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**AFRICOM: The militarization of American Foreign Policy, or the ‘civilianization’ of the American military?**

**I. Introduction**

In 2007, the Bush Administration announced the creation of an African Combatant Command, the first command to be created since the Carter years. Heralded by some as a much needed shift in strategic thinking about the African continent, it is viewed by others with trepidation and suspicion.

AFRICOM has been touted as an innovative new design for a combatant command that will lead a revolution in Washington that is based on interagency cooperation. Combining the diplomacy of the State Department, the humanitarian development efforts of USAID, and the military defense strategies of the Department of Defense, AFRICOM’s hybrid structure attempts to address major weaknesses in the implementation of American foreign policy epitomized by the power struggle between these agencies.

The problem with AFRICOM is that rhetoric is not supported by action. While the alleged goals of the command are to support African nations in their efforts to promote security and democracy, to promote crisis prevention and African initiatives which are compatible with American interests abroad, there is little evidence to support this.

Is the African Command the dawn of a new civilian structure for a combatant command as the creators of the initiative have alleged? Or is it more likely that this new agency is merely the continuation of a significant militarization of American foreign

policy towards Africa? The justifications for AFRICOM and the short term goals of the organization are pointedly geared towards American interests, not African ones. By looking at the actions of the command, and the hierarchy of the chain of command within the agency itself, it is clear that if AFRICOM is to achieve its hybrid status there is much work to do.

## **II. What is AFRICOM: A New Look? The humanitarian Combatant Command**

Africa for US policy makers has consistently been viewed as a Petri dish for greater contests. Historically, foreign policy goals have never targeted Africa specifically but more generally been part of great power secondary contests. This is most evident during the Cold War period. The ideological, economic and political conflict between the US and the USSR spurred US interests in the African continent significantly for the first time; the US historically maintaining neutrality in matters of European colonial conquest.

Since its advent of global preponderance, the US has militarily approached the globe in geographical segments. Manifested in the Cold War era as spheres of influence, the US military created Unified Combatant Commands as a means for coordinating US military action abroad. Until the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there existed five combatant commands: the United States Central Command (CENTCOM), the United States European Command (EUCOM), the United States Pacific Command (PACOM), the United States Northern Command (NORTHCOM), and the United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM).

But in February of 2007, the Bush Administration announced the creation of a sixth command: the African Command (AFRICOM)<sup>1</sup>. Until this point, the African continent was divided into three larger spheres under the control of the EUCOM, the

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<sup>1</sup> The United States African Command Homepage, <http://www.africom.mil/>.

PACOM, and the CENTCOM. This view represented a Cold War mindset of global spheres of influence. In a new post-Cold War paradigm, Africa as a continent and entity in its totality has gained greater significance for US leaders. In the complex realities of a multi-polar world the US faced new interest in Africa<sup>2</sup>.

Security needs required one command, one commander, whose sole priority was the African continent, not a secondary issue to be handled by three distinct command initiatives, each with its unique and necessary priorities<sup>3</sup>.

Announced in February 2007, the African Command reached capacity in October 2008, and now is intended to represent a new military model. It designed to incorporate an innovative inter-agency structure<sup>4</sup>. AFRICOM is an experiment in reorganization, going beyond the traditional role of the combatant command (CoCom), and not just the actual management of war, but working actively to avoid it<sup>5</sup>. With the State Department, US Agency for International Development and the Department of Defense all represented, the command marks an important move towards more integrated cooperation between the traditionally competitive agencies in Washington<sup>6</sup>. When presented in 2007, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld emphasized a relationship between State and the

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel Volman, "AFRICOM: The New US Military Command for Africa," *Pambazuka*, Issue 327, November 7th, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Gabe Scheinmann, "AFRICOM: A New Military Command," *The Washington Institute*, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2635>, July 10, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Robert G. Berschinski, "AFRICOM's Dilemma: The Global War on Terrorism, Capacity Building, Humanitarianism, and the Future of US Security Policy," *The Strategic Studies Institute*, November 2007.

