



# U.S. National Interests and Africa's Strategic Significance

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It has been a long-standing and, alas, self-fulfilling cliché that Africa is the stepchild of U.S. foreign policy. Sadly exploited by colonial rulers before being divided by the proxy battles of the cold-war rivals, the continent—as it continues to be blighted by environmental degradation, economic malaise, social tensions, ethnic conflict, and political misrule—has yet to see any “peace dividend.” With the exception of a handful of experts (for the most part, tucked away in academia and Africanists by training or experience), most foreign policy realists wrote the continent off as little more than a source of trouble, albeit one that could be safely ignored because it rarely if ever impinged on America's strategic national interests. In Washington, U.S.–Africa policy was the almost exclusive preserve of the Congressional Black Caucus and a few liberal humanitarians when those worthies were not otherwise distracted by other matters.<sup>1</sup> The September 11, 2001, attacks, however, changed the calculus of Africa's strategic significance.

According to the September 2002 *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington taught the world's sole remaining superpower that “weak states . . . can pose as great a danger to our national interests as strong states. Poverty does not make poor people into terrorists and murderers. Yet poverty, weak institutions, and corruption can make weak states vulnerable to terrorist networks and drug cartels within their borders.”<sup>2</sup> Perhaps with the exception of the Greater Middle East, nowhere is this analysis truer than in Africa, where poverty and state weakness are par for the course. Consequently, the

*National Security Strategy* acknowledged that

In Africa, promise and opportunity sit side by side with disease, war, and desperate poverty. This threatens both a core value of the United States—preserving human dignity—and our strategic priority—combating terror. American interests and American principles, therefore, lead in the same direction: we will work with others for an African continent that lives in liberty, peace, and growing prosperity.

Unfortunately, old habits die hard, and other challenges soon took priority, especially given the political calculations of a presidential election year. As far as the war on terrorism is concerned, attention has been focused almost exclusively on the Middle East when it was not fixated on “homeland security.” This lack of attention with regard to Africa is not just shortsighted but will ultimately prove perilous to U.S. national interests stemming from a number of factors, both natural and geopolitical, unless remedied in the coming presidential term. Currently Sub-Saharan Africa supplies the United States with 16 percent of its petroleum needs. According to a report prepared for the National Intelligence Council, within a decade the West African subregion will play an increasingly important role in global energy markets, providing more than one-quarter of North American oil imports by 2015, and thus surpass the total volume of oil imports from the Middle East.<sup>3</sup> The continent also boasts the world's fastest rate of population growth: By

2020, today's 900 million Africans will number more than 1.2 billion—more than the combined populations of Europe and North America. Nor do these absolute numbers tell the whole story: By then the median age of Europeans will be 45, whereas nearly half of the African population will be under the age of 15.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the dynamic potential implicit in these natural and human resource figures, Africa also suffers from many woes. Sub-Saharan Africa remains the world's economic basket case, with a per capita GDP of barely \$575, according to the World Bank's *World Development Indicators 2003* report.<sup>5</sup> The United Nations Development Program's *Human Development Report 2004* determined that of the 36 countries found to have "low development," 32 were in Africa.<sup>6</sup> Although sub-Saharan Africa is home to only 10 percent of the world's overall population, more than two-thirds of the people living with HIV are Sub-Saharan Africans. In 2003 alone, an estimated 3 million Africans became infected, and 2.2 million died of AIDS, the latter figure representing 75 percent of AIDS deaths globally that year.<sup>7</sup>

Poverty and disease are not the only challenges facing the continent and the world, although they certainly complicate the search for solutions to a wide array of difficulties. Throughout the continent, the institution of the state itself is in trouble, and it is on this challenge that the next U.S. administration must focus its attention.

## **"Quasi-States" and the War on Terrorism**

The challenge for African states since independence has been how to refashion what Bertrand Badie has called *l'état importé*<sup>8</sup> into an arrangement that is not only stable but also accepted by its citizens as legitimate, as well as capable of performing the basic functions of statehood: control over national territory; oversight of natural resources; the effective and rational

collection of revenue; the maintenance of adequate national infrastructure; and the capacity to govern and maintain law and order, including respect for basic human rights.

