The United States Africa Command: Security for Whom?

by

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Abstract

On February 6 2007, former President George W. Bush officially announced the decision of his government to create a Unified Combatant Command for Africa, known as U.S. Africa Command or AFRICOM, which became activated as a full-fledged unified combatant command on October 1 2008. The intention was that this new security organ would have responsibility for all African countries except Egypt, which remained under the supervision of the Central Command (CENTCOM).

This paper examines the reasons behind the latest change in U.S. policy towards Africa (culminating in the creation of AFRICOM), and argues that in spite of the declarative human security rationalisations which form part of the basis for its establishment, AFRICOM is really more about addressing American security requirements than redressing Africa's developmental challenges.

Indeed, there may be reasonable grounds to view it as a deliberate U.S. neo-imperialistic and hegemonic design to control Africa militarily in order to better enhance its strategic interests in the region. It is clearly realist state-centric security imperative camouflaged in human security paraphernalia.

Keywords: Human Security, State-centric security, Strategic interest and Scramble for Africa.

Introduction

As recent as 1995, the United States of America's (U.S.) policymakers gave peripheral considerations to the geo-strategic importance of Africa to U.S national interest in the 21st century. In its 1995 *United States Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa,* the Department of Defense (DoD) stated clearly that the U.S had "very little traditional strategic interest in Africa."[1] Not surprisingly, therefore, US military operations in Africa were divided among different commands: the European Command (EUCOM), whose area of responsibility (AOR) includes the totality of Europe, Israel, and most countries on the African continent except Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Somalia, and Sudan; the Central Command (CENTCOM), which had responsibility for the Horn of Africa region, Egypt, the Middle East and Central Asian countries; and the Pacific Command (PACOM), which was saddled with the responsibility to oversee Madagascar, and other Indian Ocean islands such as Seychelles, Mauritius and Comoros (Volman 2008:32). Obviously, "Africa was never a number-one priority for any unified command. Each viewed its strategic imperative as being elsewhere, leaving Africa as a secondary or even tertiary concern" (Mcfate 2008:11).

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[1] *United States Security Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa*, Washington, DC: Department of Defense Office of International Security Affairs, August 1995, p. 3.

Clearly, a shift occurred in official views in Washington about Africa's relative strategic unimportance to the US especially after 11September 2001 al-Qaeda's terroristic incident. Consequently, on February 6 2007, former President Bush announced officially the decision of his government to create a Unified Combatant Command for Africa, known as United States Africa Command (AFRICOM), with responsibility for all African countries except Egypt, which would remain under the supervision of the Central Command (CENTCOM). AFRICOM, which attained initial operating capability (IOC) as a sub-unified command under European Command (EUCOM) on 1st October 2007, and became a separate fully operational unified command by 1 October 2008, is expected to function not only as a military organization but also as a development and humanitarian establishment – a "combatant command plus"(Ploch 2007:4).

It is important to note, however, that in spite of the seemingly lofty declarative purposes of AFRICOM, nearly all African leaders have been sceptical about the establishment of such a military organisation on African soil, except President Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson of Liberia – who incidentally was the only known African leader that publicly clamored to host AFRICOM in her country (This Day, 11 December 2007:8). Conversely, several African states have criticized the plan to locate AFRICOM in Africa. It appears that the refusal of African countries to host AFRICOM, despite belated U.S. diplomatic overtures, has occasioned a temporary change of plan with respect to its relocation from Stuttgart to Africa by 1 October 2008. It will now be based in Stuttgart, Germany, until early 2012.

In this schema, this paper seeks to analyse carefully the factors responsible for the sudden and significant change in Washington's perception of the strategic importance of Africa to US national interest in the 21st century, culminating in the creation of AFRICOM. Furthermore, it attempts to address the question of whether AFRICOM is being established for the enhancement of human security challenges in Africa or merely America's guise for the pursuit, actualisation, and consolidation of its strategic state-centric security interests in Africa. In other words, AFRICOM, whose security?