<sup>5</sup> James Forest and Rebecca Crispin, "AFRICOM: Troubled Infancy, Promising Future," *Contemporary Security Policy*, v 30, 6.

<sup>6</sup> Chris Janlec, "US Experiments with African Command," *Policy Innovations*, <http://www.policyinnovations.org/ideas/briefings/data/000084>, October 29th, 2009.

Department of Defense; that AFRICOM had a civilian aspect that rendered it a "bureau for nation building" and not just an epicenter for the direction of military exercises<sup>7</sup>.

The Department of Defense is changing its strategic approach towards Africa, approaching it for the first time as a distinct and whole entity. Operationally conducted and monitored like any other command, the AFRICOM chain of command is responsible to both the Congress and the president<sup>8</sup>. It is important to note that a command is not a policy making body, or policy determining power, but a tactical decision making machine with respect to specific actions on the ground, which takes its orders from Washington just like any other CoCom<sup>9</sup>.

The command is headed by General William 'Kip' Ward, the official Commander who was appointed by the Bush Administration in 2007. A career military man, Ward has served in the US military all over the globe, including but not limited to: Korea, Egypt, Somalia, Bosnia, Israel and Germany. Most recently, Ward was the Deputy to the Commander of USEURCOM before his appointment to be the first commander of USAFRICOM. Reporting directly to the commander are two deputy commanders: one civilian and one military. Ambassador J Anthony Holmes is the Deputy to the Commander for Civil-Military Activities (DCMA), the civilian half of the second tier of command. Holmes is responsible for all civilian activities, policy partnerships and humanitarian concerns. This is the culmination of Holmes career in the Foreign Service as he is a career diplomat. His military counterpart, Vice Admiral Robert T Moeller, is

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<sup>7</sup> Robert D Kaplan, "The Next Frontier," *The Atlantic*, <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200711u/kaplan-africa>, November 1st 2007.

<sup>8</sup> TRANSCRIPT: Ward Discusses Roles, Mission of U.S. Africa Command with Al-Jazeera, <http://www.africom.mil/getArticle.asp?art=3005&lang=>, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> John Perra, "Seven Questions: General William 'Kip' Ward," *Foreign Policy*, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story\\_id=4662](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4662), February 2009.

the Deputy to the Commander for Military Operations (DCMO). He is directly under the commander, and is responsible for all military activities. The two other leadership roles in AFRICOM are headed by Command Sergeant Major Mark S Ripka, the military adviser, and Raymond L Brown who is the foreign policy adviser for the group<sup>10</sup>.

The power structure in the chain of command is emblematic of the larger inter-agency issues between the various policy making entities in Washington<sup>11</sup>. There are designated civilians in significant leadership positions, but according to US law, no civilian can direct military operations. In contrast, military personnel are able to oversee and command any civilian activities<sup>12</sup>. This seems to undermine the suggestion that there is significance in the civilian structure of the command.

The headquarters are currently in Stuttgart, Germany, where they were created in coordination with the EURCOM. Initially Washington expressed a desire for a regional command center, but explosive public relations backlash stalled plans quickly. No country was willing to play host to the command<sup>13</sup>. Only Liberia has expressed any interest in considering the command's permanent presence. Washington backpedaled rapidly, deciding to keep AFRICOM in Stuttgart indefinitely.

In practice however, the command is more strategically located in Germany than it would be anywhere on the African continent itself. Apart from the widespread resentment that is brewing locally toward the command, a regional base is not necessary. The command has no standing troops, as Washington prefers to keep the majority of

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<sup>10</sup> AFRICOM Homepage.

<sup>11</sup> House of Representatives, "AFRICOM: Rationales, Roles and Progress on the Eve of Operations," *US Government Printing Office* (Washington, 2009), 3.

<sup>12</sup> Forest, 9.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel Volman, "AFRICOM and the Obama Administration," *The African Security Research Project*, <http://concernedafricascholars.org/african-security-research-project/>, April 1st, 2009.

troops at home, able to be deployed anywhere on the globe. AFRICOM must request troops from Washington for each operation it undertakes. Additionally, it is easier to operate from Europe because it allows access to the whole continent. In order to fly from West Africa to East Africa, it is necessary to fly through Europe<sup>14</sup>. As it is north of Africa, Stuttgart is also within an hour of any time zone on the continent, improving the capabilities of communication<sup>15</sup>.

