

STEALING THUNDER:
AFRICAN SECURITY SECTOR
REFORM, THE MILITARY'S
NEW CHALLENGE

BY

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USAWC PROGRAM RESEARCH PAPER

**STEALING THUNDER:
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by

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ABSTRACT

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Africa has been, and promises to remain, in a perilous state for many years to come. Stabilizing Sub-Saharan Africa is a vital task that is essential to long-term global security. This paper examines Africa's current situation and the reasons behind its catastrophic circumstances. It focuses upon Security Sector Reform as a relatively new but key process essential to developing a healthy political environment. The paper examines the roots of Africa's instability and analyzes one example of SSR in Africa. It further identifies the practice's characteristic features, and develops a set of ten operating principles and finally makes recommendations to implement SSR on a broad scale across Africa. The paper recommends that to bring Africa to an acceptable level of stability, the militaries of the wealthy nations need to become much more actively involved in security reform. The one nation best placed to initiate and coordinate that reform is the United States with its newly formed Africa Command. Assuming this responsibility means willingly undertaking an expanded range of tasks that are outside the realm of traditional war fighting. Such activity will drive further transformations in the character and structure of modern armed forces.

STEALING THUNDER:
AFRICAN SECURITY SECTOR REFORM, THE MILITARY'S NEW CHALLENGE

Want of foresight, unwillingness to act when action would be simple and effective, lack of clear thinking, confusion of counsel until the emergency comes, until self-preservation strikes its jarring gong - these are the features which constitute the endless repetition of history.

Winston Churchill

By any conceivable measure, Africa is in serious trouble and bringing the continent to a state of equilibrium will probably bring about changes in the way the armies of modern developed nations think and operate.

All of Africa's key indicators are abysmal. The frequency of armed conflicts, accepted gauges of life expectancy, infant mortality, general health levels, education, corruption, incidence of mass murder, international crime, human rights abuse, debt levels, economic growth and virtually all gauges of development are uniformly alarming.¹ Unless there is major change, Africa is likely to be a cauldron of war and a source of infectious instability for decades. The continent has only two isolated but tenuous islands of progress, which sadly, do not indicate a trend.² Thus, barring some kind of unforeseen transformation, in an increasingly globalized world, Africa will continue its slide, threatening to become a breeding ground for terrorist malcontents and international criminals. Over the next two decades the continent's population is predicted to rise uncontrollably and vital resources such as clean water and arable land will become scarcer.³ If left unchecked Africa will remain an unending stew of ethnic warfare stimulating massive destabilizing and uncontrolled migrations, and the continent will inexorably metamorphose into a contagious source of global insecurity. And, as

9/11 has so forcefully taught us, violence engendered by distant instability can be swiftly exported.

The West's long-term strategic interests in Africa are clear: we must thwart the growth of terrorism and trans-national crime; we must prevent destabilizing mass migrations; and we must maintain secure trade links. In order to realize these strategic objectives, as well as to act out of simple human compassion to alleviate suffering on a colossal scale, the world must fix the current situation in Africa.⁴ From a more selfish perspective, a strong and vigorous Africa will open its markets to the rest of the world and at the same time liberate an entire continent's energy, intelligence, and creativity.

Africa's problems are deep and have often erroneously been attributed to malevolent external forces.⁵ The truth is likely more complicated than this. Over the years the global community has not been deaf to Africa's plight. The continent has received trillions of dollars in aid.⁶ It currently benefits from thousands of relief projects, billions of dollars in debt forgiveness, and more international peacekeeping missions are conducted there than in all other areas of the world combined.⁷ The depressing reality is that international assistance for Africa has functioned more like first aid rather than therapy, and it has been largely ineffective in instigating genuine change. Most aid has suffered from being too small in scale, from ineffectual management with inadequate follow through resulting in no long-term benefits, and with staggering sums of money siphoned off into the private accounts of corrupt officials.⁸ And perhaps most significantly, many of the gains made through aid are eradicated due to chronic instability.⁹

Since the end of the colonial era, a half-century of inconsistent efforts at stimulating African economies and providing technical assistance has been largely ineffective in preventing conflict and enabling meaningful development to take root. Notwithstanding years of perpetually embryonic foreign aid schemes and disjointed external political inputs, much of the continent finds itself in a dangerous state of hand to mouth turmoil. This is a completely unnatural state of affairs, and if Africa is to be stabilized and defused before it boils over into a global security hazard, it is vital to understand the root causes of instability across the continent.