Conceptual Clarifications

Historically, it is worthy of note that realists, the most influential theorists of international relations and world politics, have always explained security based on state-centric considerations. The obvious implication of this fact is that states, rather than individuals, remain the basic referent object of security (Liotta 2002). In the words of Makinda (1998: 286), realists interpret security "primarily in terms of war, the survival of the state, and the role of military power in settling global disputes."

This traditional statist, militarist and zero sum approach to security dominated the Cold War era of bi-polarism, and essentially addresses specific threats such as the defense of a state against external aggression, the protection of a state's vital national interests in the global arena, and the overall enhancement of state security. Furthermore, statesmen and decision-makers frequently resort to the use of this paradigm not as a result of its ability to predict outcomes accurately but due to its dominance in International Relations.

However, the post-Cold War era, specifically the last decade of the 20th century, has seen a major conceptual and policy reassessment around the notion of what constitutes security. There has been a growing realization of effective changes in the nature of security imperatives faced by states. In consonance with this paradigmatic shift, the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Report (UNDP 1994: 22) stated that:

> The concept of security has for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of nuclear holocaust. It has been related to nation-states more than people....

In this way, the alternative explanations of security served not only to generate broad-based discussions and arguments about the nature and extent of the security paradigm but also to establish fundamental shifts away from the traditional conceptualization of security. Consequently, in contrast to the traditional realist state-centric and politico-military conception of security, human security paradigm, which lays emphasis on the security of the individual rather than the state, materialized. Possibly, the term 'Human security' was originally accepted and officially used by UNDP in its 1994 report, in which global human security problems were categorized into seven, namely: economic security, environmental security, personal security, community security, health security, political security and food security (Suhrke 1999:269; Fourie & Schonteich 2001: 29; Thomas & Tow 2002; UNDP 1994).

Since it is a security paradigm that places high premium on the individual, it calls for holistic security policies that ensure the integration of pragmatic strategies for the promotion of human rights, human dignity, women empowerment, enhancement of the well being of children, democratic governance and development (UNDP 1994). Thus, bearing in mind both the realist state-centric security framework and the human security paradigm, we shall examine critically (based on available evidence) the reasons for the establishment of AFRICOM by the US.

The African Paradox

According to the Population Reference Bureau's *2007 World Population Data Sheet,* Africa's estimated population of about 944 million people (788million in sub-Saharan Africa and 195 million in northern Africa) makes it the second most populous continent in the world and perhaps the richest continent in terms of natural resource endowment (McCoy 2001). Indeed, the region's enormous quantity and assortment of natural resources are as substantial as they are widely dispersed: countries such as Nigeria, Angola, Sudan, Algeria, Libya, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea together produce a sizeable portion of the world's crude oil. In fact, the US imports more crude oil from West Africa than from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait combined; South Africa alone holds 89 per cent of the world's known reserves of platinum-group metals, 23 per cent of reserves of vanadium, 14 per cent of reserves of gold, and 12 per cent of diamond reserves. In 2005, it was the world's leading producer of andalusite, chromite, ferrochrome, gold, platinum-group metals, vanadium and vermiculite, and the world's fifth ranked producer of industrial diamonds (Holmberg 2007).

Paradoxically, the African continent is exposed to a high level of vulnerabilities occasioned by numerous human security challenges such as poverty, child mortality, maternal mortality, HIV/Aids, monumental unemployment, and environmental degradation. Not surprisingly, Africa is the poorest region in the world; it has an average life expectancy of 47 years and is home to thirty-four of the fifty Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the world as at 2006. Extreme poverty is rife, especially in sub-Saharan Africa where approximately one in two people live on less than one dollar per day (ADI 2007:8; Arnfred & Utas 2007). According to the *Millennium Development Goals Report 2007,* 41.1% of Africans live on less than one dollar a day and this translates to about 323.8 million people, the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita in Sub-Saharan Africa is $746; the percentage of malnourished children under five years stands at 29; maternal mortality is scandalously high at 1 in 16 unlike 1 in 3,800 in the developed countries; barely 42% have access to clean water in rural areas while as much as 63% of people lack access to basic sanitation facilities, and 2.3 million are refugees.[2] Of the estimated 33.2 million people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide, 22.5 million – more than two thirds (68%) are in sub-Saharan Africa.