It is also more strategic for the headquarters to remain in Europe because of African sensitivity. Colonial wounds make African nations not only fearful for their sovereignty, but also very wary of military bases and troop presences<sup>16</sup>. No additional troops were introduced at the advent of the command, the only troops on the continent were ones previously stationed at preexisting bases. This is another reason that the emphasis of the command is more than military, and the role of the local ambassadors is emphasized<sup>17</sup>. Therefore troop numbers remain low, and civilian and military interests, staff and operations are mixed<sup>18</sup>.

Two distinct missions predate AFRICOM, which have been taken under the control of the new command: the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) and Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans Sahara (OEF-TS). CJTF-HOA is a counter-terrorism initiative that was established on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2002. With responsibilities in the Horn and East Africa, the Task Force performs military activities designed to support regional security by building partnerships and indigenous capacities.

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<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth Dickinson, "Think Again: AFRICOM," *Foreign Policy*, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/11/17/think\\_again\\_africom](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/11/17/think_again_africom), November 17th 2009, 3.

<sup>15</sup> TRANSCRIPT: Moeller Discusses Mission, Priorities of U.S. Africa Command, <http://www.africom.mil/getArticle.asp?art=3160&lang=>, May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "In Africa, Bush denies intent to build bases," *New York Times*, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/20/world/africa/20iht-prexy.5.10249167.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/20/world/africa/20iht-prexy.5.10249167.html?_r=1).

<sup>17</sup> Robert E Gribbin, "Implementing AFRICOM," *American Diplomacy*, [http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/item/2008/0103/grib/gribbin\\_africom.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/item/2008/0103/grib/gribbin_africom.html), February 12th, 2008.

<sup>18</sup> Volman, 2007.

The only base on the continent, around two thousand troops are stationed at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti, and the whole program serves as the only preexisting model for AFRICOM's formation<sup>19</sup>.

The OEF-TS is the military component of the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership, an initiative that works with Islamic governments of ten African nations to combat local extremism. It began as the Pan Sahel Initiative that was completed and expanded in 2004. Its main activities include: military information sharing to improve communication systems interoperability, joint, combined and multinational military exercises which enhance cooperation, building mutual military professionalism and accountability, and airlift and logistical support<sup>20</sup>. Apart from the two established missions, most of the actions and responsibilities of the Command are related to the training and capacity building of African troops. Joint military exercises, military contractors and engineer specialists, loans for arms through the Foreign Military Sales Program, police equipment through the Direct Commercial Sales Program not to mention border security and anti-terrorism initiatives<sup>21</sup>.

The stated goals of the US Military are usually codified in terms of “deter and engage, seize initiative, dominate and transition<sup>22</sup>.” But AFRICOM goes even further to try and create conflict prevention as well as supporting the more general goals of the military. The mission statement of AFRICOM is as follows:

USAFRICOM, in concert with other US government agencies and international partners, conducts sustained security engagement through military to military

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<sup>19</sup> AFRICOM Homepage.

<sup>20</sup> AFRICOM Homepage.

<sup>21</sup> Volman, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Dickinson.

programs, military sponsored activities, and other military operations as directed to promote a stable and secure African environment in support of US foreign policy<sup>23</sup>.

The leadership of the command emphasizes what they refer to as a '3D Approach:' the combination of diplomacy, development and defense. The command itself is only part of the larger picture of the policy design. It is responsible for the 'defense' aspect of the 3Ds, but in a strategy that supports initiatives of African governments, who are the driving force behind the determination of policy. The idea of 'sustained security engagement' is one designed to create longevity in security because it gives skills to Africans themselves, the main point being to work with Africans governments and organizations: the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and other regional organizations<sup>24</sup>.