The simple and obvious explanation for the region's stunted and violent development lies squarely with its leadership. Governance across Africa, for several reasons, has been completely inadequate to the tasks before it. Self-seeking, corrupt and short sighted leaders are at the heart of virtually all of Africa's problems.¹⁰ They have consumed enormous quantities of aid and changed virtually nothing. It would be wrong and foolish to suggest that such leadership is an innate African trait. The leadership issue is symptomatic of other underlying problems, and in each of these, numerous factors have coalesced to create the conditions for Africa's current climate of dismal leadership.

Historically, sub-Saharan Africa has been largely inaccessible. Jungles, deserts, an inhospitable climate, a range of deadly diseases and un-navigable river systems have over the centuries isolated Africa from significant interaction with other societies. Internally, this harsh geographic reality fostered the development of a complex and idiosyncratic set of social structures resulting in over two thousand independent

languages and a web of over a thousand tribes.¹¹ These same circumstances of geographic isolation and intensely tribalized populations meant that Africa was particularly vulnerable to centuries of predatory European and Arabic slave traders. In turn, the slave trade had its own poisonous and debilitating effect on African society. Slavery was instrumental in nurturing and deeply imprinting habits of suspicion and ruthlessness towards all those outside one's tribe, and, in doing so, the practice fostered a widespread tradition of intense inter-tribal hostility.¹² Furthermore, and almost equally as damaging, centuries of constant slave raiding regularly sapped the vitality of African societies. By the mid-nineteenth century, the end of the slave trade left the continent with its fractured and enfeebled social systems as easy prey for a century of European colonial exploitation.¹³

Whatever one might claim about the infrastructure and institutional improvements that were created in Africa's colonial era, they were ultimately exploitive in nature, not developmental.¹⁴ The abrupt end of the colonial period generally left African nations independent, but almost entirely ill prepared for self-government. Without a critical mass in the workforce of trained and educated professionals, tradesmen and technicians, roads became impassable, cities decayed and institutions crumbled. And, as the colonial masters grudgingly hauled down their flags, Africa simultaneously found itself as a minor but very active theatre in the emerging Cold War.

The Cold War, in its turn, meant that the West, the Soviets and the Chinese provided support and aid to those who appeared to be ideologically trustworthy – the ability to govern competently or honestly was generally not a consideration. Thus, the

Cold War became for Africa a period of violence and further decline. It was a time when Africa was flooded with arms and ruled by erratic leaders who clung to power within a nightmare culture of coups, revolutions, insurgencies, widespread corruption and institutionalized cruelty.¹⁵ It was a period when, across most of Africa, things grew steadily worse.¹⁶

The post Cold War legacy of Africa is a dispiriting one. It remains a continent wracked by war, mass murder and genocide. It is too frequently led by paranoid despots and crooks, where the security apparatus of its states is far too powerful. The police and the courts are untrustworthy. Basic government services are in a perpetual state of collapse; productive investment and routine commerce is strangled; widespread corruption is systemic, and peaceful governance is a fleeting exception rather than a norm.

Superimposed on this scenario, western aid has for decades been administered with little effective supervision. For fear of alienating tenuous allies in the Cold War, and later, out of an earnest desire to avoid giving offence by treading on sovereignty or being branded racist or colonialist, aid programs have rarely been tied to larger governance issues. And they have routinely had little positive influence on security and stability issues.¹⁷ Now, the aid community is in the process of polarizing into two philosophical camps: those who urge a dramatic increase to traditional aid programs and those who urge smaller, more highly targeted and more responsibly constrained programs.¹⁸

No matter how the foreign aid issue eventually plays out, Africa's complex problems will require comprehensive solutions that simultaneously address the key, critical and inter-related components of the continent's volatile culture. For this reason, any solutions will have to be simultaneously both developmental and security related. Massive education programs and carefully focused infrastructure development will unquestionably be essential in getting Africa on its feet, as will campaigns to rid Africa of the scourge of AIDS and malaria. But such developmental programs will continue to be ineffective without first having in place a secure environment within which healthy functioning, economic, political and social systems can grow. It is in this arena that western militaries can play a key role in transforming the culture of Africa's notoriously unstable security institutions.

