Context

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11) exerted a profound influence on the Bush administration’s approach to national security as the White House announced a global war on terrorism that harkened back to the initial stages of
the Cold War. Among the various domestic initiatives undertaken included enactment of the Patriot Act, which provided new, aggressive powers to law enforcement agencies; creation of a Department of Homeland Security to oversee borders and coordinate domestic counterterrorism activities; reorganization of the military's global command structure to add a Northern Command that would be responsible for military activities in Canada, Mexico and the U.S. (the first time a military officer had been appointed to such a post since World War II); and, after much pressure from the public and the Congress over the intelligence failures associated with the attacks of 9/11, creation of a new cabinet-level position, Director of National Intelligence, that would be responsible for coordinating the diverse intelligence activities of fifteen agencies.

The human impact of these national security reforms, especially on African entrants into the U.S. who are either Arab or Muslim or both, was striking. Two examples suffice. The Justice Department in November 2002 ordered all male non-citizens from five Muslim countries (Libya, Iran, Iraq, Sudan and Syria) who were temporarily visiting or residing in the U.S. to present themselves at Federal government offices for fingerprinting and photographing. Originally justified on the grounds that these countries comprised part of the State Department’s list of official state sponsors of terrorism, this order was expanded in December 2002 to include nationals from an additional thirteen countries, including Algeria, Eritrea, Morocco, Somalia and Tunisia (Sheridan 2003, 5). Civil libertarians were particularly critical of a change in asylum rules that was announced by the Department of Homeland Security in March 2003. These changes permitted authorities to undertake the blanket detention of people seeking political asylum from thirty-two countries, including the African countries of Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Libya, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan and Tunisia (Drew and Liptak 2003, 8), essentially incarcerating them while their requests for asylum are being considered, a process that often takes at least six months. In these and other cases, actions in the name of national security sent a chill throughout Muslim immigrant communities and made foreign nationals from targeted countries think twice about attempting to visit the United States.

The domestic exigencies associated with the war on terrorism, most notably the prevention of another major terrorist attack on U.S. soil, also prompted the Bush administration to revisit several hallowed traditions of U.S. foreign policy. Of particular note was the administration’s review of the Geneva Convention concerning the treatment of prisoners of war (POWs). In what would become the most contested Executive Branch decision that has prompted several appeals to the U.S. Supreme Court, the Bush administration designated al-Qaeda and other terrorist operatives captured on the global field of battle as “unlawful combatants,” imprisoning them in a series of makeshift prisons, including at the U.S. military base at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba (Amnesty International 2005). The term “unlawful combatant” was carefully and consciously chosen as part of a legal argument designed to deny those captured, including citizens from at least eleven African countries (Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia and Uganda) with the legal protections guaranteed under the Geneva Convention, essentially providing the Executive
Branch with the self-appointed authority to undertake any and all extreme measures, including indefinite incarceration, in the name of the war on terrorism. The potential for abuse under such a system was demonstrated when revelations of torture, most notably photographs of U.S. soldiers standing over naked Iraqi prisoners held with dog leashes, surfaced at the U.S. military-run Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad, which had been "Gitmoized" (i.e., had incorporated Guantánamo incarceration practices) (Greenberg and Dratel 2005). There is no doubt that the administration's handling of foreign prisoners has severely tarnished foreign perceptions of the hallowed elements of U.S. democratic traditions, most notably the rule of law. It is for this reason that a growing chorus of voices is calling for the Bush administration to shut down the Guantánamo prison.