A cursory glance at any major newspaper, however, reveals that in Africa today the "imported state" is in trouble. Sierra Leone is only now emerging from more than a decade of civil war that brought about the near total collapse of its government, as well as frightening scenes of apocalyptic violence; today the country's government is propped up by a 12,000-man UN peacekeeping force.

Until last year Liberia was run as a personal fiefdom by a warlord turned president who is currently wanted for war crimes by the UN-sponsored Special Court for Sierra Leone; the country is presently a *de facto* UN protectorate supervised by a former U.S. Air Force major general, Jacques Paul Klein.<sup>9</sup>

Since its start in September 2002, the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire has killed an estimated 12,000 people and displaced anywhere from 700,000 to 1 million persons; the fragile truce holds only because the country's former colonial ruler, France, has deployed several thousand soldiers to separate the warring parties.<sup>10</sup>

The ironically named Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)—which, in its history as an independent state, has never had as much as one free and democratic election—has been embroiled in a conflict that has been called Africa's first world war. It has taken a toll of at least 3.3 million lives, giving the DRC the world's highest crude mortality rate.<sup>11</sup>

Zimbabwe degenerated from being the breadbasket of Africa to being the basket case of the continent in less than half a decade: Last year the production of maize was down to one-third and that of wheat to one-twelfth of 2000 levels.<sup>12</sup>

Somalia—or at least its southern half—still lacks a central government more than a decade after the ill-starred U.S.-led international intervention.

Although a peace deal is tenuously holding in Sudan's south, the western Darfur region is wit-

nessing a state-sponsored *pogrom*—described as “genocide” by both President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell<sup>13</sup>—that has killed more than 50,000 people (10,000 more are dying each month from malnutrition, disease, and other consequences) and displaced more than 1.2 million people and threatens to tear apart Africa's largest country just as it is beginning, with revenues from newly discovered oilfields, the first sustained development effort in its history.

The *National Security Strategy* correctly identified weak or failed states as a major threat to the United States. These “quasi-states,” to borrow the formulation of Boston University professor Robert Jackson, may be “internationally enfranchised and possess the same rights and responsibilities as all other sovereign states,” but their governments “are often deficient in the political will, institutional authority, and organized power to protect human rights or provide socioeconomic welfare.”<sup>14</sup> These capacity-challenged states—between one-third and one-half of all Sub-Saharan African countries are estimated to fall into this category<sup>15</sup>—provide potential havens for terrorist groups and other transnational criminal networks taking advantage of the inability of ostensibly sovereign governments to assert authority beyond the environs of their capitals.

Although the postinvasion of Iraq *volte-face* of Libya's Muammar al-Qaddafi has apparently exorcized the specter of state sponsorship of terrorism from the continent, Africa's weak states and corrupt rulers still willingly or unwittingly provide haven and other support for all manner of terrorists and other nonstate actors. It was no accident that Osama bin Laden ran Al Qaeda from Khartoum in the 1990s. My forthcoming book on the Sierra Leonean conflict documents the shadowy role that various factions from the Middle East, many associated with Islamist groups in Lebanon, played in that West African country's civil war. In fact, Nabih Berri, the speaker of Lebanon's parliament and leader of the Shia Amal militia closely aligned with Syria, was born in Sierra Leone. Islamists from abroad have also been actively exploiting economic stagnation and

political corruption in Nigeria in an attempt to fracture Africa's most populous state (and America's fifth largest source of crude petroleum). Muslim-Christian clashes over Islamist attempts to impose *sharia* regularly leave hundreds dead.

Furthermore, by being a bane to their own citizens, who are utterly alienated from if not brutalized by the neopatrimonial elites squandering national resources with impunity, the governments of many of Africa's weak states unwittingly provide even more potential converts to terrorist causes. Recall that before 9/11, Al Qaeda's most spectacular success was the nearly simultaneous August 7, 1998, bombings of U.S. embassies in the African capitals of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya—an operation the terrorist network could not have carried out without local collaborators. And although African Muslims have traditionally followed moderate traditions, more radical elements have begun to make their presence felt in recent years. To gain a foothold among many communities they have promoted their ability to provide education and other social services in the absence of the provision of even basic services by weak governments.