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[2] See 2007 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons, accessed at http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/STATISTICS/4852366f2.pdf (April 04, 2008).

Interestingly, poverty in Africa can be originally traced to the exploitative slave trade and colonial dispensations when the continent was literarily raped of her vital human and mineral resources. Slave trade brazenly facilitated the carrying off of more than 12 million Africans by Europeans for the development of Western economies to the detriment of the region, while colonialism linked and ensured the continuing linkage of African political economies as appendages to Western interests thereby guaranteeing the sustained dependence of African states (Ake 1978). Moreover, after a brief decade of fair economic growth in the 60s and the first oil crisis in 1973, African countries suffered severe economic imbalances due to deteriorating terms of trade, commodity prices, and debt burden which unavoidably led to a disastrous and atrocious structural adjustment and stabilization programs between early 1980s and 1995 -- prescribed, financed and supervised (enforced) by the twin Bretton Woods institutions -- World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). African economic crisis worsened as it witnessed stagnant or depreciated per capita income devoid of the much-touted economic recovery, thereby exacerbating poverty (Bigsten & Durevall 2007; Easterly 2001; Watts 2006).

Besides, it is worth mentioning that the balkanization of Africa by Western imperialist countries during the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 is a major source of conflicts that has aggravated the level of underdevelopment and poverty in the region. Past and contemporary conflicts in such heterogeneous states as Angola, Burundi, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Zimbabwe may be partly attributed to this issue of colonial partitioning of the continent without due respect to the ethnic diversity and compatibility of divergent ethnicities which were blatantly exploited by the colonial powers (Davis & Pitsch 1997).

Furthermore, vulnerabilities and human security challenges were aggravated in Africa during the Cold War era of bipolar politics. For instance, proxy wars were openly fought and supported by the two super-powers, the U.S. and the Soviet Union. While some obnoxious regimes and rebels were supported, some promising African leaders in the early postcolonial era such as Patrice Lumumba were overthrown. For instance, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) rebel leader Jonas Savimbi was courted, celebrated and overwhelmingly supported as a 'freedom fighter' by the U.S. in a bid to oust the Movement for the Liberation of Angola's (MPLA) government; the U.S. also backed and armed Mobutu Sese Seko's inglorious regime and thereby assisted in consolidating the foundation for the two destructive civil wars that claimed the lives of not less than 4 million people in DRC (former Zaire), and destroyed the country's socio-economic and political system. Military hardware and training valued at more than $400 million was provided to prop up the cruel dictator despite his well-known proclivity for extensive human rights abuses and corruption (Tshitereke 2003; Hartung & Moix 2000).

It is estimated that weapons worth $1.5 billion was supplied to African countries by the U.S alone during the Cold War era, in utter disregard of its consequences in the region. Countries such as Zaire, Somalia and Liberia, which were notable U.S. 'arms clients', became engulfed by violent conflicts after the Cold War. Not surprisingly, therefore, these arms were useful in the post-Cold War violence that bedeviled Africa and resulted in numerous human security problems. As such, the U.S. should accept some liability for the persistent violence and economic tribulations bedeviling the African continent (Hartung & Moix 2000).

Despite the forgoing scenario, it should be noted also that Africa's pathetic human security situation can also be attributed to a host of other factors, including: non-transparent and faulty institutional structures, pervasive or endemic corruption, managerial and productive incompetence, poor health conditions and diseases, and bad policies and poor governance arrangements. Not surprisingly, the net result has been social and political conflicts, insurgencies and failed states, large terrain of ungoverned and under-governed space, which combine to generally inhibit economic growth and precipitate the preconditions for the exacerbation of human security vulnerabilities in the continent (Bigsten & Durevall 2007: 46; ADI 2007; UNECA 2007).