One of the most important examples of the nexus between the war on terrorism at home and abroad involves the growing cooperation between U.S. and foreign intelligence services in the interrogation of prisoners. This practice dates back to the cold war, when the CIA formed close relationships with the intelligence agencies of "friendly" countries, such as Morocco, South Africa and the former Zaire. In the current war on terror, numerous examples abound, most notably the CIA's cooperation with the Moroccan intelligence service, which dispatched a team to Guantánamo to take a direct role in the interrogation of eighteen Moroccan prisoners who were being held, including Abdallah Tabarak, a bodyguard for Osama Bin Laden who was captured in the battle of Tora-Bora (Mansour 2003). The most controversial form of U.S. cooperation with foreign intelligence agencies involves what the Bush administration legally refers to as "extraordinary rendition," a practice in which suspected terrorists are turned over to third countries for interrogation purposes with both the knowledge and the expectation that interrogation methods disallowed by U.S. law (i.e., torture) will serve as the primary means of extracting information. Referred to by critics as "outsourcing torture" (Herbert 2005), the rendition program existed prior to 9/11, but was transformed into a much more extensive, systematic program as part of the war on terrorism, with the CIA being given broad operational responsibility to transfer suspected terrorists to countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Syria.

The national security reforms enacted by the Bush administration nonetheless did little to alter the domestic constellation of forces that are involved in the making of U.S. foreign policy toward Africa, which are best treated as a series of three concentric circles: the inner White House circle of the president and his principal foreign policy advisors, most notably the national security advisor; a second circle that comprises the national security bureaucracies of the executive branch; and an outer circle that includes Congress and the larger African affairs constituency. As concerns the inner White House circle, for example, the same factors that fostered presidential neglect during the Cold War have remained constant during the post-9/11 era: a president's typical lack of knowledge and therefore the absence of a deep-felt interest in a region that historically enjoyed few enduring political links with the U.S. as compared with the former European colonial powers; a tendency to view Africa as the responsibility of those same European colonial powers, especially France; and the necessity of balancing
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domestic and foreign priorities, especially during a first term in office in which the primary goal of all presidents is to assure re-election, with electoral logic suggesting that Africa is not a priority for the vast majority of the voting public. Even Bush’s highly trumpeted visit to five African countries (Botswana, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, and Uganda) in July 2003 failed to reverse and in fact reinforced perceptions of Africa’s neglect in the Bush White House. African reporters, who dubbed Bush’s visit as that of a “cowboy in Africa” and representative of “Tarzan politics,” were critical of the short nature of the stopovers (often lasting only a few hours) that were limited to small choreographed audiences, suggesting that the visit was designed more to achieve sound-bites destined for audiences in the U.S. (most notably the African-American community) than to provide serious engagement with African policymakers and their peoples (Kaddafi 2003; Kpatinde 2003).

The U.S. Congress, which constitutes the outer circle of the policymaking process, also has historically neglected Africa relative to other regions of perceived greater interest due to a variety of factors that have remained constant during the Cold War and 9/11 eras. Re-election pressures and time constraints imposed by terms of office (two years for representatives and six years for senators) force them to select and prioritize the domestic and the international issues that will receive their attention. Since the primary objective of most members is to be re-elected, and since most U.S. citizens know or care very little about the African continent, conventional wisdom suggests that it is politically unwise to incur the possibility of alienating their constituencies by focusing on Africa. Membership on the Africa subcommittees is also among the least desired congressional positions in both houses of Congress, and is therefore relegated to relatively junior representatives and senators. As a result, even highly motivated chairpersons of Africa subcommittees, who have held a limited number of hearings on Africa’s place within the Bush administration’s war on terrorism (U.S. House of Representatives 2001) face an uphill task in pushing African issues to the forefront of congressional debate. The likelihood of congressional activism in Africa is further hindered by the small margins of Democratic Party control of both houses of Congress in the aftermath of the November 2006 elections. In the Senate, for example, the Democrats hold a razor-thin majority of fifty-one seats, including two seats held by Independents, as opposed to forty-nine seats for the Republicans. In both the Senate and the House, slim partisan majorities militate against activist policies in regions considered to be of minor concern (i.e., Africa), as both parties seek to avoid missteps in preparation for the presidential elections of November 2008.

The net result of White House and congressional neglect is that U.S. foreign policy toward Africa, perhaps more so than that toward any other region of the world, remains largely delegated to the high-level bureaucrats and political appointees within the bureaucracies of the executive branch. Exceptions of course exist, such as the willingness of both the White House and the Congress to pressure Sudan’s government to seek a peaceful resolution of civil conflict in the southern portion of the country, but these are rare occurrences typically due to pressures from grass-roots constituencies that have the ear of the president and
office in which electoral logic prevails and in which voting public expectations are met. African regions, however, were largely and in fact categorically excluded from this process. African regions are seen as peripheral to the global politics of security and economic development.

