

USAFRICOM

The Militarization of U.S. Foreign Policy?

By DENNIS R. J. PENN



The U.S. Government is in a unique position to leverage a momentous and historic shift in military focus: that it is now possible to mitigate the conditions that lead to conflict by working with allies and partners to shape the international environment and thus promote stability and security.¹ U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) is the embodiment of this opportunity. Though American efforts to date represent steps in the right direction, they are nonetheless overly reliant on the Armed Forces and, as such, do little to alleviate the perception of the militarization of U.S. foreign policy. But the Government can mitigate and reverse this perception by implement-

ing an integrated 3D (diplomacy, development, and defense) security engagement policy.

Converging Threads

The end of the Cold War brought an era of remarkable change in the U.S. Government. Within this confluence of change, two independent threads emerged, evolved, and eventually started to converge. The first thread deals with the continent of Africa and its rise in strategic value vis-à-vis American national interests, and the second relates to a significant shift in military focus. The two threads first

Dennis R.J. Penn is an Analyst at the National Security Agency.



Kenyan, Tanzanian, and Ugandan soldiers join U.S. Marines for opening of exercise in Kenya

4th Combat Camera Squadron (Nic Raven)

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came together at U.S. European Command (USEUCOM), whose area of responsibility included all of Europe, Israel, Russia, and most of Africa. Through its efforts in the war on terror, USEUCOM pioneered a new approach to theater security cooperation (TSC) and traditional warfighting—Phase Zero. The command operationalized its TSC and capacity-building efforts by collaborating with regional allies and focusing on terrorism's long-term, underlying conditions. With an emphasis on interagency cooperation, coordination, and collaboration, Phase Zero represented a natural outgrowth of, or evolution in, the concept of proactive peacetime engagement. In recognition of the need for a unified response to Africa's growing importance, the George W. Bush administration established a new unified combatant command, U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM).

Though the arrival of USAFRICOM represents the next logical step in proactive peacetime engagement implementation, the new command underscores the appearance of policy militarization and ultimately weakens the link between the two threads. If, however, the proactive peacetime engagement thread were to reflect a nonmilitary lead coupled with still more diversified U.S. Government participation, the bond between threads could actually strengthen rather than weaken. Today, the Government is striving to do just this, but the efforts fall short of the scale of change required and do not adequately address the perceptions of militarizing our foreign policy. The bold steps recommended below might prove to be the level of change required to shift the balance in favor of strengthening the two threads and ensuring success. These steps must be permanent, come with the appropriate resources, address transformational change, and take the next evolutionary leap started in the revolution in military affairs noted above—establishing a genuinely integrated and proactive security engagement framework.

Africa Rising

Among the reasons for Africa's rise in strategic value are the continent's natural resources. In some cases, Africa will be as important a source for U.S. energy imports as the Middle East.² Equally important, as the atrocities in Darfur bear witness, certain elements within Africa continue to "test the resolve of the international community and the U.S. to prevent mass killings and genocide."³ Moreover, other nations are expressing

increased interest in Africa, and the world's major powers are working aggressively to seek out investments, win contracts, peddle influence, and build political support on the African continent.⁴ With respect to access to Africa's oil, natural gas, and other natural resources, the United States is in direct competition with numerous nations.

U.S. national policy edicts in recent years reflect Africa's rise in strategic import. In July 2003, the President's African Policy stated that "promise and opportunity sit side by side with disease, war, and desperate poverty" and that this "threatens both a core value of the U.S.—preserving human dignity—and our strategic priority—combating global terror."⁵ In July 2005, President Bush garnered G8 partner commitment for initiatives that advance U.S. priorities in Africa to include forgiving debt, fighting malaria, addressing urgent humanitarian needs, improving education, boosting development assistance, increasing trade and investment, and broadening support for peace and stability.⁶ The March 2006 U.S. National Security Strategy states the United States "recognizes that our security depends upon partnering with Africans to strengthen fragile and failing states and bring ungoverned areas under the control of effective democracies."⁷