## Addressing African State Weakness

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At the center of this crisis in state capacity is the contrived and artificial nature of the African state, itself a colonial superstructure imposed on indigenous societies, coupled with the surreal expectation that postindependence leaders should somehow forge nations out of heterogeneous groups of people and cultures. In many instances colonial rule was not direct—the colonial powers finding it more convenient to coopt local chieftains and other strongmen into what at least appeared to be a uniform system of administration. In actuality, as Columbia University Professor Mahmood Mamdani has pointed out, colonial Africa became bifurcated, permitting a tiny minor-

ity of Europeans and Westernized Africans to enjoy the full prerogatives of citizenship, while the overwhelming majority of Africans had whatever rights they were accorded only as subjects of tribally defined "native authorities."<sup>16</sup>

A thumbnail definition of a nation focuses on a "named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members."<sup>17</sup> If that is the case, then there is no such entity as the "Sierra Leonean nation" or the "Liberian nation"—or any other Sub-Saharan nation, for that matter. Accordingly, African jurist Makau wa Mutua has argued this point in moral and juridical terms.

The post-colonial state, the uncritical successor of the colonial state, is doomed because it lacks basic moral legitimacy. Its normative and territorial construction on the African colonial state, itself a legal and moral nullity, is the fundamental reason for its failure. . . . At independence, the West decolonized the colonial state, not the African peoples subject to it. In other words, the right of self-determination was exercised not by victims of colonization but [by] their victimizers, the elites who control the international state system.<sup>18</sup>

Although Africa has a rich social, cultural, and political history, modern African states are not rooted in this past. The present-day borders and national composition of African states are colonial legacies that emerged directly from the often arbitrary ways that the great powers delineated their respective spheres of influence during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Henry Kissinger has elaborated on the consequences of this colonial past.

In Africa, borders not only follow the demarcations *between* the spheres of influence of the European powers, as in

Asia; they also reflect the administrative subdivisions *within* each colonial area. In East and West Africa, Britain and France governed colonies with long coastlines. Hence it proved efficient to divide these colonies into a multiplicity of administrative units, each with its own outlet to the sea, which later became independent states. On the other hand, in Central Africa, tiny Belgium governed a region nearly as large as the British and French possessions without, however, any significant coastline. Possessing only a very short outlet to the sea at the mouth of the Congo River, this vast territory was ruled by Belgium as a single unit, which later emerged as a single state with an explosive ethnic mixture.

Most importantly, the administrative borders in each colony were drawn without regard to ethnic or tribal identities; indeed, the colonial powers often found it useful to divide up ethnic or tribal groups in order to complicate the emergence of a unified opposition to imperial rule.<sup>19</sup>

Although the struggle, whether peaceful or violent, toward independence from colonial rule united disparate groups in a common cause, it was rarely sufficient to form a national identity. The challenge was even greater in some cases, like that of Sierra Leone, a country that was created by amalgamating two separate colonial-era political units, the Crown Colony of Freetown and the Protectorate of Sierra Leone, each of which bore a distinct colonial experience grafted onto more ancient differences when it became independent.<sup>20</sup> In Liberia, Sub-Saharan Africa's oldest republic, the franchise was extended to members of indigenous communities only in 1946—a full century after the country's independence—and then only to those who owned a hut and paid taxes on it. The country's current legal code, first promulgated in 1956, invests neither

tribal groups nor individual members of native ethnic groups with title to lands that they and their ancestors have occupied for centuries. Indigenous communities are granted the use of public land. When a tribe is judged "sufficiently advanced in civilization," it is permitted to "petition the government for a division of tribal lands into family holdings." Needless to say, in addition to penalizing the individual, the law specifies no specific criteria for determining when any given group has achieved the state of being "sufficiently advanced in civilization."<sup>21</sup>