The Bush administration entered office with a realist-oriented foreign policy that did not perceive the African continent as an important part of the overall international strategic landscape. This geopolitical vision was altered by the events of 9/11, as the Bush administration made anti-terrorism the centerpiece of U.S. foreign policy. The interventionist assumption behind Africa’s rising geopolitical stakes is the belief that many African countries are susceptible to and in turn will potentially become exporters of terrorism, either due to the existence of radical regimes that are sympathetic to the goals and ideologies of these organizations and therefore are willing to host them on their soil (e.g., Sudan’s willingness to host Osama bin Laden from 1991 to 1996), the inability of weak central governments to effectively monitor outlying regions where terrorist organizations can organize and thrive (e.g., the vast Sahelian hinterlands of Chad, Niger, Mali, and Mauritania), or the threat of state collapse and the loss of state control over the territory as a whole (e.g., Somalia since 1991).

Several regional security initiatives demonstrate Africa’s integration into the war on terrorism. The first involves the Pentagon’s establishment in Djibouti of the headquarters for the Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA), which is charged with waging war on al-Qaeda and its supporters in the Greater Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan) and Yemen. Land operations are primarily conducted by over 1,500 U.S. troops who are based at Camp Lemonier. Coastal patrols are undertaken by U.S. Combined Task Force 150 (CTF 150), which also includes naval contingents from...
other countries, such as Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom. The CJTF-HOA also coordinates with CIA paramilitary operations, including the launching of Predator drone aircraft against suspected terrorist targets. One such operation involved the use in November 2001 of Predator drone-launched missiles to attack and kill an alleged al-Qaeda leader and four other individuals travelling by car in Yemen.

Djibouti, which sits astride the Straits of Bab el Mandeb at the entrance of the Red Sea and across the Gulf of Aden from the Arabian Peninsula, is the geographical anchor of the CJTF-HOA. Djibouti’s leadership is courted, as witnessed by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s visit to Djibouti in December 2002. The country enjoys the distinction of hosting the only formal U.S. military base on African soil and is one of only three African countries to be designated by the Bush administration as a “front-line state in the war on terrorism” (State Department 2006, 253). The country also hosts Radio Sawa, Washington’s post-9/11 Arabic-language program that is beamed to all Middle Eastern countries and Sudan, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, as part of the State Department’s aggressive Public Diplomacy Program for the Middle East. U.S. appreciation for Djibouti’s willingness to stand “shoulder to shoulder with the United States” (State Department 2006, 253) is demonstrated by a substantial foreign aid program for a country of less than 400,000 people (more than $9 million provided for 2006), making it one of the highest per capita recipients of U.S. aid in Africa. Not surprisingly, the growing U.S. military presence initially fuelled minor tensions with France, due to Djibouti’s special status as host to France’s largest permanent military force on the African continent and the continued perception among French policymakers of Djibouti constituting part of France’s chasse gardée (literally, “private hunting ground”).

