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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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“Walk Softly and Carry a Big Stick”

An analysis of the impact of colonialism/imperialism on the operational art for campaign planners assigned to AFRICOM using the Darfur Crisis as a case study.

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## Executive Summary

**Title:** “Walk Softly and Carry a Big Stick: An analysis of the impact of colonialism on the operational art for campaign planners assigned to AFRICOM using the Darfur Crisis as a case study.”

**Author:** Major John F. Griffin, United States Marine Corps

**Thesis:** Using the Darfur crisis as a model of future conflicts in Africa, this paper submits that AFRICOM must avoid any appearances of colonialism or imperialism in order to conduct successful operations in Africa.

**Discussion:** For African nations, colonialism is considered one of the root causes for many of their problems today. When planning operations in Africa, operational planners have to be keenly aware of the impact that the latent mistrust regarding anything colonial has on the African psyche. This thesis will discuss some colonial theory, the unique structure of the newly operational command AFRICOM, the Darfur Conflict and will provide nine planning considerations for AFRICOM planners to avoid the appearance of colonialism for operations in Africa while using the Darfur Conflict as a case study for future planners. The nine planning considerations are: Cost of Conflict theory, an alternative approach to leveraging capabilities, population engagement, perception problems, transparency in planning, inappropriate use of labeling in the Darfur Conflict, strategic communication, religious considerations and the consequences of a disarming policy in Darfur.

**Conclusion:** In today’s new world order (which is still to be defined), America has to avoid a cookie-cutter approach to military operations. AFRICOM is uniquely structured to leverage American resources and military capabilities in order to achieve American strategic goals of advancing democracy, the protecting human rights and the rule of law, and creating regional cooperation and security.

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## *Preface*

The conflict in Darfur is the subject of much current research and academic attention. This thesis will not attempt to capture all of the historical, political, and economic dynamics in the region, but will look at the crisis simply through the analytical lens of the experience with colonialism. The object of this work is to add to the greater body of literature and provide a better understanding on how to achieve a peaceful and successful solution to the greater crisis. This thesis will look at one region within a proscribed nation-state - Darfur in Sudan - to consider whether some methods and approaches that AFRICOM can take towards Darfur are transferable to other regions in Africa.

There are significant strategic incentives to resolving the Darfur Crisis, the least of which is not using the full weight of American resources to aid in an international humanitarian crisis in order to regain some of America's prestige. At the time of this writing, the United States is looking to surge forces into Afghanistan adopting a similar approach that has led to the recent successes in Iraq. While some of the lessons learned in Iraq are transferrable to Africa, the United States cannot adopt a cookie-cutter approach to all conflicts. This thesis will provide some recommendations to operational planners.

I want to thank Dr. Paolo Tripodi for his mentorship throughout this process. His role as a facilitator to me during this academic journey has truly allowed me to enjoy the quest that I have embarked upon. For each subtle change of opinion or direction I discovered, he unhesitatingly supported my decisions while still keeping me focused and on track. I would also like to thank Dr Holmes-Eber who recommended I change my case study from the strategic culture of the Horn of Africa to focus on the region of Darfur. Her vision on the potential breadth and scope of my initial proposal has allowed me to conduct an analysis using the colonial lens with greater focus, while simultaneously achieving a result that is transferable to the larger continent of Africa. And finally, I would like to thank my family – Jean, Jack and Abby. This has been a tough year being separated from you but without your support and love, nothing in my life would be meaningful.

*“The ideal utilization of armed forces has always been to prevent fighting rather than provoke it”<sup>i</sup>*

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

“‘Speak softly and carry a big stick’ is one of former President Theodore Roosevelt’s most famous and enduring remarks. Big stick capabilities remain essential in preserving America’s security. However, in its long war against violent Islamist extremists, U.S. Armed Forces seek a balanced approach that also addresses the ‘speak softly’ side of the equation.”<sup>2</sup>

“America is now threatened less by conquering states. . . than by failing ones.”<sup>3</sup> Nowhere is the categorization of failing states more relevant than the continent of Africa. The responsibility of dealing with the continent of Africa now falls to Africa Command (AFRICOM) which became operational on October 1, 2008. One of the many challenges that AFRICOM planners will have to consider is the effect that imperialism and colonialism has on operations in Africa. Colonialism is the root cause for many problems that African nations are still working to overcome. The former colonial powers divided up the continent by drawing arbitrary lines that cut through cultures, religions, or kin-based social networks. Therefore, the AFRICOM planner “has to understand perceptions from subregion to subregion, country to country, and small folk community to small folk community”<sup>4</sup> because the geographical boundaries do not accurately reflect the cultural reality. The Darfur region in Sudan is just one example in Africa that illustrates the cultural challenges that the artificial assignment of national boundaries has had on stability within the continent. Using the Darfur crisis as a model of future conflicts in Africa, this paper suggests that AFRICOM must avoid any appearances of colonialism or imperialism in order to conduct successful operations in Africa.

## **B. AFRICAN COLONIALISM AND IMPERIALISM**

Americans tend to view our break from colonial oppression by England with proud nostalgia: a period of time that laid the foundation for our American ethos - liberty,

egalitarianism and a capitalist economy that rewards hard work. Contrarily, for the modern African citizen, colonialism is considered a root cause for the instability that exists today. Unlike the American colonial experience which concluded in 1783, the period of African colonialism ended in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. As such, the legacy of colonialism is a significant operational art consideration in campaign planning for Africa.

While many theories exist regarding colonialism and imperialism, Ronald Hovarth's definitions will serve as the basis for this analysis. According to Hovath, imperialism is a form of intergroup domination in which few, if any, permanent settlers from the imperial homeland migrate to the colony. Similarly, colonialism is defined as that form of intergroup domination in which settlers in significant numbers migrate permanently to the colony from the colonizing power.<sup>5</sup> The key difference between the two is the presence of settlers.