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Not surprisingly, not everyone thinks the USAFRICOM approach to proactive peacetime engagement is a good idea. This apparent "militarization" of U.S. foreign policy, though transparent to most of the domestic American audience, is glaringly obvious to a foreign audience acutely aware of shifts in U.S. policy—particularly in Africa where USAFRICOM is being met with "less than euphoria" in many states.⁸ For instance, African nations are concerned that the command "will incite, not preclude, terrorist attacks."⁹ To exacerbate African fears, poorly conceived references to USAFRICOM as a combatant command "plus" only serve to call greater attention to the command's military mission. Again, concerns such as these are not without foundation. Despite USAFRICOM's focus on a broader soft power mandate designed to build a stable security environment, it is still a military command and, as such, it has "all the roles and responsibilities of a traditional

geographic combatant command, including the ability to facilitate or lead military operations."¹⁰

Revolution in Policy, Doctrine, and Strategy

In what must certainly be a genuine revolution in military affairs, the U.S. Armed Forces have fundamentally adjusted their policy, doctrine, and strategies over the last decade and a half to include an emphasis on proactive peacetime engagement as a way to achieve national strategy objectives.¹¹ Proactive peacetime engagement is based on the principle that it is "much more cost effective to prevent conflict than it is to stop one once it has started," and its efforts are designed to "reassure allies and partners, promote stability and mitigate the conditions that lead to conflict."¹² As it evolves to meet the emerging challenges of a complex security environment, the philosophy of proactive peacetime engagement aims to shape the international milieu to meet national interests by creating partnerships and building the capacity of allies and partners.¹³ While some may argue that the military has always performed this function, its role in conflict prevention did not take root in policy until the fall of the Soviet empire—the post-Cold War era.¹⁴ This shift away from a focus on fighting wars is at the core of the USAFRICOM mission.¹⁵

The introduction and inculcation of shaping and stability operations into military strategy, policy, and doctrine since 2005 signals senior leadership's categorical support for the concept of war prevention. This support is evidenced in documents such as the Capstone Concept for Joint Operations published in August 2005 and Department of Defense (DOD) Directive 3000.05 published in November 2005. Given the additional emphasis in joint doctrine, it should come as no surprise that the military's take-charge, "can do" attitude, coupled with its large resource pool, has catapulted it to the front of Government agencies in its ability to implement and support stability operations. As is the case with USAFRICOM, the military is now taking the lead across Government efforts in implementing the concept.¹⁶

The question, however, is whether the military *should* take the lead. Both policy and doctrine describe successful shaping and stability operations as closely integrated interagency efforts where the military often plays a supporting versus a supported role.¹⁷ Publication of National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 44, "Management of Inter-

agency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization,” in December 2005 resolved this dilemma by assigning the Department of State the responsibility to “coordinate, lead, and strengthen [U.S. Government] efforts to prepare, plan for, and conduct reconstruction and stabilization missions and to harmonize efforts with U.S. military plans and operations.”¹⁸

Perception Management

USAFRICOM’s unique approach to proactive peacetime engagement reflects the evolution in national strategy described above.¹⁹ In keeping with the precepts of emerging policy and doctrine, command planners are “organizing along highly nontraditional lines,” designing the command to “build both indigenous African security capacities and U.S. interagency collaboration” capabilities.²⁰ USAFRICOM’s nontraditional “emphasis on development and war-prevention in lieu of warfighting” is garnering “widespread praise” throughout the U.S. Government.²¹

However, the less-than-traditional military focus is also engendering “mixed feelings” within certain quarters.²² Some elements within State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) express concern that the military may “overestimate its capabilities as well as its diplomatic role in Africa, or pursue activities that are not a core part of its mandate.”²³ These concerns are somewhat justifiable. Though the authority for international engagement belongs to State, the agency has only 4,000 to 5,000 foreign service officers in the field—far fewer than what DOD

can leverage through its TSC efforts.²⁴ Nor do State’s resources to conduct extensive partner engagement activities “match the opportunities that DOD schools, visits, exercises, equipment, and other cooperation activities offer.”²⁵ As if there were not enough bad news, Congress effected deep cuts into State and other civilian agencies during the 1990s, significantly reducing foreign aid budget authorizations while simultaneously enhancing military capability.²⁶ In a concerted effort to assuage concerns over its role in the foreign policy arena, DOD press releases emphasize that USAFRICOM is not to assume “a leadership role.” Rather, the command will work with the African Union as well as with other international partners and multinational organizations.²⁷

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Despite these statements to the contrary, there are those who believe that USAFRICOM—like the other combatant commands—is another prime example of American proconsuls plying foreign policy.²⁸ In ancient Rome, proconsuls were provincial governors responsible for overseeing the army, justice, and administration within their province. Later, the title referenced colonial governors with similar far-reaching powers.