A second regional security program also launched by the Pentagon is the Pan-Saharan Initiative (PSI), which includes four Sahelian countries (Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) at the intersection of North and West Africa. This program was launched in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 to ensure that the four partner countries were capable of controlling the vast, largely uninhabited portions of the Sahel that fall under their individual jurisdictions, such that the region did not become a safe haven for terrorist groups fleeing direct U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan in 2002 and later in Iraq in 2003. Indeed, it was commonplace in the aftermath of U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan for Pentagon officers to make exaggerated claims that the Sahelian region was a “new Afghanistan” with “well-financed bands of Islamic militants recruiting, training and arming themselves” (Smith 2004). The PSI sought to counter these efforts by dispatching teams of U.S. Special Forces to carry out on-the-ground training with local troops and providing basic equipment, such as pickup trucks and Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment, for tracking hostile forces. Although limited in scope (training was carried out at the company level) and financing (the entire program cost $6.25 million), the program was credited with achieving several successes, most notably the capture of some leaders of the Algerian-based Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (GSPC).
Pentagon officials who were pleased with PSI’s success nonetheless perceived the Sahel as but the core of a potentially larger threat that incorporates the entire Sahara region. As a result, $300 million ($100 million a year over five years) was budgeted beginning in 2005 to support an expanded Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI) that expanded the PSI to include Algeria and Senegal, with three additional countries (Nigeria, Morocco and Tunisia) serving as observer countries. The addition of Senegal is deemed logical due to the country’s geographical location and status as the Bush administration’s “most important francophone partner” in Sub-Saharan Africa (State Department 2006, 294-95). The Bush administration remains especially appreciative of President Abdoulaye Wade’s early and firm support for U.S. counter-terrorism measures in the aftermath of 9/11, including Senegal’s hosting of a meeting in Dakar in October 2001 to express solidarity with the U.S. and to prompt his African counterparts to ratify the 1999 Algiers Convention Against Terrorism, even though this meeting achieved few if any concrete diplomatic results. Algeria is perceived as the anchor of an expanded TSCTI, due to its geographical location at the crossroads of the Sahara and its status as a country that is successfully emerging from a “decade of terrorist violence” (State Department 2006, 443). Pentagon planners often state that the U.S. has much to learn from Algeria as concerns the war on terrorism, ranging from how Algerian insurgents defeated French military forces during the 1960s to how the current Algerian government has defeated Islamic insurgent forces during the 1990s. The official launching of the TSCTI took place in June 2005 with the holding of Exercise Flintlock 2005, in which U.S. Special Forces will take part in training exercises at the battalion level with their counterparts from TSCTI countries.

A third and final regional security program is the East Africa Counter-Terrorism Initiative (EACTI), which is inclusive of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. This program, launched in 2003 with over $100 million in funding, is principally driven by the State Department. The EACTI funds a variety of law enforcement and border control programs in East Africa that are designed to disrupt longstanding al-Qaeda networks within the region and to prevent a repeat of al-Qaeda’s August 1998 attacks against U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi, and November 2002 attacks against Israeli targets in Mombasa. One such program is the Safe Skies for Africa (SSFA) initiative, which promotes improvements in aviation safety, security and air navigation. This program provides funding for an East African Aviation Security Advisor who is based in Nairobi and who is responsible for developing civil aviation security programs for the region. Kenya serves as the anchor of EACTI counter-terrorism programs. The country’s leadership provided strong support to the U.S. during the Cold War, and the same has been true of the post-9/11 era. It supported the U.S. war in Iraq in 2003 as an official coalition partner and, like Djibouti, is designated by the Bush administration as a “front-line state in the war on terrorism” (State Department 2006, 268-69).

Together these regional security programs provide useful insights into the evolving nature of U.S. foreign policy toward Africa. First, these programs serve as the core of an evolving foreign policy approach that divides Africa into at
least four spheres of variable foreign policy interest: (1) those regions (North and Eastern Africa) destined to receive priority attention due to their proximity to the Middle East, the perceived epicenter of the global war on terrorism; (2) regional powers, typically Nigeria and South Africa but also including Algeria, Ethiopia, Kenya and Senegal, that are perceived as crucial to the maintenance of regional stability and therefore as "regional anchors" of counter-terrorism efforts; (3) countries deemed important to U.S. economic interests, most notably oil-producing countries in the Gulf of Guinea region; and (4) the remainder of Sub-Saharan Africa which remains relegated to the back-burner of U.S. foreign policy. Not surprisingly, U.S. foreign policy is increasingly focusing on those countries in which core foreign policy interests intersect, as in the case of Algeria, a regional power with oil resources that is considered crucial to combating perceived terrorist threats in North Africa.