America has no colonial aspirations in Africa. Therefore, AFRICOM planners ought to consider the impact of imperialism, more precisely, on its operations. However, the term colonialism tends to evoke a more visceral response among those who would oppose the United States, AFRICOM, and its operations. One example, as stated by Nunu Kidane: "Africom is nothing new -- it is an initiative to ensure "command" of land and resources that in the past was called just plain "colonialism."<sup>6</sup> Therefore, for the context of this thesis, the analysis will use the term colonialism as virtually synonymous with the term imperialism since it is the term colonialism that is used to contest America's new focus on Africa (albeit erroneously).

As Basil Davidson points out, the modern African nation-state, which was constructed by Europeans during the colonial period and has continued to this day, has become a curse.<sup>7</sup> While the subsequent periods of decolonization throughout Africa occurred under different circumstances, conditions and/or timelines, the modern African nation-state is still a very

distinctive by-product of its colonial experience. Many of the current African nation-states still lack the ability to self-govern, many remain wrought in violent conflicts (both internal and external to their borders), and many governments are still despotic, corrupt, ineffectual, and irresponsible to their nation's demands. Even today, free of colonial rule, the modern African nation state remains disadvantaged from the exploitations of more modern imperializing nations. Africa is a complex environment: recent colonial experience; exploited by imperializing powers; a Muslim population that already possesses anti-American sentiment; a population highly infected with AIDS and other medical issues with inadequate health care systems; weak, authoritative governance; inadequate infrastructure; and porous borders. Additionally, within the context of the Global War on Terror, there is an increase in Al Qaeda (AQ) presence and infrastructure.

The AQ presence creates greater challenges to AFRICOM supporting regional cooperation and stability beyond the range of existing complexities on the African continent. As the United States' sworn enemy, AQ will attempt to undermine the progress and initiatives America attempts to accomplish. In Osama bin Laden's "Letter to America," he identified seven headings of instructions to Muslims around the world -- the fifth of which (directed at America) is "to pack your luggage and get out of our lands."<sup>8</sup> While not an explicit reference to colonialism, there is a concern for the potential negative impact such a message might have on a disenfranchised African villager, particularly in East Africa where ethnic groups have had Muslim influences since the second century, and who harbors ill-feelings about the inequitable colonial or imperial treatment. Understanding the colonial and post-colonial periods in Africa and understanding how other external actors that have come to "support" Africa have been

viewed is critical to the way in which AFRICOM has to present itself to the African nations, governments and ultimately its citizens.

### C. THE DARFUR CONFLICT

Up until the 1970s, the Sudanese territory supported two modes of co-existence – farming and pastoral nomads. The two groups supported one another by sharing available resources and purchasing either animals or agricultural from each other. The distinction among the ethnicities was characterized by economic classes and lifestyles – there were “Black” farmers and Muslim “Arab” pastoral nomads. Then, in the 1970s the reliable rainfall began to recede causing competition for the, by then, limited resources.<sup>9</sup> The Muslim Khartoum government became involved and encouraged the nomads to align themselves more closely with Islam. Additionally, the government conducted regional reorganization of the territory to more accurately reflect the “ethnic” divisions. Following these influences and other government sponsored initiatives, the pastoral nomads began assuming a Muslim identity in order to win favor with Khartoum and the farmers were sub-categorized as Black Africans. The stratification of the society was now divided along ethno-religious lines. These events caused significant turmoil over the next decade, when the second civil war erupted in 1983 and violent strife characterized the next twenty years.<sup>10</sup>

In 2003, the farmers (“Black Africans”) staged a rebellion due to the lack of support from the Khartoum government who condoned the pastoral nomad (“Muslim”) attacks on farming villages and tribes. This rebellion was then “considered” an insurgency by Khartoum and the government subsequently organized a militia of poor and dispossessed tribesmen known as the Janjaweed. The Janjaweed militia was organized on their “Muslimness” to fight against the “Black Africans.”<sup>11</sup> This contrived approach by the Khartoum government changed the conflict

from a competition on economic resources to an ethnic struggle. The history of violent conflict demonstrates that ethnic strife is a more vicious motivation for violence than economic.

In response that same year, the farmers organized into militias as well. The two prominent militias formed were the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). The fighting in 2003-2004 was extremely violent and caused an estimated 250,000 Sudanese deaths, 2,700 villages destroyed and two million refugees.<sup>12</sup> In 2005, the United States brokered a peace agreement called the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). While numerous stipulations were demanded, the two most pressing concerns were the call for a general election in 2009 and the opportunity for Southern Sudan to have a referendum to secede from Sudan in 2011 altogether. So far, the Khartoum Government has not complied with many of the tenets of the CPA.

The party that remains in power in Khartoum is the National Congress Party (NCP) in the north – formerly the National Islamic Front (NIF). Even though the NCP encouraged the nomads to consider themselves Muslim, the NCP is not a significantly Islamic based party. Due to the desperation and tenuous grasp of control that the NCP maintains, they are focused more on staying in power rather than advancing Islamism across the continent. The party demonstrated this when they changed their name from NIF to NCP in order to appeal to a larger number of Sudanese. Additionally, the leaders and members of the NCP are concerned if they lose power, they will be victimized by violent retributions or charged by the international courts for human rights violations and war crimes.

As the north is struggling to retain power, the south is gaining strength (politically, economically, and militarily). War remains tenuously at bay at this point. A conflagration could re-erupt from numerous potential sparks but four prominent points of contention need to be

addressed. First, particularly important to both sides are the oil reserves in the territory of Abyei in Southern Sudan.<sup>1</sup> Second, the North is not fully adhering to the tenets of the CPA. Third, the necessary preparation for the 2009 general elections has not started yet. Finally, the north cannot make any attempt to prevent the south from seceding because of the 2011 referendum. If these issues are not resolved, war will certainly break out again.