Ostensibly, it was the recognition of this appalling African situation that led former President Bush to announce the establishment of AFRICOM as a military cum humanitarian command to assist in the mitigation of the multifarious human security challenges on the continent. However, several scholars and African statesmen have questioned the rationale behind the location of a full-fledged military command for developmental and humanitarian assistance in the region. Can a military command of an imperial power be truly as benign and contributive (socially and economically) as suggested by the American declarations about AFRICOM? Why impose a military command without even the pretense of routine discussions with, and buy-in by the putative beneficiaries? Does such a model not risk fostering dependency for a region that is looking to develop the capacity to address and solve its own problems with its own solutions? Indeed, why not look to address the root causes of Africa's problem rather than the symptoms as manifested in the region's range of vulnerabilities? If existing US aid instruments are ineffective, why not look to reform them appropriately? Similarly, if the actual concern is that continued African vulnerabilities to human security challenges render them (Africans) susceptible to activities that threaten America's national security, would it not be preferable to be up-front about it and to seek directly the cooperation of African governments on how best to address mutual concerns?

Africa and US Military Collaborations

Over the years, the U.S. has established a range of bilateral and multilateral military-security collaborations with African countries, which have sought to address mutual security concerns. They include the following:

- **International Military Education and Training (IMET):** The IMET, which facilitates the training of African military officers in U.S. military schools, and virtually all-African countries take part in this military capacity-building educational training (Volman 2008:38).

- **African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance Program (ACOTA)/Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI):** ACOTA is a bilateral military training programme specifically designed for the enhancement of multilateral peacekeeping capabilities of African soldiers. (Ploch 2007:11-12).

- **Operation Enduring Freedom: Trans Sahara Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI):** PSI was specifically borne out of the post 9/11 Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and focused on training African personnel for counter-terrorism and improved border security. In 2005, it was renamed as TSCTI, expanded in mission, and was extended to include Algeria, Morocco, Nigeria, Tunisia, and Senegal. Also Operation Enduring Freedom – Trans-Sahara (OEF-TS) was developed as the military arm of TSCTI (Robert 2007:9).

- **Combined Joint Task Force: Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA):** Similarly in October 2002, CJTF-HOA was established as a permanent counter-terrorism military outfit in East Africa. Located in Camp Lemonier in Djibouti, CJTF-HOA which was created based on the notion that al-Qaeda members in Afghanistan dislodged due to the U.S.-led invasion will possibly escape to the Horn, consists of about 2,300 U.S. personnel, and its operational mandate covers Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda, Yemen on the Arabian peninsula and the surrounding coastal waters. However, CJTF-HOA is more popular for overtly supporting the Ethiopian military to enforce regime change in Somalia between December 2006 and early January 2007, which resulted in the displacement of about 400,000 civilians (Robert 2007:40-42).

- **Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme:** Through this programme, U.S. sold military equipment to African countries as coordinated by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) of the DoD. In 2008, the administration requested nearly $8m for sub-Sahara Africa and nearly $6m for the Maghreb.

- **African Coastal and Border Security Programme (ACBSP):** The U.S. supplies specialized military equipment for the patrol and defense of land borders and coastal waters to African countries through this programme. Such equipment includes electronic monitors and censors, patrol boats, patrol vehicles, communication gadgets, and night vision devices. In addition, training in intelligence operations and airborne surveillance are offered in some cases. About $4 million was spent on this programme in 2006, and another $4 million was requested in 2007 (Volman 2008).

- **Excess Defense Articles (EDA) programme:** Surplus U.S. military equipment is also transferred to select African countries through the EDA.