The heart of the Bush administration's new regional security initiatives is the re-emergence of a "globalist" logic reminiscent of the Cold War, that identifies international influences as the primary cause of instability and conflict in individual African countries, subsequently ushering in a new era of containment and rollback policies (as opposed to a "regionalist" logic that primarily focuses on the internal shortcomings of African regimes, and therefore the need to promote reformist policies, including support for the protection of human rights, the promotion of socio-economic development, and the adoption of democratic practices). The core elements of this globalist logic, as was the case during the Cold War, are threefold: (1) a tendency to view Africa as a battlefield for proxy wars between the U.S. and foreign-sponsored terrorist elements; (2) a perception of African allies as the means for solving non-African problems (in this case, international terrorism); and (3) the evolution of U.S. relationships with these regimes according to their relative importance within the global war on terrorism.

Not surprisingly, such logic is also fostering the most egregious shortcomings associated with the Cold War (Clough 1992). When the normative goal of promoting democracy clashes with the strategic goal of containing terrorist threats, the latter almost certainly wins, thereby more closely associating the U.S. with some of the worst abusers of human rights in North and Eastern Africa, such as the Egyptian regime of Hosni Mubarak. The U.S. also runs the risk of becoming mired in internal African conflicts that have little if anything to do with the global war on terrorism, as local leaders denounce domestic opponents as "terrorist threats" and the U.S. government turns a blind eye as U.S.-supplied weapons become the means for extinguishing those "threats." This phenomenon is already occurring in the Pan-Saharan region, where the U.S. has been prone to accept characterizations of domestic insurrections, especially those influenced by Islamic principles, as terrorist groups (International Crisis Group 2005). In short, an overriding preoccupation with terrorist threats is leading Washington once again to overlook the authoritarian excesses of African regimes in favor of their willingness to support U.S. national security objectives (i.e., the war on terrorism).
Military Dimension of the War on Terrorism

The Bush administration entered office with a strong aversion to direct U.S. military involvement in either peacekeeping or peacemaking operations on the African continent, often derisively referred to during the 2000 presidential campaign as ill-conceived exercises in nation building. It is for this reason that in 2003 the Bush administration resisted initial pleas from within the West African region and the international community to commit large numbers of U.S. troops to stem fighting in Liberia, offering instead a limited deployment of small numbers of U.S. troops designed to provide logistical support to a larger West African peacekeeping force led by Nigeria. Even in the post-9/11 era, in which policymakers have recognized that weak and failed African states run the risk of becoming breeding grounds for terrorist activities, the Bush administration remains reluctant to authorize the involvement of U.S. troops, preferring instead to rely on the interventionist efforts of three sets of actors: United Nations (UN)-led peacekeeping forces, as in the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), although this option is limited due to distrust among administration neo-conservatives and the Republican-controlled Congress for UN-sponsored solutions; former colonial powers, as in the case of French intervention in Côte d'Ivoire or British intervention in Sierra Leone; and African regional powers or regional organizations with direct stakes in the conflict, as in the case of Nigerian-led intervention in Liberia.

Three military programs demonstrate the Bush administration's desire to strengthen the capacity of especially African militaries (as opposed to UN or European military forces) to bear the brunt of counter-terrorism activities. The first, International Military Education and Training (IMET), sends foreign soldiers, especially officers, to the U.S. for military training and to introduce them to American culture. The expectation, of course, is that military personnel who have spent time in the U.S. will not only be better able to coordinate with their U.S. military counterparts on the battlefield, but that they will return to their home countries with a more positive, long-term image of the United States. Especially during the Cold War, when regime change in Africa typically occurred as a result of military coups d'etat, the IMET program was designed to ensure that the soldiers who assumed the reins of power would be pro-American and therefore willing to support the U.S. in its ideological competition with the Soviet Union.