Despite the fact that the conflict is currently “organized” as a struggle between the “Muslim” and “Black” Africans, the roots are much deeper based on the colonial legacy. Following the Mahdi’s rebellion from Egypt (then loosely under the Ottoman Empire), his short-lived theocracy (1881-1885) united the tribes of Sudan. Following his death, a power struggle ensued and his successor placed members of the Baggara tribe (Arab nomads) in positions of power over the Fur tribesmen (farmers). The Mahdi’s army was defeated in 1898 by the British at which time, Sudan became a British colony. Even then, Southern Sudan had always been distinct from Northern Sudan and the south never did come under effective control from the colonizing power.

Under the British administrative rule (1898-1947), the British dealt primarily with members from the North. Southern representatives were either excluded from or hand-picked and forced into negotiations that were mostly symbolic. Under British colonial rule, Sudan was never empowered with the concepts of civil liberties, self-governing infrastructure, or the rule of law. After the Sudanese gained independence from Great Britain in 1956, “independence for Sudan meant nothing for South Sudan but a change of masters as the North Sudanese took over the colonial state.”<sup>13</sup> Violent conflicts persisted until the seventies while the different parties struggled for power. This dynamics of power remain as prevalent in Khartoum as it did in 1956.

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<sup>1</sup> See Map Two: Abyei Territory

From a variety of historical reference points, this conflict can be dated to 2003, 1983, 1956 or 1881. To ignore any of these flash points in Sudanese history, or to believe the current categorization of “Muslim” against “Black African,” is a clear denial that the roots of this struggle is a by-product of the Sudanese colonial experience.

#### **D. AFRICOM**

AFRICOM is the product of a realignment of the combatant commands PACCOM, CENTCOM, and EUCOM which previously all had responsibility for different regions of Africa. The former combatant command organization reflected the United States’ vision of the cold war strategy. AFRICOM was officially established on October 1, 2008 due to a growing recognition of the strategic importance of the African continent. Its mission is: “In concert with other U.S. government agencies and international partners, conducts sustained security engagement through military-to-military programs, military-sponsored activities, and other military operations as directed to promote a stable and secure African environment in support of U.S. foreign policy.”<sup>14</sup> It is a military command, but due to its unique command structure, it is organized to synergize the efforts of national policy. Compared to other combatant commands, AFRICOM is specifically modeled to coordinate all the elements of national power as opposed to placing a specific focus on military led options. The structure of the command includes representatives from USAID, Department of State and other governmental agencies.<sup>2</sup> The Commanding General’s two senior advisors: one military and one civilian reflect the nature of this organization relative to other combatant commands.<sup>3</sup> Since it became operational in October, 2008, one of AFRICOM’s leading concerns is the Darfur Crisis due to its strategic implications.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix One: An Innovative Organization

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix Two: Military and Civilian Leadership in AFRICOM

## E. STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF AFRICOM ACTION IN DARFUR

The United States stood up AFRICOM to reflect a growing recognition of the strategic importance of Africa. Many African nations assume this is solely *realpolitik* rather than an advancement of American idealism to project the building of democratic institutions in order to establish secure and stable states. Greg Mills noted that, "In Africa the view is widespread that AFRICOM is a tool to secure better access to Africa's natural resources, erode China's growing influence on the continent, and establish bases to hunt and destroy networks linked to Al-Qaeda."<sup>15</sup> Yet, in my view, Mills' vision is only partially correct. While these might be some of the desired results, certainly they are not exclusive nor do they reflect the broader vision of American idealism in promoting democracy, establishing global security, and ensuring the protection of people's civil liberties. It is reasonable to concede that the U.S. acts in her own self-interests. To think otherwise is simply naïve. Yet, America's self-interest *is* regional cooperation and stability in Africa. This vestige of mistrust from some African nations is clearly symptomatic of the African colonial experience in which external powers only involvement was the exploitation of the colony. So what are the strategic implications of Darfur?

The United States has a strategic interest in forging and maintaining regional stability in Africa. The most obvious recognition of this commitment is the on-going deployment of 2,000 personnel in support of the Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) in Djibouti. This operation serves as the vanguard operation for AFRICOM. CJTF-HOA's mission reflects AFRICOM's broader mission in that it seeks to establish regional cooperation and stability in East Africa. Given the United States' experience following the end of the Cold War, the United States recognizes that the cost of regime change and nation building is too high a price to pay to influence and create regional security and alliances with the United States. The

US is pursuing a policy in Africa that seeks to develop stable governments and market economies in Africa before more conflicts erupt (referred to as Phase Zero operation in the modern military vernacular). Seeking an immediate resolution to the crisis in Darfur is strategically relevant to support the initiatives in the Horn of Africa and also support the United States' strategic partners – Egypt and Eritrea.

A destabilized Sudan has transnational implications on other partners and regions of concern, namely: Chad, the Sahel region and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In fact, a destabilized Sudan has implications for all nine countries with which it shares a border. From an energy security perspective, China and the Gulf States are seeking to tap into the potential reserves located in Sudan. According to Sean McFate, the “Central Intelligence Agency estimates suggest Africa may supply as much as 25 percent of imports to America by 2015. Already by 2006, sub-Saharan African oil constituted approximately 18 percent of all U.S. imports. By comparison, Persian Gulf imports were at 21 percent. China comparably is getting 30 percent of its oil from strategic resources.”<sup>16</sup> China became a net importer in the mid-90s breaking its former energy security policy of remaining self-sufficient. With its expanding population and economy, China will continue to grow as a competitor against the United States for petroleum products. In addition, Al-Qaeda has had historic ties in Sudan. If the United States fails to influence Sudan positively, the conditions already exist for a renewed AQ exploitation.

Given these factors, the United States has a strategic interest to take decisive action in this crisis. Instead of looking at Darfur as an independent operation, it should be viewed in the broader context as a supporting effort to the current operations in the Horn of Africa. Seeking stability for strategic allies and adjacent regions will benefit from Sudanese stabilization. In

addition, decisive action will deny terrorist organizations a critical capability for their recruiting. Further, with America's declining reputation in the Middle East and a misperception that Washington is conducting a war on Islam, there is significant political capital to be recouped by using American resources for a humanitarian crisis. Finally, the earlier in a crisis the United States becomes involved, the less costly the requirement is in resources and life. With the potential flashpoint in 2011, the United States could engage in preventive measures now (mid-range crisis) even though the crisis is on-going.