The survival of such artifices has not been contingent so much on internal legitimacy—by and large nonexistent—but on international recognition derived from the right of self-determination granted to the colonial state and reinforced by the logic of the cold war. Absent the cold war or neocolonial guarantees to client states such as the ones French military missions provide in places like Côte d'Ivoire, ethnic plurality and in some cases state duality have finally caught up with Sub-Saharan Africa. The consequences of the failure of postcolonial states in their highly arbitrary borders to forge national identities and loyalties have been devastating. Without organic ties to a nation-state, rulers and their cronies and, by extension, members of their ethnic groups pillage it at will and resort to massive human rights abuses to repress those who have been excluded. The genocide in Rwanda 10 years ago is only one example—albeit perhaps the most poignant one—of the destructive potential of ethnic cleavages.

Despite the damning evidence of the wholesale failure of the juridical states they inherited from former colonial masters, African elites have persisted in their canonization of the status quo. The precursor of the present African Union, the Organization of African Unity, at the first ordinary session of its Assembly of Heads of Government in 1964, formally declared the received borders a "tangible reality" and required that its member governments pledge themselves "to respect the frontiers existing on their achievement of national independence."<sup>22</sup> The preservation of

arbitrary territorial divisions has, more often than not, benefited illegitimate and incompetent rulers, while depriving the multitudes of the civil and political liberties that ought to have been the fruits of independence, to say nothing of the minimal condition *sine qua non* of a tolerable standard of living.

Of course, in the wake of the difficulties the United States has encountered in Iraq, one would be well advised to approach "regime change" (which, ultimately, is what discussions about redrawing maps is all about) of any kind with the greatest caution. Political and legal realism, however, does not automatically preclude changes when they represent the most viable option for long-term stability. Consequently, this study argues that although redrawing political maps is always a messy business—one that should be approached with the greatest caution over the long term—the interests of the international community in global security, state stability, respect for human rights, and the development of natural resources—as well as the self-evident interest of Africans in political freedom and economic development, both of which are predicated on state legitimacy—will be served best by encouraging peaceful processes like the Navaisha negotiations that empower Africans to create consensual political entities to replace clearly failed "imported states."<sup>23</sup> As Kenyan scholar Ali A. Mazrui has argued,<sup>24</sup> with or without a peaceful means for true self-determination that redresses the wrongs of colonial cartographers, the breakup of the continent's colonial-era states and the realignment of their frontiers will occur sooner or later—the only question is whether that process will require the spilling of more blood or whether it can be managed by statesmen who possess the courage and vision to face reality and defy conventions.

Unfortunately, in recent years the phenomena associated with globalization have, at least for the short-term, exacerbated the inherent weakness of postcolonial African states. Some of the reforms mandated by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, for example, have

focused on dismantling state regulations and bureaucracies, thus undermining the client-oriented focus that alone holds these states together. In his recent book, economist Peter Griffiths recounts how he was sent to Sierra Leone by the World Bank to report on the dismantling of the notoriously corrupt state monopoly on rice importation.<sup>25</sup> He discovered that the government actually imported about half of the West African country's staple food and that no businessman would take on the job in the government's stead because of Sierra Leone's well-known political instability and plummeting economy. Griffiths concluded that the World Bank's preordained policy, although it would boost the incomes of local producers and retailers in the long run, would, in the interim, subject them to starvation.

As for the government, implementing the reform meant that it lost yet another of its few links to its citizenry. Although cutting away the shackles hindering economic development is a positive change, it should be conceded that in some countries in Africa those shackles are the only civil bonds. Thanks to almost instantaneous communications, the often painful adjustments that occur during economic transitions are even more acutely felt and widely resented, especially if inequities in a given society, whether relative or absolute, have increased. UN Undersecretary General Shashi Tharoor commented that

Conversion to free markets has exacerbated the problem of economic inequality in underdeveloped countries, many of which have underdeveloped regions which correspond to specific ethnic groups or segments of society. . . . Indeed, some of the poster children for globalization proved that they were more, not less, vulnerable to civil strife as a result.<sup>26</sup>