The point of the reconfiguration created by AFRICOM is to achieve four major goals: reduce conflict, improve security, defeat violent extremism and create crisis response. This involves a combination of the US Marines, the US Navy, the US Army and US Air Force all together in one center. The military combination has the ability to act where civilian organizations do not<sup>25</sup>. Ward, while speaking in an interview with Al Jazeera tried to stress that the command is "not changing what we do, but changing *how* we do that work<sup>26</sup>(Emphasis added)." In its essence, the command is the result of a gradual shift that is an attempt to streamline policy and create real *coherency* in

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<sup>23</sup> AFRICOM Homepage.

<sup>24</sup> TRANSCRIPT: Ward Discusses African Security Challenges at Atlantic Council, <http://www.africom.mil/getArticle.asp?art=3520&lang=>, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

<sup>25</sup> TRANSCRIPT: Yates Discusses Lessons Learned at U.S. Africa Command, <http://www.africom.mil/getArticle.asp?art=3009&lang=>, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

<sup>26</sup> Al-Jazeera.



supporting African ambitions that are consistent with US goals and interests. It seeks to work with sympathetic regimes and governments to create support for US global initiatives with the ultimate goal of creating more security without the increase of US international troop presences<sup>27</sup>.

### **III. Why create an African Command: Resource Wars**

The question then becomes why now, why does the US for the first time since the Carter Administration need a new Combatant Command? The question can be answered in many ways, but they all relate to the change in the strategic interests of the US in Africa. Until recently, the US has not been actively involved in African affairs. The African continent historically has always more tightly connected to European issues than American ones. Not holding its own colonies, and only connected through the slave trade, American interests in Africa began peripherally during the Cold War era. But even as Americans became involved in African countries, it was in the context of fighting the Soviets rather than engaging with the Africans in their own right.

When the Cold War ended, so too did the security risks posed by the Soviet Union. At the end of the Cold War, US-African relations were mainly defined by the humanitarian efforts of the Clinton Administration. The 1993 failure during the Battle of Mogadishu in Somalia created revulsion for African humanitarian interventions, leading the US to avoid reengaging in any more efforts, most notably during the Rwandan Genocide in 1994-95<sup>28</sup>.

There are three main reasons for the US to create this command now. The first two are integral to US security, while the third is vital to support the first two. The Global

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<sup>27</sup> Volman, 2007.

<sup>28</sup> Berschinski.

War on Terror (GWOT), declared by the Bush Administration in 2001, has goals all over globe, but is focused in geographic areas of intense unrest or instability where terrorism has potential to gain influence. Additionally, new fears about the availability of natural resources and the influence of China in Africa are concerns voiced by the US. Support for these two security concerns is difficult both in domestic support and funding, but the creation of a combatant command establishes real concrete commitments to these initiatives.

After the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, US international interests changed significantly. The instability, chaos and corruption on the continent of Africa suddenly became of much more immanent importance to US security interests. Not only had the US already been attacked in Africa before, at embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Nairobi, Kenya during the 1990's but Al Qaeda, the perpetrators of the 9-11 attacks, were able to continue to hide out in the instability of northern Africa<sup>29</sup>.

The work being done by AFRICOM is meant to facilitate military activities, training in coordination with African troops of pro-US governments, creating surrogates to enable the US to extend the protection of its interests without necessarily sending more troops<sup>30</sup>. The security issues in Africa all relate back to the broader Bush Administration policy of the Global War on Terror. Africa is considered “a haven for terrorism.” Creating stability will better ensure US security<sup>31</sup>. The counter-terrorism activities, as noted before did not begin with AFRICOM, but is an effort to streamline the coherency of policy. Under the three previous commands, African leaders would get mixed messages from the different commanders. Now it is one command, one commander, one

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<sup>29</sup> Volman, 2007.

<sup>30</sup> Volman, 2009.

<sup>31</sup> Berschinski, 5.

consistent message. That is the idea anyway. When the consideration of terrorism activities is actually considered however, confusion exists. Even in Washington things are unclear. Clarity of objectives is very important in public perceptions, because the military actions taken US are visible<sup>32</sup>.