The United States has already used its diplomatic weight when Secretary of State Powell defined the crisis in Darfur as genocide.<sup>17</sup> This characterization obligated the United Nations to act under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.<sup>4</sup> Further as a global leader, the United States used its diplomatic clout to encourage the signing of the CPA. Since then the "U.S. recently re-established a USAID mission in Sudan and is the largest single donor to Sudan, providing 85 percent of the food distributions by the World Food Program thus far in 2006, and more than \$1.3 billion in FY 2005 money to fund humanitarian, reconstruction, and peacekeeping needs in both Darfur and other regions in Sudan."<sup>18</sup>

As of January 9, 2009, AFRICOM began using C-17 aircraft to provide operational lift to Rwandan Peacekeepers as well as flying in supplies necessary for the on-going UN and AU humanitarian operations.<sup>19</sup> The Rwandans are part of the vanguard force from the AU deployed to the Darfur region. Critical to AU legitimacy is the operational support provided by the United States. However, if the United States chooses to reduce its involvement diplomatically or in the humanitarian crisis, there might be significant strategic implications. First, the international perception will be emboldened that the United States is pursuing a war on Islam and only uses its power to invade oil rich countries. A second order effect of this decision is empowering the

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<sup>4</sup> UN resolution 260 (III) A of the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1948

recruiting effort of AQ from the disenfranchised youth in Sudan. Al-Qaeda used to operate out of Sudan and it would not take much to regenerate its infrastructure and recruiting effort there. A further destabilized Sudan would have adverse effects on the Horn of Africa campaign, the United States anti-terrorism programs in Chad and the Sahel. Finally, China and the Gulf States might gain a monopoly on the oil reserves identified in Sudan. Given the need for sustained engagement, AFRICOM needs to consider the impact of colonialism on its current and future operations.

## F. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The following nine planning considerations are offered to operational planners when considering AFRICOM operations in Darfur.

### 1. Cost of Conflict Theory

According to the authors Michael Brown and Richard Rosencrance in the book, *The Costs of Conflict*, nations should execute early or mid-conflict prevention policies in growing troubled areas because when the international community gets involved late, the cost in lives and resources are exponentially higher than preventive measures would have been. Understanding that early intervention is cost-effective should be a determinant for national interest. If “the cost of preventive actions are less than the military, economic, and political costs that have to be borne by the outside power when conflicts unfold, then the case of conflict prevention on national interest grounds becomes very strong.”<sup>20</sup>

The authors analyze nine case studies and categorize them into three separate groupings: (1) failed prevention; Bosnia, Rwanda, Somalia, Haiti and the Persian Gulf, (2) initial prevention; Macedonia and Slovakia, and (3) mid-course prevention; Cambodia and El Salvador.

“In every case examined conflict prevention actually cost or would have cost the international community much less than the conflict themselves. In some cases, the cost difference is truly staggering - in short conflict prevention is cost effective.”<sup>21</sup>

Thus, using the “Cost of Conflict Theory,” AFRICOM needs to remain proactively and consistently engaged in the region as an economy of force effort mission as opposed to waiting until the region further destabilizes and potentially draws in more regional violence and instability. A quick review of the Sudan’s location<sup>5</sup> indicates that this region is already characterized as destabilized (Chad, CAR, DROC, Ethiopia-Eretria are all dealing with varying degrees of instability). AFRICOM needs to recognize that the Darfur Crisis does not only affect Darfur, nor is it exclusively a Sudanese crisis. Marielle Debos rightly noted that “seeing this [conflict] through the lens of Darfur is misleading and draws attention away from other aspects of the entangled conflicts in the region.”<sup>22</sup> Especially when the 2011 referendum vote in South Sudan would authorize secession from Sudan under the CPA, this conflict could very well spark into a regional calamity once again. It is irrelevant if the conflict is a civil war within Sudan or a war between two independent nations - North versus South Sudan. Any renewed violent outbreak would cause a large refugee crisis that would affect the surrounding nine countries, as well as, the movement of transnational militia supporting both sides. Yet, US involvement does not necessitate only “boots on the ground.” This fact lends itself precisely to AFRICOM’s unique structure.

## **2. An Alternative Approach to Leveraging Capabilities**

AFRICOM could leverage its unique structure and capabilities to bring all elements of national power and build stability in Sudan. Instead of a typical military led operation,

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<sup>5</sup> See Map # 1- Region

AFRICOM could use military planned operations to conduct a grassroots information operations campaign. While the United States Military can build schools and structures, they are not qualified to build infrastructure or public systems. This kind of expertise lies outside of the military realm. Instead, the application of military power would serve as a *supporting effort* to a force of professionals comprised of health care administrators, public sector professionals, doctors, veterinarians; engineers, etc. The military can provide security, logistics, command and control architecture, mobility and organization, personnel, to support the main effort – civilians waging peace and development. These inter-agency operations provide the US military an opportunity to employ an operational information operations campaign that thwarts the efforts of the AQ ideology and recruiting efforts. This type of “direct action” combats the current tactics and techniques of AQ and their associated movements similar to the efforts AQ is currently pursuing in Somalia.<sup>23</sup> This is a clear paradigm shift from the employment considerations normally associated with combatant commands.

### **3. Population Engagement**

AFRICOM planning considerations need to generate alternative opportunities for the Sudanese who would otherwise join the militia. While these projects would represent positive steps towards stability and security, they would also begin to undermine the long held mistrust of western powers based on the Sudanese colonial experiences. By building in areas previously negotiated with local and community leadership, trust building and partnership relations will be fostered. This technique also engages the more dangerous sector of society, the marginalized youth. In their current status, the “marginalized youth of the region need little persuasion before embarking on war activities on their home turf or abroad as a means of upward social

mobility.”<sup>24</sup> As part of the planning process negotiated with community elders, representatives from AFRICOM should inquire about any existing skill sets that are available within the tribes that can be hired for the project work. If the particular skill sets are not readily inherent in the tribe, the non-skilled labor force should be employed to conduct commensurate labor. Even if that means creating job opportunities not necessarily proscribed by the task, the investment in the tribe should be viewed as deterrence to militia recruitment. Further, by creating employment opportunities through the community elders, credibility and respect is re-established within the communal hierarchy. Upon completion of each project, AFRICOM needs to ensure that the community-project task-force departs and leaves no enduring connection. This complete separation from the communal effort will counter any enduring admonitions of colonialism and work towards changing the perceptions.