In other instances, the arrival of multiparty politics, by exposing government corruption and failure, has actually aggravated the competition for spoils and, as Yale Law School Professor Amy

Chua pointed out in her sobering book, fanned the flames of ethnic conflict—all the while contributing to further state instability, collapse, and disorder.<sup>27</sup> Dealing with the problems of the congenital weakness of African states, as well as their low capacity to exercise authority over territory and population and to provide basic services, will be the key to providing long-term security to the people of Africa, as well as those of the rest of the world. The challenge will be to discover the means of doing so in a manner that will do justice both to the interests of Westerners and to the sensibilities of Africans.

## **Engaging Africa Now**

Although an effective strategy for stability in Africa will involve a long-term commitment to strengthening local authority—as well as improving the capacity to govern while respecting domestic desires for freedom, transparency, and democracy—in the short-term U.S. national interests will require that the next administration develop a comprehensive strategy that corresponds to American political, security, and energy needs as they relate to the continent. Such a strategy will necessarily include economic, political, and military components that have been carefully customized and balanced to maximize their impact as the specific circumstances of each subregion or country demand.

### ***Economic Agenda***

For too long U.S. economic policy toward Sub-Saharan Africa has consisted solely of transfers of ineffectual aid: Trade has increasingly played an important role. The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), signed by President Bill Clinton in 2000, offers tangible incentives for African countries to continue their efforts to open their economies and build free markets by giving them the most liberal access to the American market available to any country or region with

which the United States does not have a free trade agreement. These provisions were strengthened by the AGOA Acceleration Act signed by President Bush this past summer. Presently 37 (of a possible total of 48) Sub-Saharan countries qualify for the trade benefits offered by AGOA. Trade with these countries in 2003 was valued at more than \$17 billion, a figure that will be surpassed by the \$23 billion valuation of the exchange so far recorded during 2004.<sup>28</sup> The volume of trade ought to be expanded, increasing American firms' access to Africa's vast natural resources as well as potential markets for technology exports, while also facilitating Africa's integration into the global economy. The proposed free trade agreement with the member states of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU)—Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, and Swaziland—represents a step in the right direction in relations with a bloc whose bilateral trade with the United States during 2003 was worth \$4.5 billion. The United States also could assist SACU countries and other African countries in leveraging their comparative advantage in the continent's low-cost agricultural sector by championing at the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other international negotiations the elimination of subsidies and other barriers to trade.

African leaders have devised a plan, dubbed the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which was formally adopted at the OAU summit in July 2001. NEPAD is unique in recognizing that the challenges of escalating poverty levels, underdevelopment, and the continent's continued economic marginalization require a new, radical intervention spearheaded by African leaders themselves. In short, NEPAD is a self-imposed structural adjustment program aimed at addressing the indigenous roots of Africa's insecurity, including conflict, authoritarian rule, and poor political, economic, and corporate accountability. So far 23 countries have submitted to NEPAD's voluntary peer-review mechanism—itsself an amazing milestone in a region where sovereignty, won at great cost, has been jealously guarded.

Of course, amid the discussions of trade, Africa still needs aid. The proposed \$5 billion increase in annual aid through the Millennium Challenge Account, which rewards countries that have seriously undertaken reform efforts, is a significant improvement over traditional aid programs that delivered little more than cycles of dependency. Even though the actual level of support delivered and the strings attached have raised the hackles of critics, the Bush administration's \$15 billion initiative to fight HIV/AIDS on the continent represents a major break with the previous, unresponsive policy that was made regarding this pandemic. How Washington deals with the health crisis in Africa during the next several years will inevitably shape how it confronts HIV/AIDS-related humanitarian, economic, and security challenges that will arise in geopolitically pivotal India, China, and the countries of the former Soviet Union.