Bringing about such change requires a cultural transformation, which will predictably be a long and difficult process. But as overwhelming as such a task may seem, it is a process that has to start with inculcating new sets of values in the continent's political leaders as well as throughout the ranks of its security organizations. Permanent change will only come in Africa when the larger leadership environment ardently accepts an ethos that embraces the notion of political and social disputes being resolved lawfully and peacefully.

Security Sector Reform

SSR is a key element in the process through which such a cultural transformation can be brought about. The best definition of SSR comes from the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, which has very generally defined it as a

program that "... seeks to increase the ability of partner countries to meet the range of security needs within their societies in a manner consistent with democratic norms and sound principles of governance, transparency and the rule of law."¹⁹ From a military perspective such an endeavour is a major departure from traditional operational concepts. Conventional military operations strive to impose one's will over an opponent through the application or the threat of violence. SSR, on the other hand, seeks to transform unpredictable and potentially seditious security agencies into trustworthy and dependable institutions by infusing measures of responsibility, accountability, trust and balance into their organizations. In its simplest forms such a conversion is brought about by intensive coaching, assessing results and then closely linking successful reform to increased aid. Initiating this process should be done on a country-by-country basis through the use of tailored positive and negative reinforcements.

SSR frequently refers to the reform of all defense forces, the police (including border troops and para-military forces) and the intelligence services.²⁰ However, it should be noted that some SSR models incorporate the judiciary, penal services and governmental institutions charged with oversight of security services.²¹ This broader interpretation has undoubted merit and is based on the assumption that security reform can only be accomplished when all elements that contribute to security are in a state of equilibrium and functioning honestly and competently. This holistic model is on balance the most likely to succeed, as it would seem to promise a more realistic and comprehensive approach to Africa's deeply ingrained security problems.

Because SSR is a comparatively new concept, and it has little in the way of established doctrine or standardized processes, this inherent imprecision and uncertainty involves a heightened risk for successful implementation.²² However, it also means that because of its novelty, innovative techniques can and should be designed to address Africa's highly diverse national and ethnic mix.

Earlier variants of SSR have emerged under different guises. In its earliest form, it surfaced in the 1990s in attempts to bring the post-authoritarian security institutions of Eastern Europe and later East Timor into line with the accepted practices of Western nations.²³ SSR, or SSR-like principles, have subsequently been applied to regimes in the Balkans and more recently, in a more familiar paradigm, within some African nations. It is a notion that has been the subject of some academic discussion, but in practice has been sporadically and unevenly applied in only a handful of countries. Its implementation has been most successful in programs administered by the British Government, most notably in Sierra Leone.²⁴ And while the British efforts in Sierra Leone certainly remain a work in progress, the country's security institutions have seen substantial improvement since their dark days in the 1990s. In this respect, SSR must be viewed as a long-term process; and, the modest successes that the Sierra Leone experiment has had certainly indicate that the concept is worth expanding.²⁵

Sierra Leone and Common Features of SSR

Because Sierra Leone underwent one of the most catastrophic societal collapses of modern history, the SSR experience there offers a valuable model. The country's troubles started in the early 1990s when the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) attacked

the reigning All People's Congress Party. Sierra Leone's fragile political system rapidly disintegrated and a decade of chaos ensued.²⁶ Over the next few years, central governments fell to coups; rule of law collapsed and a vicious insurgency bled the country dry. African "Economic Community of West African States" forces eventually intervened, and for a time the Presidency was restored, creating a flickering semblance of normalcy.²⁷ However, the anarchic RUF, never having been thoroughly defeated, re-emerged; and with their return meted out horrific punishment to an already long suffering civilian population. The Lomé Peace Treaty of 1999 brought a sporadic respite from the fighting; but again, it was all too soon followed up by further violence, which in turn led to a subsequent round of negotiations and the eventual introduction of a UN peacekeeping force.²⁸ Undeterred by the UN, the RUF went on another apocalyptic rampage and in an orgy of murder and mutilation drove over half the population out of their homes as well as taking 500 UN peacekeepers hostage. At this point in May of 2000, the British, acting on behalf of the UN, intervened militarily; and in a classic illustration of professional forces defeating disorganized and ill-disciplined rebels, quickly brought stability to a chaotic situation.²⁹ Following the defeat of the RUF, Sierra Leone under UN auspices, but largely with British assistance, began a long and difficult attempt to re-establish civil government while simultaneously rebuilding its security establishment.