#### **4. Perceptions**

AFRICOM faces a perception problem among some African nations. On June 6, 2006, President Omar Al-Bashir (Sudan) declared: “The UN forces have a hidden agenda in Sudan because they are not coming for peace in Darfur. They want to recolonize Sudan.”<sup>25</sup> Samuel Makinda suggests that African nations are very suspicious of the militarization of the political and economic systems. This type of governance is exactly what Africa is attempting to rid themselves of and some African nations fail to see how a US military command can assist them to greater independence, cooperation and security.<sup>26</sup> This mistrust is a clear vestige from their colonial experience.

To counter these perceptions, AFRICOM should attempt to limit the use of uniformed soldiers to external security tasks only. This would allow all the aid workers, engineers, doctors,

etc. to serve as the connecting file between the US led efforts and the local population. Despite the best intentions of the military members, who may have possessed the same capabilities, they would be viewed with skepticism. Civilian professionals, however, regardless of nationality share a common language and passion. Over time, these continuous positive interactions among civilian professionals will change the perception of America's intentions and will win the struggle for legitimacy. Conscious consideration of each project, who the project supports, how the project will be viewed in neighboring villages or tribes needs to be delicately considered. "For the struggle for perceived legitimacy does not occur from time to time; it is a constant."<sup>27</sup> Thus, to avoid a similar colonial tactic of favoring one tribe over another, achieving legitimacy must be a pre-eminent consideration for each endeavor. Not only are the latent forces working against AFRICOM, but there is an overt apprehension about a re-colonizing effort coming from the Khartoum leadership. Therefore AFRICOM must assume a transparent approach to reconstruction as an operational necessity to reduce these colonial or imperialist perceptions.

## **5. Transparency in Planning**

The best way to take a transparent approach is three fold: to communicate to the Sudanese, Chadians, and the Central Africans, that they provide the best opportunity for success in developing infrastructure and strengthening civil society to function in an effective way; to encourage the Diaspora (not refugees) from the region to reengage and reinvest in the region; and to give ownership to the current governments.<sup>28</sup> What Americans fail to consider is that not every act of community service by the United States is considered intrinsically good. Consider the example provided by LtCol and Major Varhola: the case of a nomadic cow herder receiving veterinarian assistance. At the surface that would appear to be a good community service and

information operations victory, but when the cow herder is grazing on another farmer's land, it is viewed as favoritism towards the nomad.<sup>29</sup> To avoid these cultural missteps, if indigenous members of the region were leading the reconstruction, it would offer the individuals realistic (not violent) legitimacy and ownership of the initiatives. It would also avoid, albeit well intentioned, inevitable cultural mistakes. What makes these operations in Sudan more challenging for AFRICOM is the fact that there is actually no static tribal lay down.<sup>30</sup>

## **6. Labeling is not Applicable in the Darfur Conflict**

Based on the United States' experience in Iraq, there is an instinct to label according to ethnicity or religion such as Arab, Black, and Islamic. In Sudan, this does not accurately reflect the relationships on the ground.<sup>31</sup> Instead, AFRICOM needs to demonstrate an equitable approach based on regional reconstruction; i.e. broader than simply the Darfur territory. The kin-based social networks<sup>32</sup> that cross border loyalties can work to an operational advantage. AFRICOM should not consider enforcing borders because the "borders" are considered arbitrary remnants of the colonial period. Rather, AFRICOM should provide equitable treatment to the existing social networks that exist regardless of the arbitrary borders. This will have positive effects in the adjoining countries.

## **7. Strategic Communication**

The Public Affairs planners should focus their efforts on the informal communication networks in the region. To the local tribesmen when the United States advertises its efforts globally, their intentions are considered circumspect if tied to other policy goals.<sup>33</sup> Instead, AFRICOM should depend on the local informal communication networks to generate popular

support for their efforts. Especially where America is engaged in a global war, if they want to achieve regional success, the United States would be better suited to rely on the kin-based social network communication. Understanding these kin-based social networks will more accurately map the human terrain and avoid mislabeling militia into religious categories, since religious categorizations do not reflect the current conflict either.

## **8. Religious Considerations**

Identifying this crisis as a religious based conflict is an easy tactic for policy makers and politicians to mobilize popular and economic support. However, AFRICOM would be better suited to downplay the religious labeling because it harkens back to erroneous colonial labeling. The United States' efforts in the region will have a positive effect against Islamic fundamentalism without religious labeling or trumpeting their own achievements. While there may be some history of Islamic fundamentalism present, it is not a dominant demagogue in the region.

Africa is rich in cultures and religions. While conquering forces and traders have invaded and visited the continent throughout history, Africans have steadfastly remained committed to their own beliefs and cultures. On occasion, the Africans have seemingly adopted a religion to suit their current needs, but in the end, their original belief systems were never abandoned. For instance, in the times of Christian missionaries, Africans would adopt Christianity in order to receive education. In the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Century, the native inhabitants of Africa embraced Islam to facilitate trading with Muslims merchants.<sup>34</sup> More recently, religion can also be used as a cover for defending illegal economic markets.<sup>35</sup> As mentioned previously,

the party in power in Sudan (NCP) was quick to change their identification from the National Islamist Party when that categorization challenged their ability to remain in power.<sup>36</sup>

Given the context of the Global War on Terrorism, AFRICOM should avoid religious labeling because the enemy of the United States – Al Qaeda - is a radical fundamentalist branch of Islam. Basic war-time strategy for AQ would be to attempt to discredit and attack the United States wherever they may be. Thus AFRICOM should not artificially create a new front. By labeling these operations in Darfur region as a product of the war on terrorism, an unintended consequence is the invitation for AQ efforts to arise.