The GWOT in general and AFRICOM in particular are emblematic of the philosophy of the Bush Administration. In keeping with the ideas of the neoconservatives, this 'proactive approach' seeks to use preemptive action to promote democracy in unstable parts of the globe. Not only is it in the interests of the US, but it is part of the obligation the US has to the international system as a hegemonic power. Both of the official operations of AFRICOM, OET-TS and CJTF-HOA are examples of this. Operation Enduring Freedom is the third most significant anti-terrorism operation outside of the Middle East, after the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan<sup>33</sup>. The Joint Task Force more generally attempts to work with US allies, both African and NATO to work on security<sup>34</sup>.

The whole issue of terrorism is messy. Although the change in Department of Defense strategy is a good one, in an attempt to view Africa as a whole entity, this in itself is problematic. One of the first problems is the diversity of the continent. Even for one command the area of responsibility (AOR) is immense. The breadth of AFRICOM's mandate necessitates that many different sectors must be pulled together. In an effort to create coherency, it may only create more confusion<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> Dickinson.

<sup>33</sup> Pat Paterson, "Taking Africa Seriously," *United States Naval Institute. Proceedings*, Annapolis: October 2007, Vol. 133, 10; pg. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Volman, 2007.

<sup>35</sup> J. Peter Pham, "Getting AFRICOM Right," *World Defense Review*, <http://worlddefensereview.com/pham021507.shtml>.

The problem then becomes that because of the nature of international terrorism, should any aspect of the initiatives of AFRICOM fail, it will only escalate the issues at stake. We can see this in the present actions taking place in the Middle East. Because terrorism thrives in situations of instability and chaos, should the US bungle its operations in any way, it will have made the problem worse than if they had simply left the issue alone. If an operation is not completely achieved, it will decrease security and promote more terrorism and consequently more anti-American sentiment. AFRICOM is seen as a threat and could undermine US interests<sup>36</sup>.

The second perceived need for an African Command is neither articulated in the mandate of the command, nor is it often expressed by policy makers. This is because it is subservient to American interests alone, and not to the needs of Africans, nor can it be spun as such. This is the concern about the possible scarcity of natural resources. Africa's rich potential for sources of energy and raw materials are the main reasons that colonization occurred, and international interest in this abundance has not abated since the independence of African nations was achieved. This is especially true with the global concerns over oil.

According to some scholars, most notably Michael T Klare, oil is no longer just a commodity. With its scarcity on the rise, with the dual phenomenon of rising demand, oil has become a strategic resource. The rapid growth of developing nations, less so in Africa but predominantly in Asia (notably China and India), can only exacerbate the potential

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<sup>36</sup> Mark Malan, "AFRICOM: A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing?," *Refugees International Testimony* in Washington, DC, Before The Subcommittee on African Affairs, Committee on Foreign Relations U.S. Senate, at the hearing entitled: "Exploring the U.S. Africa Command and a New Strategic Relationship with Africa," August 01, 2007.

crisis<sup>37</sup>. For Klare, this will result in the creation of 'a new international energy order' in which resources will be controlled by governments. Adding to Klare's dire world view is the concept of 'tough oil.' As easily accessible reserves are depleted, there will only remain these 'tough' reserves. They will be typically harder to get to, and less of it will be found. It can also be present in unstable or unfriendly countries. This is a geopolitical issue because governments will now become involved<sup>38</sup>. If the creation of AFRICOM is any indication, this perspective may yet come to fruition.

The Africa continent is the perfect example of tough oil. "A vast abundance of vital raw materials contained in a deeply divided, politically weakened continent, remarkably open to international exploitation<sup>39</sup>." And there are many countries that are interested in their own portion of those resources. Not only are there large amounts of these resources, but they are for the most part much cheaper than the same resources from another part of the globe, especially places like Europe where the cost of labor is much higher.

"'African oil is of strategic national interest to us,' Walter Kansteiner, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, affirmed as early as 2002, 'and it will increase and become more important as we go forward.'<sup>40</sup>" The attention of the US military is evidence of this. Africa was marginalized as a source of energy resources for the US for a long time. But as conflict increases in strategic regions like the Persian Gulf, these African resources gain strategic importance. Africa is a big exporter of oil while still

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<sup>37</sup> Michael T Klare, *Rising Powers, Shrinking Planet* (New York, Metropolitan Books: 2008) 32.