Although Sierra Leone's situation was unique in several ways, it exhibited features common to many African failed states. Thus, Sierra Leone's experience offers a good template from which to study the problems of SSR. One of the distinguishing

features of British involvement in Sierra Leone was that it incorporated elements of peacekeeping, peacemaking and SSR operations. Another key feature was that by the time the SSR program commenced, the country was in a post-conflict state of total exhaustion and near complete civil breakdown. Sierra Leone had endured such a long and debilitating civil war that many of the rebels ceased to be fighting for any recognizable cause other than mindless criminality. In addition, Sierra Leone's suffering wasn't entirely self-inflicted: a range of external actors also influenced the situation. Adding to the problem were tidal flows of refugees in and out of the country as well as the malevolent influence of international criminal cartels that viciously exploited the country's natural mineral and forestry resources. In the end, Sierra Leone was left utterly enfeebled and forced to deal with corrupt police forces and large untrustworthy military and para-military forces that had to be disbanded and reabsorbed into the economy; and virtually all government institutions had to be re-established and retrained.

Few countries have found themselves in as desperate a situation as did Sierra Leone in 2003; and in this respect it provides a good comparative baseline for the kinds of tasks one might expect to encounter in SSR. Perhaps one of the foremost of these problems was the issue of coordinating the diverse groups involved in re-construction. The British, despite playing a leading role, were not alone in their efforts to rebuild Sierra Leone. Their situation was very much a joint one as there were several other African countries, numerous UN agencies and large numbers of nongovernmental

organizations also on hand to assist. The critical problem in such circumstances would appear to be effectively coordinating and focusing the efforts of all players.

By itself, having numerous resources to bring to bear on a problem might at first seem to be a significant advantage. But in Security Sector Reform, where the most problematic issues can often involve corruption, undue political influence, fraud and nepotism, it is essential to be able to concentrate program energies rather than have them dissipated with one side playing off the other. In this respect, SSR can be a challenge to military forces as there will be no clear lines of control or focal points of authority, and the mind-set required to coordinate and synchronize the efforts of highly disparate and unrelated groups will often be at odds with relatively precise, action oriented military chains of command. While this is by no means a hopeless problem, it is one that demands judicious personnel selection.

Another critical issue in Sierra Leone were the problems associated with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) into society of large numbers of otherwise unskilled soldiers.³⁰ DDR is almost always a problem for post conflict societies, but it can be especially challenging for unstable nations that have large tribal militias and regional paramilitary forces. DDR in Africa has become something of an evolving discipline in its own right. Unfortunately, because of its inherent complexity and the constant shortage of resources in reconstruction situations, DDR is a practice that has never yet gone smoothly. DDR has had a troubled history because without an infusion of massive resources it presents a staggering range of difficulties. Initially, disarming and demobilizing reluctant and aggressive soldiers presents one range of

problems; but this daunting task then grows into the altogether different issue of reintegrating otherwise unskilled, angry young men into societies whose economies have been shattered by war. The skills required for a successful DDR program unquestionably draw heavily upon traditional military leadership, educational, training and organizational competencies, but the process also requires a range of highly creative entrepreneurial skills, as well as a leavening of commercial insight.

Like much of Africa, Sierra Leone was awash with weapons; and no practical SSR program can take place in a nation where a distressed population retains sufficient armament to challenge the lawful authorities. As will be the case in almost all sub-Saharan African countries, the British had to develop and implement a small arms and light weapons surrender and destruction program.³¹ However, because small arms are a ubiquitous commodity in Sub-Saharan Africa, it will require concerted international efforts to control the cross border traffic in illegal weapons. In Sierra Leone, weapons flowed freely back and forth across the borders of Guinea and Liberia. Again, this is not a feature unique to Sierra Leone, and so a long-term small arms eradication program will require international military and diplomatic pressure to be effective.³²

Sierra Leone's principal and most enduring problem is one that will be common to all SSR programs: the reform of discredited military, intelligence and police services. Here again, the Sierra Leone experience teaches much about the need for continuity as well as having the right kinds of people with the appropriate training and outlook posted to delicate advisory positions. These SSR advisory teams need not be large in numbers, but they have to be sufficiently numerous to influence the leadership

throughout the host nation.³³ In these positions, SSR teams will be tasked with changing the culture and the ethos of their host organizations, and to do this they must be embedded within the parent nation's leadership and administrative hierarchy. This will be a long-term project, and in the process of developing trust and credibility, the individuals will need considerable reserves of persistence, resourcefulness and good judgment to keep things on track when problems inevitably arise.