### **9. Disarming – Right or Wrong in Darfur?**

A final issue AFRICOM planners must consider to avoid colonial mistrust is the instinct to disarm the local population. Since the colonial administrations have granted independence without building any democratic institutions, civil infrastructure, or rule of law, in this region, power *is* politics. Organizing military might is the main rule in Africa for success and power.<sup>37</sup> While full scale invasions of one country into another are not the norm in Africa, domestic armed conflict is viewed as an easier means to change governments vice democratic processes.<sup>38</sup> An additional challenge to disarmament is that a villager could be a member of the military in one country, but due to his cross border kin-based relationship, he could be a member of the rebel or local militia in an adjoining country.<sup>39</sup> Further owning and carrying weapons in this region is a sign of power and it is a necessity for security. It also demonstrates a sign of manhood.<sup>40</sup> So while an obvious tactic for peacekeeping, peacemaking or peace enforcement would be disarmament, AFRICOM will need to avoid the desire to create peace by disarming.

This technique will only resurrect the impression of colonial dominance of attempting to weaken the indigenous population.

## G. CONCLUSIONS

The creation of AFRICOM appears in a unique period of American history. As America still grapples with the new world order, whether defined by the fall of the Soviet Union, the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, or through hegemonic terms -- from bi-polarity to uni-polarity to the future multi-polarity or non-polarity -- the new world order has not been realized. Regardless of a new world order definition, AFRICOM can be considered a paradigm shift from the other combatant commands in how it approaches their operations. While Central Command and Washington remain focused on Iraq and Afghanistan (military led operations), AFRICOM stands at a cross roads of time and policy changes. As stated in the introduction, America is less threatened by stable states than it is by failing ones (National Security Strategy, 2002). Thus the need for armies to conquer states is no longer the first option for increasing global security. AFRICOM is uniquely structured to face this changing paradigm precisely in the region of the world that requires a different approach than the Cold War era or the brief unipolar era of American hegemony.

In a world of simultaneous global resource scarcity and heightened competition, assuring hegemonic reserves and influence can be achieved through global networked regional cooperation and support to stable states. The United States' recent focus on Africa is not completely altruistic. It is a realist approach to international affairs and to think otherwise is naïve. However, the US goal is not entirely *realpolitik* either. AFRICOM's new approach has a Wilsonian idealistic flair. The establishment of secure democracies, that promote peaceful transitions of power, that respect the rule of law and encourages governments to respond to the

needs of their citizens, is simultaneously good for those nations and supports US national security. As Walter Lippmann suggested, "A nation is secure to the extent to which it is not in danger of having to sacrifice core values, such as national independence or territorial integrity, if it wishes to avoid war and is able, if challenged, to maintain those values by victory in such a war."<sup>41</sup> This is the end state that the United States foreign policy efforts should seek to achieve - for the new nuclear deterrence of today is globalization. The more states become interconnected, the greater the incentive for stability.

AFRICOM needs to be keenly aware of the implications that the legacy of colonialism has on the African perception. Despite Washington's best intentions, a nation state's memory is long and will not heed the "that was then this is now approach" to reconciliation. Africa's colonial past has ingrained distrust in its leaders.<sup>42</sup> Only time and positive action can undo the mistrust of anything that appears colonial. By considering the nine planning suggestions offered in this thesis, the operational planners at AFRICOM can avoid the cloak of colonial appearance and leverage American resources to bring stability to the Darfur Region. America has the impetus to do so, because what is strategic here is access to and the opportunity to develop long standing personal relationships with the people in the region. This approach should be embraced by the military leadership at AFRICOM because it still maintains a military theoretical approach to the mission: we can use technology and operational mobility to gain advantages psychologically, technologically, spatially and in time; we can shatter those cohesive forces that work against us by relying on the kin-based social and communication networks; and we can employ the combined arms approach by leveraging all elements of national resources to achieve a strategic effect.