Today, pundits note that American combatant commands have “evolved into the modern-day equivalent of the Roman Empire’s proconsuls—well-funded, semi-autonomous, unconventional centers of U.S. foreign policy.”²⁹ The combatant commands’ rise in preeminence reflects not only the void left by a weakening State Department but also the Government’s ever-increasing dependence on its military to carry out its foreign affairs.³⁰

The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 represents the first discernable effort to expand the geographic combatant commands’ powers with legislation increasing their responsibilities and influence as warfighters.³¹ As the Goldwater-Nichols Act began to flourish, the Clinton administration started expanding the role of the commands by tasking them with the mission to shape their regions using multilateral approaches in ways that exceeded the traditional role of the military.³² The administration also learned during this period that “they could shove more and more duties onto the Defense Department,” to include jobs formerly spread among the civilian agencies, and that “the military would accept it and carry on.”³³ Moreover, in addition to executive and legislative efforts to expand the military’s mission, DOD’s self-driven shift in emphasis toward proactive peacetime engagement pushed the military further into expanded diplomatic and political roles.³⁴ By the end of the 1990s, the commands had become far more than warfighters.³⁵ They had grown to “transcend military matters and encroach into all the elements of national power.”³⁶

Botswanan officers in Germany learn about rail operations from U.S. Army logistics director



U.S. Army (Phillip Valentine)

Ambassador Mary Yates explains U.S. Africa Command mission to academic community at symposium



Ian Wagreich Photography

Touted as unique, USAFRICOM's mission is a genuine attempt to establish security through a blend of soft and hard power.³⁷ To alleviate concerns and offset strategic communications gaffes, both USAFRICOM and the Bush administration are emphasizing and reiterating the "command's benevolent intentions and nonmilitary character."³⁸ Strategic communications aim to reassure external audiences, particularly the African nations, that the United States is not pursuing colonial or imperial aspirations on the continent. In an environment where overcoming the challenges that Africa faces requires partnership, it is imperative that the multinational partners do not see American efforts as predatory or paternalistic.³⁹

Despite an aggressive strategic communications campaign, actions *do* speak louder than words. As a result, there are fundamental questions that have yet to be addressed and that serve to undermine both the command's and the Government's credibility in the USAFRICOM endeavor. The critical question is why the military is leading an organization whose stated mission is, by definition, largely the responsibility of State. Correspondingly, what message is the U.S. Government trying to impart to its foreign partners and to those it professes to be helping when it appears to place a military commander in a position of authority over his State counterpart? Intentional or not, the Government is, via its implementation of USAFRICOM, feeding the perception of a militarization of U.S. foreign policy.

Making It Right

According to a senior USAID official, "It is clearly in the U.S. Government's interest to utilize our toolkit of diplomacy, defense, and development to counter the destabilizing effects that poor governance, corruption, and weak rule of law have on political and economic systems . . . and the threats they pose to vital American interests."⁴⁰ Similarly, in a statement regarding the military's role in Africa, the USAFRICOM commander refers to a "three-pronged" government approach, with DOD taking the lead on security issues, but "playing a *supporting* role to the Department of State, which conducts diplomacy, and USAID, which implements development programs."⁴¹ Together, these two statements provide a glimpse of a potential solution for the demilitarization of U.S. foreign policy—a concept referred to as *3D security engagement*. The 3D concept supports three equal pillars of

engagement—diplomacy, development, and defense—working in unison to address threats such as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, poverty, health pandemics, and others.⁴² By including development and diplomacy as equal parts of the security strategy equation, the 3D concept deemphasizes the militaristic aspect of security engagement. It also advances the views reflected in major U.S. policy edicts.