### ***Political Agenda***

By itself, economic progress will go a long way toward relieving the perennial political instability of African states and the consequent threat that instability represents to others near and far. Old perceptions die hard, but it is remarkable how many African states have embraced—at least formally, if not always substantially—democratic politics in recent years. Even though many states have not yet made the full transition to democratic rule represented by a peaceful transition of government through free and fair elections, the principle is at least admitted. Robert Mugabe's thuggish regime in Harare is conspicuous these days precisely because it stands athwart the regional trend toward democratization.

The United States should direct efforts toward strengthening the continent's democratization process, as well as the governmental capacity of individual states in conjunction with U.S. allies and other outside stakeholders. A coordinated diplomatic and political strategy would have to

involve both the continent's regional powers (e.g., Nigeria and South Africa) and its few relative success stories (e.g., Botswana and Senegal). Bilateral ties should be supplemented with relationships with Africa's subregional groups, including the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in the northeastern part of the continent. In particular, American dealings with the subregional bodies should include political and security dialogue as well as economic concerns in recognition of the fact that the groups have been instrumental in peacekeeping and conflict resolution. IGAD not only facilitated the U.S.-led brokering of three protocols between the government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), which is expected to end some two decades of fighting in the country's south, it has been mediating between rival clans that have carved up the remnants of Somalia. Throughout the 1990s and well into the new millennium, ECOWAS carried out the thankless task of trying to intervene in the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars.

The United States would do well politically to support the ongoing transformation of the OAU into the African Union, recognizing in the latter an appropriate potential partner for dealing with transnational economic, political, and security concerns, especially when one considers that only on few occasions will core national interests demand direct American intervention in Sub-Saharan Africa but that challenges facing the continent exceed the limited capacity of individual African states. Consequently, the milestones of this past year—including the convening in March in Addis Ababa of the first session of the Pan African Parliament and the establishment in May of a Peace and Security Council within the African Union—should be welcomed as the substantive political progress they represent. The current chairman of the African Union, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, has taken the lead in mediating between the government of Sudan

and representatives of the two rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), active in the Darfur region.<sup>29</sup>

### **Military Agenda**

Effective political governance by African states ultimately will require that they be capable of exercising that classic attribute of statehood: a monopoly on the legitimate use of force within their frontiers. Enhancing the capacity of states in the region to police themselves will, of course, directly affect America's global war on terrorism. The *National Security Strategy* specifically recommended that the United States work with other countries to "help strengthen Africa's fragile states, help build indigenous capability to secure porous borders, and help build up the law enforcement and intelligence infrastructure to deny havens for terrorists."

Ironically, for a variety of historical reasons not unrelated to past abuses, the United States and its European allies have been rather stingy in giving military assistance to African states. If the cycle of violent conflict on the continent began with the loss of the government's monopoly on the means of force, one would logically suppose that the strengthening of Africa's military and police forces would be the foundation for recreating stable national states capable of giving orders and seeing them carried out throughout national territory. Instead, Western policymakers seem to approach conflicts with the assumption that their solution is the emasculation if not the wholesale dismantling of national military forces. Although, to be sure, the problem of autocracy still persists, the worst abuses that have occurred on the continent in recent years have happened where there was too little rather than too much state power deriving from anarchy rather than tyranny.

In Sierra Leone, for example, a private South African military company, Executive Outcomes, was hired by the government and not only did a

fine job of training and leading the national army in 1995 and 1996 but also brought the previously recalcitrant Revolutionary United Front (RUF) to the negotiating table. Yet the Abidjan Agreement of November 1996 stipulated that the security company had to withdraw, which it did in January 1997. Precisely three months later, the ill-disciplined army mutinied and joined the RUF in imposing a nine-month reign of terror that ended only when a Nigerian-led West African force, supplied by another private firm, the British-based Sandline International, threw the rebels out. The Nigerians left in May 2000; the day after their departure, the insurgency erupted again, and its instigators took some 500 UN peacekeepers hostage. That uprising was put down only by a British expeditionary force.