APPENDIX 1: INNOVATIVE ORGANIZATION

**An Innovative Organization**

Six Functionally-Aligned Directorates

A Complementary Mix of Military and Civilians

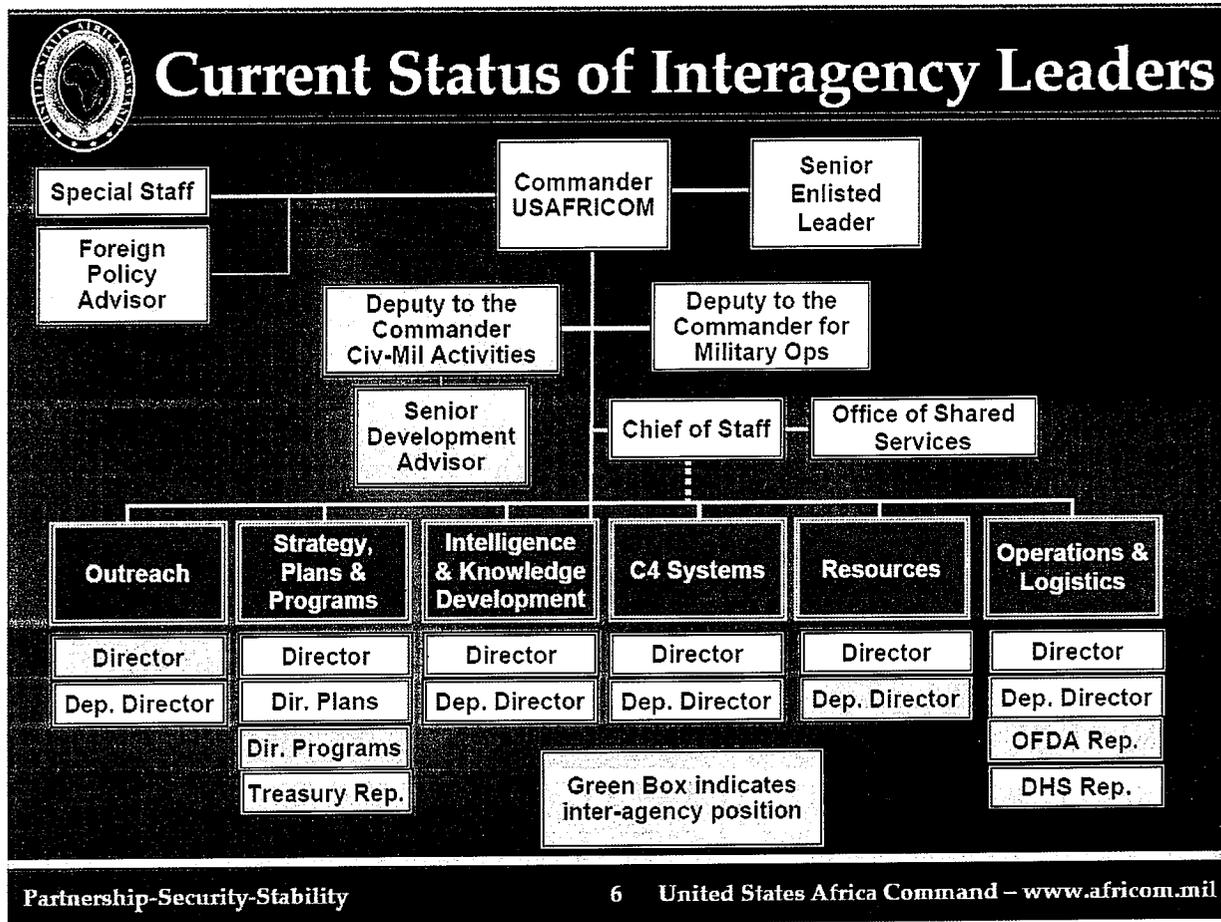
Interagency Members in Leadership Positions

Partnership-Security-Stability

5 United States Africa Command – [www.africom.mil](http://www.africom.mil)

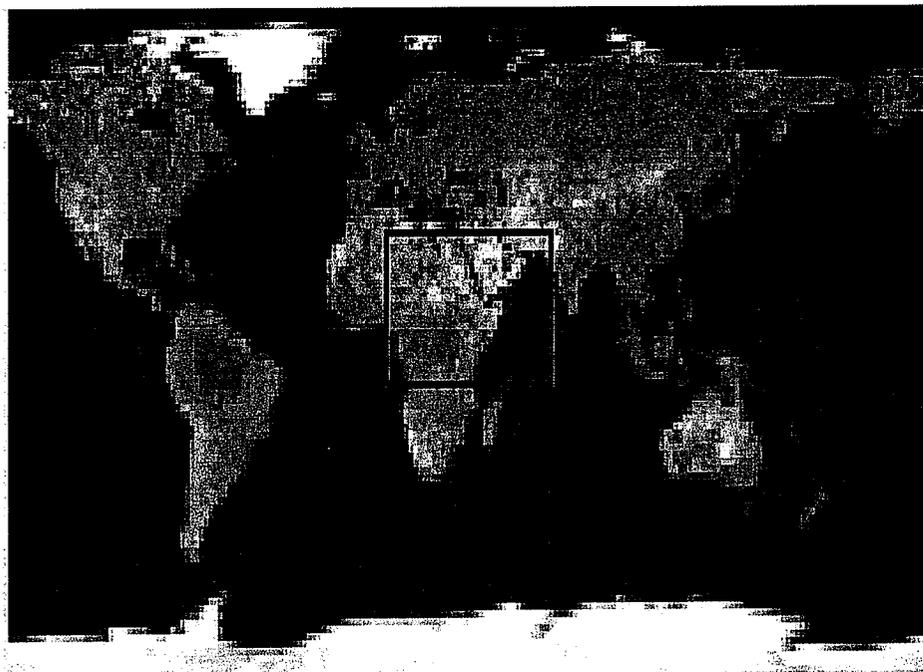
From AFRICOM website (accessed August 9, 2008).

APPENDIX 2: MILITARY AND CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP IN AFRICOM

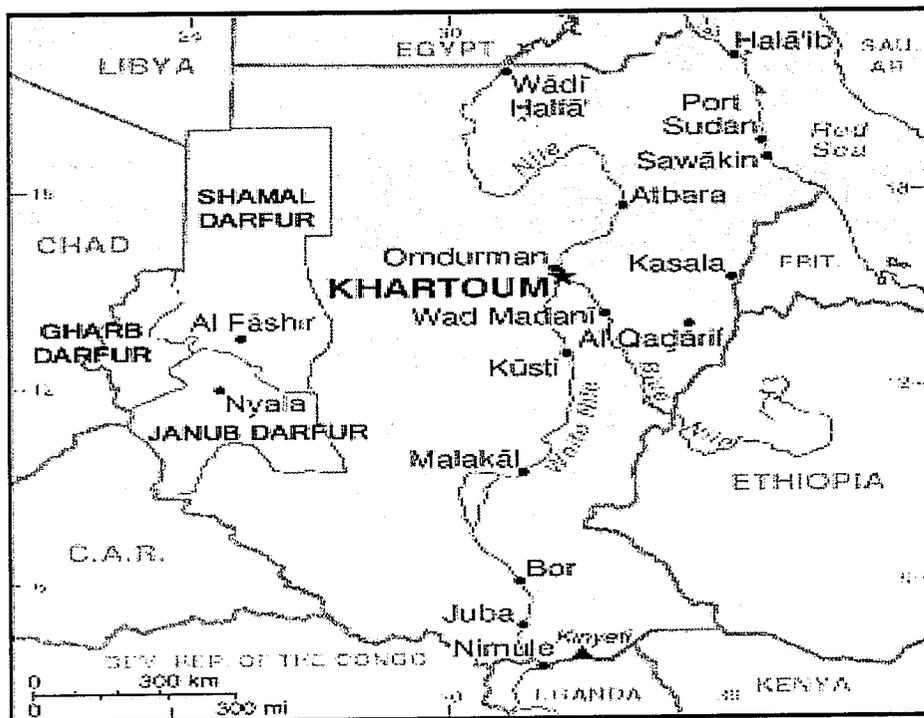


From AFRICOM website (accessed August 9, 2008).