The IMET program has emerged as an important tool in the Bush administration's war on terrorism. Forty-one countries in Sub-Saharan Africa received IMET aid in 2005, and forty-five were slated to receive such aid in 2006 (State Department 2006). The larger Middle East, inclusive of North Africa, is especially noted as a priority region, not least of all due to the expectation that some of the military officers of today will emerge as the political leaders of tomorrow. Every country in North Africa receives IMET assistance except for Libya, and levels of IMET assistance have significantly increased in the post-9/11 era. Morocco and Tunisia have especially benefited, receiving $1.875 million each in 2005, with the same amount being set aside for both in 2006. Although at first
glance these may not appear to be large sums of money, the potential impact of
the IMET program becomes clearer when one determines the actual number of
military students funded. In Tunisia, the IMET program during three years
(2004 to 2006) will have trained 255 military officers in the U.S. (roughly
eighty-five each year). When examined over the lifespan of this program, it is
impressive to note that the vast majority of Tunisian military officers have spent
some time in the United States. Tunisia is not unique, but indicative of the long-
term impacts of a carefully crafted program that has been expanded in the post-
9/11 era.

A second military program that has been expanded in the post-9/11 era is For-
eign Military Financing (FMF). This program is designed to ensure that
governments friendly to the U.S. are able to procure U.S. military equipment
and training such that they are able to "strengthen and modernize their self-
defense capabilities, safeguard their borders and territorial waters, meet their le-
gitimate indigenous security needs, increase their interoperability with U.S.
forces and support coalition efforts in the war on terrorism" (State Department
2006). The vast majority (84 percent or nearly $3.9 billion) of FMF is devoted to
the Middle East. Of the thirteen countries from the African continent that were
expected to receive FMF in 2006, three are from North Africa (Egypt, Tunisia
and Morocco) and five are from Eastern Africa (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia,
Kenya and Uganda). Egypt, along with two other countries (Israel and Jordan),
receive the lion's share of FMF devoted to the Middle East. In Sub-Saharan Af-
rica, the two leading recipients are Kenya ($7 million) and Djibouti ($4 million),
indicative of the leading roles of these two countries as regional anchors for U.S.
counter-terrorism efforts in the Horn of Africa.

A final military program falls under the rubric of the recently launched Global
Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), for which the Bush administration requested
$114 million in global funding for 2006. The African component of this pro-
gram (funding level of $37 million) is the African Contingency Operations
Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program, which in turn replaced the African
Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI). The primary difference between ACRI (cre-
at ed by the Clinton administration in 1996) and ACOTA (created by the Bush
administration in 2002) is that the latter focuses on training for offensive mili-
tary operations, including the ability of African troops to conduct operations in
hostile environments. Whereas Mali and Niger have served as the primary
TSCTI recipients of ACOTA training, EACTI countries include Ethiopia, Kenya
and Uganda.

The net result of these military programs, which are primarily driven by the
Pentagon's vision of the military necessities associated with the war on terror-
ism, is the growing militarization of U.S. foreign policy toward Africa that
harkens back to the Cold War. The current period is nonetheless unique, how-
ever, due to the Pentagon's determination to create what General James L. Jones
referred to as a "family of bases" that will enable the U.S. military to undertake
a more proactive, aggressive and direct military approach on the African contin-
ent as part of the doctrine of pre-emption that characterizes U.S. military
strategy in the post-9/11 era. Two types of military facilities are being pursued:
“forward operating sites” inclusive of logistical facilities (airstrip or port) and weapons stockpiles to be maintained by a small permanent crew of U.S. military technicians (but no combat units); and bare bones “cooperative security locations” only for use in crisis situations that will be maintained by military contractors and host-country personnel (Klare 2005, 1-2). In both cases, generous military assistance programs are considered critical to “greasing the wheels” with African leaders who previously may have been reluctant to accept such basing arrangements. The primary risk of such a policy approach, of course, is that these military bases and the U.S. military largesse which fuels them will potentially be used by authoritarian regimes to silence domestic dissent and to undertake military actions against domestic insurgencies that have little if anything to do with the war on terrorism.

The list of African countries (Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Mali, Namibia, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda) under Pentagon review as potential sites for new U.S. military facilities also demonstrates the growing nexus between the Bush administration’s war on terrorism and the more classic U.S. national security objective of ensuring access to diverse sources of foreign oil (Klare and Volman 2004; Ellis 2003). Three of these countries comprise part of the Gulf of Guinea region, which in the eyes of U.S. policymakers stretches along the coast from Nigeria to Angola, inclusive of Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe (with some policymakers also including Chad in this arrangement, due to the fact that Chadian oil is exported to the coast via a pipeline through Cameroon). Oil is the principal reason for Washington’s interest in this region, which is expected to provide as much as 25 percent of U.S. oil needs by 2015.