Finally, the Sierra Leone example reveals one crucial feature that will be common to all reconstruction situations: military rebuilding has to progress at the same time as the creation of a fledgling government and a functioning political and administrative apparatus. Here again, in many SSR situations, the military will be required to play a role in which it will have to gradually disassociate itself and hand over responsibility to civilian agencies as the physical dangers recede and success becomes apparent.³⁴

In addition to providing a glimpse of the kinds of program elements needed, Sierra Leone also illustrates several general features that will be associated with SSR. This will likely include: volatility, dealing with ingrained corruption, regional influences, criminal pressures, the interplay of complex and interdependent political, social and economic factors, as well as the need for entrepreneurial and innovative thinking.

Ten Principles of SSR

SSR is an embryonic process in which many of its major program features will be comparable from one country to the next.³⁵ However, there will also be major distinctions, as the critical differentiators of culture, the political environment, external

influences and history, will in each country shape their own unique set of circumstances. Consequently, what follows is an identification of SSR's key principles rather than an attempt to sketch a universal blueprint for the process.³⁶

"Human Rights Based" The guiding principle for establishing stable and effective security institutions is the acceptance of basic human rights as a nation's core ethic. Long lasting security can only be based upon the acceptance of a shared overriding ethic. And as history has repeatedly shown, national and international security is most easily developed and sustained in a system that promotes protection of the individual as its basic precept. This notion is fundamentally different from the Cold War concept of shoring up whatever government appeared to demonstrate the most sympathetic ideological posture. Thus, SSR must be "democratic" in the Western sense in that rather than sustain political parties or interest groups that advocate a specific policy, it must be based upon the acceptance of tolerance, plurality and individual human rights as its underlying standards.³⁷

"Local Support" and "Local Understanding" SSR must be "supported and implemented by local security forces." The practice cannot simply be imposed from above, for to do so would result in resentment and inevitably cause serious distortions within the system. To ensure indigenous implementation, the leaders of local security institutions must first be convinced that SSR really is in their long-term interest. This has the potential to be an extremely difficult undertaking, for in the highly tribalized and regionalized African context, SSR programs that work in one location will not necessarily work in another. For this reason, SSR programs will require that the teams

administering them have a “detailed understanding” of the country that they are operating in, as well as a sound appreciation of local culture and politics.

“Democratic Norms” and “Rule of Law” SSR must also reflect “democratic norms” in such a manner that reformed security agencies reflect a spirit of justice and integrity. Again, in much of Africa this is initially going to be a target goal that SSR teams strive to develop, rather than a precondition for SSR activity. In many countries obtaining even a grudging practical acceptance of democratic ideals will be a key preliminary task, for if stability is the goal, security agencies can never operate or be seen to be above the laws that they are enforcing or protecting.³⁸ Here again, and very closely related to the concept of democratic norms, will be the inculcation of adherence to the “rule of law.” For many of those local leaders who have enjoyed relatively unfettered power, this will be a major cultural shift,

“Prolonged Process” Clearly, SSR in Africa is going to take a long time to implement, therefore, one of its leading principles must be that it is a long-term process. Like any complex and lengthy endeavour, one has to expect some tactical failures and temporary reversals. And, if one accepts the possibility of reversals, the international community must also be prepared to react by launching “peacemaking and peacekeeping operations” when and as they are required.

“Jointness” and “Initially Led by Military” As the Sierra Leone experience indicates, the SSR process must be a tightly synchronized “joint endeavour.” To some, well-defined military hierarchies may seem to be unlikely start points from which to synchronize diverse and highly independent organizations, but the militaries of western

nations are probably the world's most adept and experienced institutions at managing "Jointness." Moreover, Western militaries are the only professional group that has adopted the furtherance of "Jointness" as a basic component of their professional doctrine. So, in addition to "Jointness" as a principle, should be added the corollary tenet that SSR should, at least, be "initially led by the military." Thus, the military would serve as an administrative umbrella group for a wide variety of military and non-military actors.