<sup>38</sup> Klare, 7.

<sup>39</sup> Klare, 146.

<sup>40</sup> Klare, 148.

maintaining large reserves. It is currently the fifth highest exporter of oil to the US<sup>41</sup>.

While currently twenty percent of US imports come from Africa, it is projected that by 2015 it will reach twenty-five percent<sup>42</sup>.

An interest in resources has never been articulated as a part of the specific objectives of the African Command, but it is a necessary consequence. This fact is clearly inconsistent with US stated goals of working in tandem with Africans<sup>43</sup>. General Ward has even emphasized the need to secure US access to African resources<sup>44</sup>. He amended this in an interview with Al Jazeera; that resources are obviously consistent with the national interest of the US, but the goal is not to monopolize these resources, only secure them so that Africans can benefit from them<sup>45</sup>. This is slightly disingenuous, because it is clear that the US would also greatly stand to benefit from the security of natural resources in Africa, if not more at least in equal quantity.

The problem of political instability jeopardizes the energy industry. While reserves in Angola, Nigeria, Algeria and others are eagerly sought by international buyers, the threat of rebel groups, especially in the corrupt nation of Nigeria disrupts exports. This necessitates dangerous and often expensive alternatives such as off-shore drilling. US policy makers' demonstrated as early as the 1970's the geopolitical importance of secure access to minerals<sup>46</sup>

Integrally connected to the problem of oil interests in Africa is the problem of China. "Both Beijing and African governments have welcomed new trade relations-in

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<sup>41</sup> Berschinski.

<sup>42</sup> Ezekiel Pajibo and Emira Woods, "AFRICOM: Wrong for Liberia, Disastrous for Africa," *Foreign Policy in Focus*, [http://www.fpiif.org/articles/africom\\_wrong\\_for\\_liberia\\_disastrous\\_for\\_africa](http://www.fpiif.org/articles/africom_wrong_for_liberia_disastrous_for_africa), July 26, 2007.

<sup>43</sup> Berschinski.

<sup>44</sup> Volman, 2009.

<sup>45</sup> Al-Jazeera.

<sup>46</sup> Klare, 147-176.

part because there is no colonial past or difficult history to complicate matters-and business is booming. Trade is growing around 50 percent a year...<sup>47</sup>” China is now the third largest trading partner with Africa, second only to France and the US<sup>48</sup>.

The fear for the US is the competition that China poses as it grows in global power and influence, but also as its demands increase with its size and prestige. An even bigger problem with respect to its competition is that China has no scruples when dealing with despotic African regimes. Beijing is very aggressively seeking resources and making arms deals in Africa, without questioning African nations about their human rights records or political legitimacy<sup>49</sup>. The US on the other hand, holds expectations of the governments with which it does business, at least on paper. While actively working with the UN and other allies with economic sanctions and political maneuvers when in the case of abuses, the US is more limited than China with respect to trading with African nations.

General Ward insists that AFRICOM is not a "counterweight" to any other powers on the continent, indirectly referencing China. He reiterates that AFRICOM is only there to support African ambitions that are consistent with US goals and interests<sup>50</sup>. Jeopardizing the legitimacy of this statement is the simple fact that resource protection and security in Africa is consistent with stated US goals. The fear for many is that Africa could potentially become a theater for a Sino-American conflict over influence and resources in the coming decades<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> Fareed Zakaria, *The Post American World* (New York, WW Norton and Co.: 2008), 116.

<sup>48</sup> Scheinmann.

<sup>49</sup> Pajibo and Woods.

<sup>50</sup> Perra.

<sup>51</sup> Berschinski.

The battle for resources is not limited to China and the US. It is also active between the agencies in Washington. In order to gain domestic support for logistics, it is necessary to create a reason to justify more funding<sup>52</sup>. By creating a CoCom, the administration demonstrates a clear commitment, and the importance that is placed by the administration in the issue at hand. It makes the issue more competitive and more likely to get congressional attention<sup>53</sup>.