Strategic Imperatives of an Evolving Foreign Aid Program

Africa’s incorporation into the Bush administration’s war on terrorism is also demonstrated by the strategic imperatives imbedded in the evolving U.S. foreign aid program (apart from the already discussed regional security initiatives and military assistance programs). One shift in the foreign aid budget concerns the expansion of security-related programs in North and Eastern Africa that are included under the awkwardly titled budget item, Non-proliferation, Anti-terrorism, De-Mining, and Related (NADR) programs, which received $351 million and $399 million for global activities in 2004 and 2005, and for which the Bush administration sought $440 million in 2006. Several programs serve as the core of NADR counter-terrorism initiatives.

Counter-Terrorism Financing (CTF) assists countries whose financial systems are considered vulnerable to terrorist financing. This program was a direct outgrowth of Washington’s freezing of assets of presumed terrorist-related financial networks, such as the Somali-based al-Itihad al-Islamiya and the Barakaat remittance company, in the immediate post-9/11 era. A second program, Counter-Terrorism Engagement, provides aid to support specific counter-terrorism initiatives of allied countries. An example is U.S. funding to support Algeria’s
opening of a counter-terrorism center in Algiers. Finally, the Terrorist Interdiction Program (TIP) provides countries with the computer software to monitor the potential movement of terrorists across borders through the installation and maintenance of the Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System (PISCES) at sea, air and land points of entry. Participating countries in Africa which have installed the PISCES technology include Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Tanzania and Uganda.

The most lavishly funded NADR counter-terrorism program is Anti-Terrorist Assistance (ATA), which received $96 million and $118 million for global activities in 2004 and 2005, and for which the Bush administration sought $134 million in 2006. ATA is devoted to expanding "the skills and abilities of foreign law enforcement officials who have primary responsibility in their nations for taking decisive action against international terrorists and networks that seek to target U.S. citizens, businesses and other interests" (State Department 2006, 142). Both in-country and U.S.-based programs focus on very specific forms of training, including "detection and rendering safe explosive devices, post-blast investigation techniques, VIP protection, senior leadership crisis management, hostage negotiations, and a variety of other courses" (U.S. House of Representatives 2004, 6). Kenyan security forces have been an important beneficiary of the ATA program. A total of $14 million was spent in 2004 and 2005 to support the training of the Kenyan Anti-terror Police Unit, and another $3 million was requested for 2006.

The NADR program also provides funding for a number of other security initiatives related to the war on terrorism. The Small Arms/Light Weapons Destruction (SALW) program funds the destruction of surplus and illicit stocks of military weaponry, most notably Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS). The importance of this program, which has funded the destruction of over 10,500 MANPADS since 2003, became evident in the aftermath of al-Qaeda's failed attempt to shoot down an Israeli airliner taking off from an airport in Mombasa with a surface-to-air missile. A second program, Export Control and Related Border Security Assistance (EXBS), seeks to prevent the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), their missile delivery systems, and advanced conventional weapons through the strengthening of border controls. Three of the four African countries proposed to receive such aid in 2006 are from North or Eastern Africa, including Kenya, Tanzania and Libya. A final NADR program, the Non-Proliferation of WMD Expertise (NPWMDE), "redirects" WMD knowledge to alternative employment activities for scientists of participating countries, most notably Libya, that are in the process of dismantling their WMD programs. A joint U.S.-United Kingdom study has determined that as many as 250 key personnel and 1,500 support personnel from Libya will require some form of financial support. The Non-proliferation Disarmament Fund (NDF) provided $500,000 for start-up activities in 2004 and $2.5 million for training purposes in 2005, with the Bush administration requesting an additional $1 million in NPWMDE funds for 2006.