"Phased Execution" Although SSR will be different in each nation, there will likely be three phases in every program.³⁹ The first, establishment phase would be conducted by strategic advisors who would provide advice on constitutional, legal and organizational matters. These officers would ensure there is agreement on the terms of the program. The second, or operational phase, would see a major expansion of the SSR team with advisors embedded at all levels in the fields of military education and professional development, as well as in key administrative spheres such as procurement, pay, budgeting, personnel policies, accountability processes and organizational design. In Phase Two, technical and tactical training assistance could be provided as necessary, but it should always be given in the context of the larger SSR aims. Phase Three would be a graduated period in which SSR advisors would relinquish their duties as the host nation leadership begins to operate responsibly and viably.

"Linked to Foreign Aid" Finally, SSR programs need to be backstopped by incentives and penalties and to do this, SSR must be directly linked to foreign aid.

Security reform cannot exist in a vacuum. If it is to be successful, it must be tied to a fair and transparent system of rewards and sanctions that help guide the larger society on its process of transformation. If the process is to take root, key SSR coordinators must play an influential role in allocating foreign aid.

In these ten guiding principles, there is an undeniable element of idealism, but SSR is by no means unattainable - and as the world's most peaceful nations have demonstrated, these principles are far from impractical. Indeed a compelling argument can be made that security institutions that have not adhered to these principles eventually become a menace to peace and stability. It is worthwhile re-emphasizing that implementing a program that attempts to replace one established ethos for another will be a formidable task. However, the alternative, continued refusal to address the issues of chronic African instability, is no less intimidating – and, the passive option carries with it the near certain guarantee of perpetual calamity. Fortunately, the recent creation of Africa Command (AFRICOM) has the potential to bring a continent-wide implementation of SSR much closer to fruition than would ever have been possible, even a few months ago.

American Led Implementation

SSR is a task ideally suited for the skill sets and aptitudes of the US armed forces. As the world's strongest proponent of democracy, America has the world's most advanced knowledge based military. And so, with the recent establishment of

AFRICOM, whose tasks closely parallel the objectives of SSR, it is entirely appropriate that a substantial, pan-African SSR unit be added to the new command's establishment.⁴⁰

There are several reasons the United States should assume the lead as the global sponsor for African SSR. By taking the lead role in promoting SSR, AFRICOM will accelerate the attainment of American strategic goals on the continent. AFRICOM can do this because it is ideally positioned to influence and support the efforts of other indispensable players, most especially the African Union and the UN. AFRICOM will also be able to help shape the efforts of other external, like-minded parties such as the EU, NATO and major NGOs. Furthermore, an SSR component in AFRICOM would also be an essential element in dispelling fears that exist in some quarters that American interest in Africa is sinister and menacing.⁴¹

From a diplomatic perspective, an AFRICOM lead in a massive continental SSR coalition would be particularly valuable because it has the added advantage of providing a much needed and easily supported multi-lateral defense and humanitarian initiative. And, with the large-scale integration of other countries and trans-national organizations, it simultaneously increases the resources that can be devoted to African nations. Aside from the strategic and diplomatic importance of such an undertaking, an AFRICOM led SSR coalition would also dramatically reduce the cost to the United States. But perhaps most importantly, it will ensure that there is an effective, functioning international forum for responding to African problems within Africa. Had such an organization existed

during the last two decades, Africa's history might have been quite different - and in Rwanda, South Sudan, Darfur, Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Congo and elsewhere millions of people might not have been slaughtered.⁴²

There will almost certainly be other hidden benefits to SSR. One of these is that it will probably furnish a workable model for ameliorating the problems of tribalism, and this would have unquestionable spin-off benefits for regions other than Africa.

Internationally, there will be those who claim that a coordinated SSR program will be little more than colonialism under a different name. However, this would clearly not be the case as colonialism was exploitive and SSR would be demonstrably developmental in nature. Moreover, for those sceptics who still doubt the intentions of an AFRICOM led SSR program, it should be noted that a properly managed large-scale SSR program is absolutely necessary if African nations are ever to meet the UN's Millennium Development Goals.⁴³

Within the military there will be elements that see SSR as a wasteful drain on the resources needed for the military's primary warfighting role, or, what has in the past been idiomatically called its "Kinetic" operations. By expanding on the conventional energy metaphor, SSR should be regarded as being a "Potential Energy" operation." While kinetic operations transfer energy instantly, SSR operations, over a much longer period of time, steadily funnel low levels of institutional energy by employing military expertise to shape, modify and transform would-be foes while defusing probable causes of conflict.