#### **IV. Militarization not Civilianization**

The first contest of AFRICOM was a public opinion battle. And it lost. Presented as a new form of CoCom, integrating the soft power of the State Department with the strength and effectiveness of the DoD, AFRICOM has not lived up to its proclaimed emphasis on development and humanitarian efforts. All of its current actions are military that have been carried over from before the creation of the command. In trying too hard to win the public relations battle that it started on the wrong foot, AFRICOM has only succeeded in continually contradicting itself. Africans can only look to Iraq as an example, and for them, they see only the militarization of relations.

The problem for US policy makers is that they devise strategy from an external viewpoint. The goal was a revolution in the CoCom structure. But the whole concept of the CoComs is devised on the paradigm of spheres of influence, even if the Cold War bipolarity no longer exists<sup>54</sup>.

An additional problem is that Islamic governments feel attacked by anti-terrorist initiatives. But the larger issue is that counter-terrorism is not about promoting African security, because terrorism is not the only security concern for Africa. It is a security

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<sup>52</sup> Pham.

<sup>53</sup> Volman, 2009.

<sup>54</sup> James Hentz, "Into Africa," *Hoover Digest*, n 4, 2008.



concern for the US. All of actions of AFRICOM, despite its rhetoric, are all based on Western needs. The GWOT is becoming a new kind of communism, with similar devastating affects for the African continent<sup>55</sup>. In general, Africans are glad of the attention that AFRICOM is bringing, but they are fearful of its motives<sup>56</sup>. The problem remains that the construct of the command looks like militarization. The issues that it tackles and the actions it undertakes are all about American interests. They are not representative of the new innovative structure that AFRICOM was supposed to represent<sup>57</sup>. And if AFRICOM represents a militarization of foreign policy, it also represents the militarization of humanitarian efforts in coordination with AFRICOM on the continent, because at the end of the day, it is a combatant command, but one that is now responsible for civilian actions as well<sup>58</sup>.

Another challenge that AFRICOM represents for the US military is that while designed to designate more attention to Africa, it is received negatively because it has not articulated a convincingly coherent policy and is therefore seen with trepidation and fear. The State Department in particular is concerned about AFRICOM impinging on their territory<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> Moussa Diop Mboup, "MISGUIDED INTENTIONS: RESISTING AFRICOM," *Military Review*: Jul/Aug 2009, 89.

<sup>56</sup> Gribbin.

<sup>57</sup> Berschinski, 10.

<sup>58</sup> Malan.

<sup>59</sup> Dickinson, 1.

## V. Conclusion

General Ward, in AFRICOM's 2009 Posture Statement that "The National Defense Strategy objectives of 'defending the homeland, promoting security, deterring conflict and winning our nation's wars' define US security interests in Africa."<sup>60</sup> This statement is one of the truer statements about AFRICOM. The problem with the command is not that it fundamentally undermines US interests in the continent, but that it pretends to address African ones. And the reality is that the command does not promote African interests at all, nor in fact should it.

In trying to fight a public relations battle, the administration has only succeeded in undermining US interests in Africa by creating resentment, suspicion and resistance to its efforts. The future of AFRICOM under the Obama Administration does not look much different. Obama's goals for Africa include: "democratic opportunities, health and peaceful resolution of conflict"<sup>61</sup>. The 2010 budget however, does not make any fundamental shifts, and so the militarization is likely to continue.

"AFRICOM presents these fundamental questions during a post-Cold War, post-9-11 environment in which we continue to grapple with the asymmetric threats of terrorism and potential breeding grounds in ungoverned spaces as well as in relation to a continent that has been wracked by poverty, disease and war"<sup>62</sup>, declared Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. AFRICOM is emblematic of the interagency issues that plague policy makers. But until Washington is truly ready to make fundamental changes in the contest between the State Department soft powers and the military might of the Department of Defense, there will be no 'new Combatant Command.'

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<sup>60</sup> United States African Command Posture Statement for 2009, <http://www.africom.mil/>.

<sup>61</sup> The Atlantic Council.

<sup>62</sup> House of Representatives Hearing, 2.