Consequently, the capacity-building programs launched by the Bush administration, including the \$100 million East Africa Counterterrorism Initiative (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda), a comprehensive package to improve counterterrorism capabilities, and the more modest \$7 million Pan-Sahel Initiative (Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger), aimed at enhancing border security, are important developments. These alliances have already borne fruit: Last year when 32 European tourists in Algeria were kidnapped by Islamist terrorists of the Al Qaeda-linked Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) and taken to the Sahel region—the difficult-to-patrol border region between Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Algeria—Malian President Amadou Toumani Touré was instrumental in securing the release of the hostages after a six-month ordeal.<sup>30</sup>

Despite security concerns arising from Africa, the U.S. military itself has yet to establish a coordinated response mechanism. In an arrangement harking back to the colonial era and the days of the cold war, 37 of the 48 Sub-Saharan African states fall under the military aegis of the U.S. European Command (EUCOM). Given current geopolitical realities, it would make more sense if a separate African Command was precluded to align most of Africa with the Middle Eastern

countries covered by the Central Command (CENTCOM). Africa also is the only region in the world where the United States never developed a system of regional security structures, as it did successfully in the North Atlantic with NATO and with some degree of good effect if not the same level of success in Southeast Asia (SEATO), the South Pacific (ANZUS), and the Middle East (CENTO).

The African Union agreed in early March 2004 to form five brigades of soldiers, policemen, and military observers—15,000 people in all—to be based in each of the five regions of the continent. While details are being worked out, the United States will have an opportunity to support and shape the nascent joint force, which, if all goes well, would also absolve America of the need to intervene directly in crises in a region where military intervention would enjoy little if any popular support at home. In any event, these various developments are further reason to revisit American military organizational structures as they affect or fail to affect Africa.

## Conclusion

The realities on the ground in Africa and their importance to the post-9/11 world at large require the United States to undertake both a comprehensive analysis and a policy commitment. Since the end of the cold war, at least two-dozen wars have broken out on the continent, killing at least 8 million Africans and currently displacing a population that has been estimated to come close to 20 million.<sup>31</sup> Despite heroic talk about an “African renaissance,”<sup>32</sup> the reality has been a vicious circle of weak states and the collapsing rule of law, frightening off both local and international investment and producing chronic underdevelopment that when coupled with disease and environmental stress contributes to anarchy and lawlessness and eventually to open conflict. The whole cycle constitutes what one study succinctly characterized as “development in reverse”—the conditions of which make the states affected par-

ticularly attractive to terrorists and other transnational criminals.

Despite this bleak analysis, there is still a unique window of opportunity. The challenges posed by the continent—unchecked disease, endemic poverty, systematic corruption, and state weakness—render its states particularly receptive to outside initiatives. Nevertheless, in the present global context, Africa has acquired a strategic significance—a youthful population, natural resources, and economic potential, as well as ongoing security considerations—that makes sustained U.S. attention and commitment possible. For all the potential pitfalls, Washington should recommit to engaging actively with Africa, realizing that promoting stability and development there is in America's national interests, as well as in accord with its principles.

### About the Author

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### Notes

1. For example, as human rights lawyer Samantha Power noted in her Pulitzer Prize-winning study of American foreign policy and genocide, the domestic U.S. lobby for Africa had its attention turned elsewhere as the 1994 Rwandan genocide unfolded. At the time the massacre of the Tutsi and Hutu moderates was in full swing, Randall Robinson of TransAfrica was engaging in a hunger strike to protest the automatic repatriation of Haitians fleeing the coup that had ousted Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and six members of Congress were getting themselves arrested in

front of the White House in demonstrations over the same policy. The late Senator Paul Simon, then chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Africa and one of the few members of Congress to urge the Clinton administration to be more engaged, sadly recalled later: "If every member of the House and Senate had received 100 letters from people back home saying we have to do something about Rwanda, when the crisis was first developing, then I think the response would have been different." See Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York, 2002), 375–377.

2. For the full text, see [www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html) (accessed September 29, 2004).

3. National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2015: A Dialogue About the Future with Nongovernmental Experts* (NIC 2000–2002, December 2000), 73.

4. *Ibid.*, 19–24.

5. World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2003 CD-ROM*.

6. United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report 2004: Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World* (New York, 2004), 141–142.

7. Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS, *2004 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic* (Geneva, 2004), 30–34.