- **Base access agreements for cooperative security locations and forward operating sites:** The U.S. has signed base access agreements with some African countries, which allow her to use local military facilities especially bases for surveillance, forward operating grounds for combat, and other military maneuvers. It is against this background that the U.S. used military facilities in Kenya, Djibouti, and Ethiopia to initiate attacks against ICU members who were allegedly involved in the al-Qaeda terrorist organization in January and June 2007 (Volman 2007).

- **Naval Operations in the Gulf of Guinea:** Naval forces from the U.S. Sixth Fleet EUCOM operate regularly in the West African oil rich Gulf of Guinea, and the U.S. is fostering several naval agreements with African countries in this region. In 2005, for example, the U.S. collaborated with Nigeria to establish the Gulf of Guinea Energy Security Strategy (GGESS) that is saddled with the mission of providing a secured business environment in the entire Gulf of Guinea (Vanguard, 25 March 2008: 3).

Cognizant of the multiplicity of U.S. military-security collaborations and the near pervasiveness of her military paraphernalia in Africa, what could have possibly informed her unilateral stance towards the mobilization and concentration of more military resources for the continent through AFRICOM regardless of its virtual rejection by Africans?

Why did Africa suddenly become an area of 'vital interest' to the U.S. deserving the creation of a full-fledged military command? Was AFRICOM established for the development, and alleviation of vulnerabilities and human security challenges in Africa or was it created for the pursuit of U.S. hegemonic and state-centric security interests?

AFRICOM: Security for Whom?

If the mitigation of human security challenges, peacekeeping and developmental enhancement of Africa were paramount in the minds of U.S. policy makers, then the unilaterally planned militarization of the continent through the establishment of AFRICOM would not have been the best option. The mandates of any or some of the existing military collaborations such as, TSCTI, CJTF-HOA, and ACOTA, could have been extended. For example, CJTF-HOA is noted for its engagement in humanitarian and developmental missions in the Horn area. As at 2007, it had built over fifty schools and thirty clinics, inoculated several East Africans against diseases, dug several wells for drinking water and irrigational purposes, and also inoculated thousands of livestock against diseases in the East African sub region (Robert 2007: 44).

Equally, ACOTA's 'train-the-trainer' educational packages could have been expanded and extended to the fifty-three African Union (AU) members in a bid to sharpen their peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and contingency capabilities so as to ensure the consolidation of the proposed Regional Economic Community (REC) brigades, and the African Standby Force (ASF). USAID, which is the official American institution responsible for humanitarian and development assistance, stimulation of economic development and growth, consolidation of democratic transitions, and strengthening of regional and sub-regional organizations, could also have been expanded and strengthened with the much needed resources for the development of Africa. Presently, USAID is involved in developmental assistance tasks in forty-seven countries, and has established twenty-three bilateral missions in the continent.[3] The consolidation and enlargement of these programmes and their institutional structures would have led to the realization of virtually all the stated objectives of AFRICOM, without further militarization of the continent.

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[3] See Overview of U.S. Foreign Assistance to Africa, accessed at http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/, (June 30, 2008).

Clearly, given the stated objectives of AFRICOM and the alternative arrangements already in place, its introduction does not appear logical. Indeed, a cursory understanding of the imperialistic and hegemonic inclinations of the U.S. in the context of realist theorizing explains vividly the reasons why AFRICOM was established. Put simply, AFRICOM was introduced to further America's national security objectives. In an international system that has become somewhat unipolar (by default), the U.S. has demonstrated increased readiness to use its power unilaterally in pursuit of its national interests as evidenced by its invasion of Iraq despite its non-endorsement by the U.N., and disapproval by other major powers such as: China, France, Germany and Russia (Krahmann 2005:539).

Specifically, three principal factors underpin the United States' decision to set up AFRICOM:

Securing Africa's Oil Sources: Against this backdrop, a major reason why Africa suddenly became strategically important to the U.S. culminating in the creation of AFRICOM could be seen in the history of the genesis of CENTCOM, which was primarily created in 1980 for the security of crude oil supplies from the Persian Gulf (Klare 2008).