For those who are leery of such a concept, it should be noted that peaceful preventative employment of the military is not new and military adoption of SSR is not a revolutionary step. It is an evolutionary one. In this respect, SSR fits neatly into the category of skills that have recently been advocated for adoption by those who endorse a much more selective and discriminating use of force for waging the low intensity and prolonged campaigns of post-modern conflict.⁴⁴ SSR is a logical offshoot of numerous concepts that have been evolving steadily since the Second World War. It shares the same pedigree as fourth generation warfare, the three-block war, counter-insurgency theories, "Operations Other Than War," psyops and military advisory assistance. However, in this respect, conscious adoption of SSR in Africa will represent a milestone in military evolution, in that its adoption acknowledges the long-term, positive influence armed forces can exert in furthering national policy.

SSR is a relatively new concept, but it is one with a promising history. It is comparatively inexpensive and holds out the promise of bringing much needed stability to a menacing and agonized part of the world. For this reason AFRICOM should act now to establish an international SSR component. Africa is far too big a problem for America to take on single-handedly, and if it is left to fester, the continent will prove much too large a battleground for any one country to influence by force. However, if America takes the lead in sponsoring a multi-lateral SSR program, she will undoubtedly exert a constructive influence that will help make future violent interventions unnecessary.

Endnotes

¹ For a good, but thoroughly depressing summary of African problems see: Martin Meredith The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair, A history of 50 years of Independence, (New York, Public Affairs, 2005)

² Of the forty-seven countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, only two, South Africa and Senegal are notable for any substantial indications of economic progress and highly qualified projections of continued stability. See UN reports produced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Economic Report on Africa 2005. Meeting the Challenges of Unemployment and Poverty in Africa at: <<http://www.uneca.org/era2005/>>.

³ See for example: Walter Tatlock, Water Stress in Sub-Saharan Africa, (Washington, Council on Foreign Relations, 2006) See also: Gillette Hall, Poverty Line: Eye on Sub Saharan Africa Population Policy, (Washington, The World Bank, 1996).

⁴ See: The World Economic Forum's podcast on 1/26/07: Africa's Emergence as a Vital Strategic Interest at:

<http://gaia.world-television.com/wef/worldeconomicforum_annualmeeting2007/> For another view of the West's strategic vital interests, see also: Canadian Department of National Defense Africa - Regional Trends, Strategic Assessment 2004 (P.M. Archambault and C.C. Morrisey, General Editors, Directorate of Strategic Analysis, Policy Planning Division D STRAT A Project Report 2004/20 Strategic Assessment 2003/4, Ottawa).

⁵ Pal Ahluwalia Politics and Post-colonial Theory: African Inflections (Routledge, London, 2001) See also: Basil Davidson The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State (New York, Three Rivers Press, 1993).

⁶ Meredith, 373 –374.

⁷ Der Spiegel estimates Europe alone provides 26 Billion euros annually in foreign aid to Africa. See: Erich Wiedemann and Thilo Thielke Choking on Aid Money in Africa (Speigel Magazine, 04 July 2005), at <<http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1,1518,363604,00.html> > also see statistics provided by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations at <<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/index.asp> >.

⁸ For a comprehensive overview of the corruption problem see: Robert Guest, The Shackled Continent: Power, Corruption, and African Lives (New York, Smithsonian, 2004).

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¹⁰ For a current summary of the scale of the problem as well as a synopsis of those African leaders trying to fight the problem see: The Independent, 26 October 2006, A cure for corruption? The Scourge of Africa's Kleptocrats at: <<http://news.independent.co.uk/world/africa/article1932721.ece>>.

¹¹ See Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Barbara F Grimes (Dallas, Summer Institute of Linguistics, 2005)

¹² Landes David S, The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Nations are so Rich and Some Are So Poor (New York, WW Norton, 1999).

¹³ For a similar explanation of this phenomenon, see: David Lamb, The Africans (New York, Random House, 1982) 149.

¹⁴ Meredith, 150 – 161.

¹⁵ For typical examples of Cold War interventions and issues in Africa see: Odd Arne Westad, The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005.) For a good synopsis of the debilitating effects of the Cold War in one country also see: Major Lance S. Young, Mozambique's Sixteen-Year Bloody Civil War, reprinted at: <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1991/YLS.htm>>.

¹⁶ For a good overview see: Colin Legum, Africa Since Independence, (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1999).

¹⁷ See also: Michael Maren, The Road to Hell: The Ravaging Effects of Foreign Aid and International Charity (New York, Free Press, 2001).