Within the U.S. Government today, the departments and agencies whose mission sets most closely represent the 3D security engagement concept are State, DOD, and USAID. These organizations have the responsibilities, authorities, resources, and capabilities to reassure allies and partners, promote stability, and mitigate the conditions that lead to conflict.⁴³ Other elements of the U.S. Government, international and regional organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) would matrix into and out of the 3D security engagement process as required. In this way, the concept is not a replacement for integrated interagency interaction; rather, it is a way to better organize and implement interagency activities. Indeed, the "interagency" is not a person, place, or thing.⁴⁴ It is not part of the Government; it has no leader, nor does it have a workforce.⁴⁵ The interagency is the juncture at which DOD, State, and other formal agencies coordinate, cooperate, and collaborate to achieve some objective.⁴⁶ It is a *process*.⁴⁷ Similarly, the three Ds do not specifically refer to a given department or agency. For instance, *development* does not point exclusively to USAID. Instead, it refers

policy. Also presented here are recommendations for overcoming each obstacle.

First, there is no one common regional system for viewing the world within the U.S. Government. All the key national security elements of the Government define global regions differently, creating policy seams and overlaps that often lead to poor coordination.⁴⁸ In addition, the absence of economic data further undermines national strategic direction at the regional level.⁴⁹ To ensure that all departments and agencies view the world using the same template, the regions of the world should be realigned under one common system applicable to the whole of Government. This rather simple but critical initiative reduces complications of interagency coordination that multiply as seams and overlaps occur across the departments and agencies.⁵⁰

Second, there is no senior functional lead to oversee security engagement efforts in regions. To improve unity of effort, reduce peer competition, and mitigate perceptions of the militarization of foreign policy, a forward-deployed National Security Council (NSC)-level representative should be established to oversee and lead 3D efforts in each region. The NSC is the "President's principal forum for considering national security and foreign policy matters with the administration's senior national security advisors and cabinet officials," advising and assisting the President with integrating all aspects of domestic, foreign, military, intelligence, and economic national security policy.⁵¹ Given the high degree of insight into national strategic objectives inherent within the National

the 3D concept supports three equal pillars of engagement— diplomacy, development, and defense

more appropriately to the activity of development for which USAID plays a leading role and in which DOD or an NGO might be a major participant.

To implement the 3D security engagement concept and mitigate concerns over the militarization of foreign power, the Government must address key obstacles through bold reform and policy driven by national-level strategic leadership. To this end, isolated here are the four fundamental impediments to a practicable implementation of the 3D security engagement concept as it affects and relates to the demilitarization of foreign

Security Council, placing a senior NSC representative to oversee 3D efforts within each region would ensure that the principal 3D elements—DOD, State, and USAID—all work within the same national-level guidance and toward the same national-level objectives.

Third, there are currently no facilities in region to host combined 3D security engagement efforts apart from the combatant commands. To provide a shared environment for coordination, cooperation, and collaboration, as well as to diminish perceptions of a militarized foreign policy, the Government must establish 3D centers in each region

separate and apart from the existing combatant commands. Though it may be the most costly to implement, this initiative is essential to eliminating all vestiges of a militarized foreign policy. A key element in resolving where to place 3D centers sits with foreign allies and friends—potential partners who may find value and prestige in having such centers located in their nations.

Fourth, there are insufficient State and USAID resources to implement proactive security engagement activities worldwide. To offset the unequal distribution of resources among DOD, State, and USAID, and to mitigate the perception of and potential for a militarization of foreign policy, civilian capacity for both State and USAID should be increased. Forced by circumstance and by direction, the U.S. military has taken on many burdens that in the past were the purview of civilian agencies; despite its gallant efforts, the military is no replacement for civilian involvement and expertise.⁵² Much like the State initiative to build a civilian response corps, the Government needs to develop a permanent, sizeable cadre of immediately deployable civilian experts with disparate skills to supplement or replace existing DOD efforts.⁵³ A robust civilian capability cannot help but reduce the military footprint in certain shaping and stability operations.⁵⁴ Not only would an enhanced civilian capability reduce the temptation to use the military as a first choice, but it also would have a positive impact on perceptions abroad.

While the recommendations proffered are not individually novel in and of themselves, they do represent a unique amalgamation of popular opinion presented within the context of the 3D security engagement concept as the next step in the revolution in military affairs that started with proactive peacetime engagement. Moreover, the solutions, though likely to be contentious in certain circles, are nonetheless easily achievable and, if implemented, could address perceptions of foreign policy militarization. **JFQ**

NOTES

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