Clearly, the US has long regarded a steady supply of oil as a vital national security matter. For much of the 20th century, the United States was the world's leading producer of crude oil and petroleum products. At its peak in 1970, US production accounted for more than 40% of all global oil production. However, US leadership of global production ended in 1986 (well after the enunciation of the Carter Doctrine) and have been in steady decline thereafter, including for every year since the beginning of the 21st century. The net result has been that American dependence on supplementary foreign oil imports have increased at the end of 2007 to about 67 percent or two-thirds of its annual requirements. This is even as its consumption levels continue to outstrip those of other major consumer countries. According to statistics from the *Energy Information Administration*, at about 20.7 million barrels per day, total US consumption at the end of 2006 surpassed the combined total of the next largest consumer countries – China (7.2), Japan (5.2), Russia (2.8), Germany (2.7), and India (2.6).[4] Not surprisingly, given this context of declining production and rising consumption, the steady and secure supplies of oil products have become an even more paramount national security matter to US policymakers than it was in 1980.

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[4] See statistics from the Energy Information Administration, accessed at
http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country/index.cfm?view=consumption, (August 24, 2008).

As such, Washington has adopted the view that given the context of intractable political instability in the Middle East, it would be in the national strategic interest of the US to diversify its sources of energy dependence. The development of African (West African) oil sector, the world's fastest growing since the turn of the 21st century, is seen as potential panacea to America's oil supply concerns. With oil from Gulf of Guinea (including Nigeria – 9%; Angola – 4.5%; and Chad 1%) now making up more than 15 percent of US imports and projected by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to increase to 25% by 2015, African oil has become a major strategic issue for Washington (Mcfate 2008: 12). In essence, the establishment of AFRICOM is part of a grand plan to guarantee the security of this American interest by ensuring friendly governments, denying terrorists access to the region, and fostering political stability.

The high level of restiveness in Nigeria, one of the largest global suppliers of oil to the U.S., as well as continuing tensions or conflict in Angola, Cameroon, Chad, and Congo trigger alarm bells in Washington. A good case in point is the Niger Delta, which though the source of much of Nigeria's oil production remains mired in poverty, general underdevelopment, and environmental degradation due to the neglect and marginalization of the region by both the Nigerian government and multinational oil companies (MNOCs). The net result has been recourse to militancy, insurgency and criminalities, which threaten oil flows. For instance in 2006, unrest in the Delta led to about 17% reduction in crude oil output (ICG 2007:10). The imperativeness of providing adequate security to ensure the non-disruption of the production and supplies of crude oil became paramount to the U.S., which increased her military presence in the Gulf of Guinea region through several military agreements and eventually announced the unilateral establishment of AFRICOM in 2007. Therefore, AFRICOM, like CENTCOM, was created in pursuit of U.S. national security objectives.

Containment of International Terrorism: Washington and key western policy centres view terrorist networks or international terrorism as posing one of the greatest challenges to western imperial and hegemonic interests on the world. In the aftermath of the events of 11 September 2001, the United States has sought to contain terrorism by taking the war against terrorists to their breeding and training grounds. With Africa's porous borders and range of poor governance issues, the continent's political instability and high vulnerability is viewed with trepidation by American policymakers who see states within the region as potentially easy targets for the activities of terrorist networks. There are concerns that successful prosecutions of the highly costly wars in Afghanistan and Iraq would flush out terrorists who would seek new havens in Africa. Therefore, it would be far less costly and easier to secure Africa from terrorists by taking proactive steps aimed at reducing the incidence of failed states and weak/weakened governments by addressing some of the potential sources of instability and by positioning American forces nearby for pre-emptive or surgical action.

Containment of Expansive China: In consonance with its hegemonic design, the U.S. wants to contain any would-be contender to its preeminent position as the dominant actor in the current global system. Projected as the principal emerging power capable of challenging American economic and military supremacy by 2050, China has attracted western attention with its reputedly aggressive push into Africa with the United States and the European Union actively looking to limit its economic and diplomatic activities.