NADR programs in general have not generated a great deal of criticism for a variety of reasons, most notably that they are perceived as fulfilling important
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The ESF program has become the home of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), the mandate of which is to promote reform in the Middle East, including North Africa. One of the administration’s often-stated arguments in favor of fostering especially political reform in the Arab world is that authoritarian Arab regimes, especially those closely tied to the U.S., breed anti-American sentiment, as witnessed by the fact that most of the attackers on 9/11 hailed from two of the most authoritarian and pro-American regimes in the Middle East (Egypt and Saudi Arabia). MEPI’s budget has expanded from $29 million in 2002 (its first year of operation) to $74.4 million in 2005, although this latter figure demonstrates a decrease from $100 million provided in 2003 and $89 million provided in 2004. The budget request for 2006 was $120 million, $25 million of which is reserved for the creation of a Middle East Foundation (along the lines of existing Asia and Eurasia Foundations) that will assume control away from the State Department over the day-to-day running of the program. MEPI is typically heralded by local U.S. Embassies as proof of the Bush administration’s commitment to democratization in the Arab world.

The primary shortcoming of the MEPI program is that it follows the tradition of ESF aid in general, namely the provision of assistance to strategically located, typically authoritarian allies for programs that their elites desire and that in reality do not question their hold over power. “The projects that MEPI has funded to date are a scattering of well-intentioned but soft-edged initiatives favoring economic and educational issues, which Arab governments much prefer to the thornier questions of political reform,” explains Thomas Carothers (2005, 2). These sentiments are echoed by the Brookings Institution, which concludes that “MEPI has chosen to nibble at the margins of the reform problem by funding a wide variety of uncontroversial programs and largely working within the boundaries set by Arab governments” (Carothers 2005, 2). Even the Bush administration has ironically reinforced these perceptions by lauding MEPI’s role in promoting trade and economic liberalization, including the signing of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with the United States (as in the case of the FTA signed with Morocco in March 2004), movement toward a Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA), and supporting the specific program initiatives of the Group of Eight’s (G-8’s) Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) that was launched at the 2004 Sea Island summit held in the United States. Indeed,
official rhetoric notwithstanding, the MEPI program fails to address the fundamental issue of political reform, preferring instead to channel resources to important regional allies.

Toward the Future

The importance of spreading democracy throughout the world served as the central foreign policy theme of President Bush’s inaugural address in January 2005. Despite President Bush’s lofty rhetoric, it is important to note that democracy promotion has never served as the principal foreign policy objective of the northern industrialized democracies, including the United States (Schraeder 2002). At best it has played a secondary role behind more self-interested foreign pursuits. Equally important, rhetoric has not always conformed to actual policies. Especially in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the Bush administration has had to weigh the benefits of democracy promotion when such a policy would potentially alienate important allies in the war on terrorism. In the Horn of Africa, for example, a decision to make democracy promotion the principal U.S. foreign policy objective would have precluded the decision to make Djibouti the only site of a formal U.S. military base on African soil. Indeed, all three of Washington’s North African allies (Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia) in the war on terrorism lack democratic political systems.

The logic of current policy was succinctly captured by an officer of the U.S. Embassy in Tunis in 2003. “In short, foreign policy is about choosing, and in this case there is no question that the security interest of combating global terrorism with our allies in North Africa is more important than the degree to which the peoples of these countries enjoy democratic forms of governance” (Interview, 2004). Official rhetoric notwithstanding, there is no doubt that this statement effectively captures Bush administration foreign policy toward all regions of the African continent, with the hierarchy of foreign interests being (1) counter-terrorism; (2) U.S. economic interests, especially ensuring access to African oil; and (3) subsidiary goals, including democracy promotion, socio-economic development, and combating HIV/AIDS. The problem with such a hierarchy of interests is that the emerging anti-terrorist consensus in U.S. foreign policy has fostered a return to a strategic approach to the African continent reminiscent of the Cold War in which national security interests overshadowed normative goals such as democracy promotion. Specifically, an overriding U.S. preoccupation with the war on terrorism has led the Bush administration to overlook the authoritarian excesses of allied regimes in favor of their willingness to support U.S. counter-terrorism policies.

References