8. See Bertrand Badie, *L'état importé. L'occidentalisation de l'ordre politique* (Paris, 1992). English translation: *The Imported State: The Westernization of the Political Order*, trans. Claudia Royal (Stanford, Calif., 2000).

9. See my study, *Liberia: Portrait of a Failed State* (New York, 2004).

10. International Crisis Group, *Côte d'Ivoire: "The War Is Not Yet Over,"* ICG Africa Report no. 72 (Freetown/Brussels, November 28, 2003), 4.

11. International Rescue Committee, *Mortality in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Results from a Nationwide Survey* (New York, April 2003), i, 13.

12. Samantha Power, "How to Kill a Country: Turning a Breadbasket into a Basket Case in Ten Easy Steps—The Robert Mugabe Way,"

*Atlantic Monthly* 292, no. 5 (December 2003): 89.

13. For the text of President Bush's September 21, 2004, address to the United Nations General Assembly, see [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/09/20040921-3.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/09/20040921-3.html) (accessed September 29, 2004); for Secretary Powell's September 9, 2004, testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee regarding the crisis in Darfur, see [www.state.gov/secretary/rm/36042.htm](http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/36042.htm) (accessed September 29, 2004).

14. Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Third World* (Cambridge, 1990), 21.

15. See William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (Boulder, Colo., 1999), 15–44.

16. See Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, N.J., 1996).

17. Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London, 1991), 43.

18. Makau wa Mutua, "Why Redraw the Map of Africa: A Moral and Legal Inquiry," *Michigan Journal of International Law* 16 (1995): 1116.

19. Henry Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy? Toward a Diplomacy for the 21st Century* (New York, 2001), 201–203.

20. See Richard Fanthorpe, "Neither Citizen Nor Subject? 'Lumpen' Agency and the Legacy of Native Administration in Sierra Leone," *African Affairs* 100 (2001): 363–386.

21. See Pham, *Liberia: Portrait of a Failed State*, 59–63.

22. Organization of African Unity, "Resolution on Border Disputes among African States," (July 17–21, 1964), in *Basic Documents on African Affairs*, ed. Ian Brownlie (Oxford, 1971), 360–361.

23. On the subject of the Navaisha accord and its implication, see my commentary "Journey with a New Map? Thoughts on the Sudan Agreement and Stability in Africa," in *The National Interest* 3, no. 24 (June 16, 2004), at [www.inthenationalinterest.com/Articles/Vol3Issue24/Vol3Issue23Pham.html](http://www.inthenationalinterest.com/Articles/Vol3Issue24/Vol3Issue23Pham.html) (accessed September 29, 2004).

24. Ali A. Mazrui, "The Bondage of Boundaries," *Economist* (September 11, 1993): 28.

25. See Peter Griffiths, *The Economist's Tale: A Consultant Encounters Hunger and the World Bank* (London, 2003).

26. *Ibid.*

27. See Amy Chua, *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability* (New York, 2003).

28. For detailed statistics, see [www.agoa.info](http://www.agoa.info) (accessed September 29, 2004).

29. On the various points in the AU chairman's agenda, see the full text of his September 23, 2004, address to the United Nations General Assembly at [www.un.org/webcast/ga/59/statements/nigeng040923.pdf](http://www.un.org/webcast/ga/59/statements/nigeng040923.pdf) (accessed September 29, 2004).

30. See my commentary, "Mali: Between Islamic Militancy and African Chaos," in *The National Interest* 3, no. 31 (August 4, 2004), [www.inthenationalinterest.com/Articles/Vol3Issue31/Vol3Issue31Pham.html](http://www.inthenationalinterest.com/Articles/Vol3Issue31/Vol3Issue31Pham.html) (accessed September 29, 2004).

31. See Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2003: Africa Overview* (New York, 2003), 3–13.

32. The term was coined by South African President Thabo Mbeki in the 1990s and popularized by U.S. President Bill Clinton during his 1998 tour of Africa. See Thabo Mbeki, *Africa—The Time Has Come* (Cape Town, 1998).