Hitherto, China was not only self-sufficient in energy resources but was also the leading exporter of crude in East Asia. However, its consistent average growth rate of 9 % for slightly over two decades resulted in a phenomenal economic boom, which triggered the quest for natural resources such as oil to sustain its growth. At about 7.6 million barrels of oil per day in 2007, China imports about 50% of its oil needs as the second largest consumer of oil after the U.S.[5] Reputedly, China's consumption levels may increase to as much as 12 million barrels per day in 2020, out of which 9 million barrels will be imported (Pan 2007). Consequently, in a deliberate attempt to diversify its sources of supply, China has increased its economic and diplomatic ties with Africa. A few examples and pointers will suffice:

- As at 1995, overall trade with Africa was less than $1 billion but by the end of 2006, it was more than $50 billion;
- Between 2000 and 2006, China's foreign direct investments (FDI) in Africa was $6.6 billion;
- Africa's average growth rate has increased to 5.4% partly due to Chinese trading partnership;
- About 700 Chinese companies are involved in business ventures in Africa;
- China has secured exploration and drilling rights in several African countries including, Angola, Chad, DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Mauritania, Nigeria, and Sudan;
- China is currently Africa's third largest trading partner, after the U. S. and France, but before Britain;
- China has established diplomatic relations with at least 47 countries in Africa. These were made possible through series of bilateral and multilateral agreements, especially the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), which was initiated at the instance of Chinese former President Jiang Zemin (Mcfate 2008: 14).

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[5] See statistics from the Energy Information Administration, accessed at
http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country/country_time_series.cfm?fips=CH (August 24, 2008).

Although the rising Chinese presence is highly welcome and appreciated by many African leaders, the U.S., its western allies and Japan feel extremely threatened (Isike, Uzodike & Gilbert 2008: 24). Moreover, due to Africa's predilection to vote in bloc in multilateral institutions such as the U.N., the strategic diplomatic partnership developing between China and the region is also a major threat to the U.S. and its allies. In light of these facts, AFRICOM was established as part of a strategic U.S. agenda aimed at the containment of Chinese influence in Africa. It is a calculated 'force projection' for the scramble for Africa, which could culminate in proxy wars thereby halting Africa's recent impressive run of economic growth, with catastrophic human security problems as its unpleasant consequences.

Concluding Remarks

The forgoing analysis evidently suggests that AFRICOM was unilaterally created for the furtherance and consolidation of US strategic state-centric security interests but packaged in human security paraphernalia for the twin purposes of credibility and acceptability by African statesmen. AFRICOM is the pragmatic instrumentality through which America seeks to maximize its three-fold foreign policy objectives in Africa: fighting terrorism, securing alternative sources of oil especially from the Gulf of Guinea, and checkmating the rising profile of China in the continent. A situation where the world's economically and militarily powerful states struggle for resources and 'spheres of influence' in contemporary Africa portends evil and should not be encouraged. By their words and actions with respect to AFRICOM, it is clear that Africa is not prepared for a new scramble for the continent in the 21st century. The continent is yet to recover from the deleterious effects of the 19th century scramble, which not only left it splintered into states with artificial borders but also forcibly injected into it a global political economy where it plays a decidedly bit role as a supplier of undervalued raw materials and a consumer of high-priced imported manufactures. As an African proverb states: "when the elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers". A new scramble for Africa will merely serve to impair the interests of African states and their people. Basically, Africans do not want to host AFRICOM not only because it was constructed to serve western interests but also because it enhances the chances of a new "Scramble for Africa", positions the continent as a battle ground for states with global ambitions, and could become a veritable tool for undue interference in the internal affairs of independent African states.

Regardless of its formal inauguration as a full fledged combatant command, and the tactful but belated seemingly 'collaborative approach' that has been devised by America to impose it on Africa, it is sensible that African statesmen should in unison concertedly and diplomatically oppose its relocation from Stuggart to the continent, before and beyond 2012.

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