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¹⁹ Security System Reform and Governance - DAC Guidelines and Reference Policies (Billancourt, OECD Publication, France 2005) 10.

²⁰ Jeremy Ginifer and Kaye Oliver, Evaluation of Conflict Prevention Pools: Sierra Leone (London, DFID, 2004) 13.

²¹ However, no SSR programs have to date addressed the issue of reform of private security firms. For a discussion of institutions targeted by SSR programs see: Heiner Hänggi, Security sector reform in peacebuilding: towards an EU-UN partnership? (Brussels, European Policy Centre, 2007) reprinted at: <<http://www.epc.eu/en/er.asp?TYP=ER&LV=293&see=y&t=2&PG=ER/EN/detail&l=&AI=613>>.

²² Much of the doctrine of SSR remains tentative. For the most comprehensive overview of SSR, see Cranfield University's SSR web site at: <<http://www.ssronline.org/index.cfm>>. See also Michael Brzoska, Development Donors and the Concept of Security Sector Reform (Geneva, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces - Occasional Paper no 4, 2003).

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²⁴ For a good overview of current British strategic thinking on SSR see: Dick Baly and Dylan Hendrickson, Understanding and Supporting Security Sector Reform (London, Dept for International Development, 2004).

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²⁶ For a comprehensive summary of the conflict in Sierra Leone and related links see: the Global Policy Forum's web site, Sierra Leone at <<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/slindex.htm>>.

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²⁹ Lansana Fofana, British Troops Arrive to Shore Up Security, from Inter Press Service, 23 February 2003. Reprinted at: <<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/liberia/2003/0226uk.htm>>.

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³³ Author's interviews with British military, intelligence and diplomatic SSR advisors from Sierra Leone in Nairobi Kenya, September 2005. Additionally, for a penetrating analysis of the problem in Sierra Leone and Liberia see also: Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States, (Brussels, International Crisis Group, Africa Report No 87 - 2004). Reprinted at: <<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/liberia/2004/1208failedstates.pdf>>.

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³⁵ The Security Council's Update Report on Security Sector Reform 14 February 2007 (UN, New York, 2007) at: <www.securitycouncilreport.org>.

³⁶ For an overview of SSR practices see: June Ball, Good Practices in Security Sector Reform in Brief 15, Security Sector Reform, (Bonn, Bonn International Centre for Conversion, 2000).

³⁷ Of course, in this view of democratic norms, the emphasis must be squarely on the acceptance of tolerance, plurality and human rights as equally as it is on democratic process. A one-time election would not reasonably qualify in this category.

³⁸ Security System Reform and Governance - DAC Guidelines and Reference Policies (Billancourt, OECD Publication, 2005) 56- 57.

³⁹ For an alternate view of SSR implementation see: Timothy Edmunds, Security Sector Reform Concepts and Implementation (Geneva, Report for Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces, November 2001) At: <http://www.dcaf.ch/cfs/ev_geneva02_papers_edmunds.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Department of Defense News Briefing, USAFRICOM - US Africa Command, slide 6. 7 February 2007, at: <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/briefingslide.aspx?briefingslideid=295>.

⁴¹ See Harvey Sapolsky and Benjamin Friedman, No to Africa Command, US Presence Would Irritate, Add Nothing To Security, (Springfield, Defense News - Army Times Publishing Company, 2 April, 2007) 61.

⁴² In addition to Meredith's cataloguing of Africa's tragedies, see also: William Easterly, The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good (New York, Penguin, 2007). Easterly, although controversial, argues persuasively that Africa's problems are largely external and now need solutions that are internally motivated, which is essentially what an effective SSR program delivers. Had a comprehensive SSR program existed, the horrors outlined might never have occurred.

⁴³ For an example of the kind of synergies an SSR program would complement, see: Jeffery Sachs, The End of Poverty (New York, Penguin Press, 2005). Sachs makes compelling arguments about the nature of the investments needed to eliminate serious poverty. In this light, SSR would be one of the essential pre-conditional security related elements needed to merge essential investments in infrastructure education and human capital with a stable functioning security apparatus.

⁴⁴ See for example, T.X. Hammes, The Sling and the Stone (Osceola, Zenith Press, 2007) and Rupert Smith, The Utility of Force. (New York, Knopf, 2006) Both authors argue that the nature of warfare is changing and the skills required in modern and future militaries must evolve to meet the changed circumstances.