MAP #1 - REGION

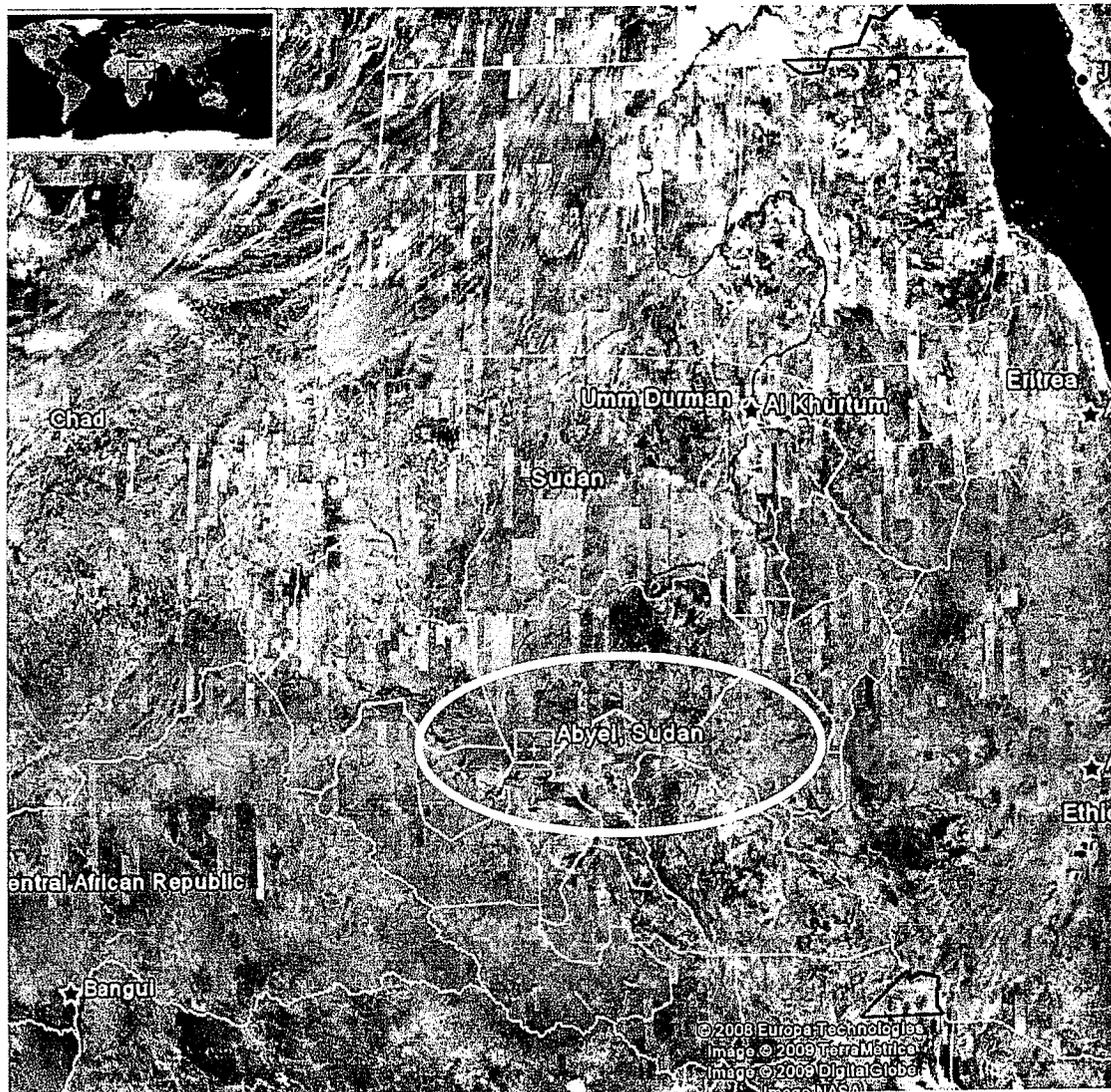


Retrieved from Google Earth on 10 January 2008.



Retrieved from [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6e/Darfur\\_map.png](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6e/Darfur_map.png) (accessed on 10 January 2009)

MAP #2: ABYEI TERRITORY



Downloaded from Google Maps on 11 January 2009.

Graphic added by author.

## Endnotes

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<sup>2</sup> Gregory G. Johnson, "The Long War Demands Proactive Engagement in Africa," *The Center for Strategic and International Studies Africa Program*. <http://forums.csis.org/africa/?p=8>, (accessed September 22, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> "National Security Strategy, United States of America." September 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Donovan C. Chau, "U.S. Counterterrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa: Understanding Costs, Cultures, and Conflicts." (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2008), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Ronald J. Hovarth. "A Definition of Colonialism." *Current Anthropology* 13, no. 1 (Feb., 1972): 46-47.

<sup>6</sup> Nunu Kidane, "Africa COMMAND spells colonialism." *Monthly Review*, July 10, 2008, <http://www.monthlyreview.org/mrzine/kidane071008.html> (accessed March 27, 2009).

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<sup>9</sup> Salmoni, Barak A. and Paula Holmes-Eber. *Operational Culture for the Warfighter: Principles and Application*. (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2008), 214.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew S. Natsois, "Beyond Darfur: Sudan's Slide Toward Civil War," <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20080501faessay87306/andrew-s-natsios/beyond-darfur.html>, (accessed December 10, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> Riek Machar Teny-Dhurgon, "South Sudan: A History of Political Domination – A Case of Self-Determination." [http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Hornet/sd\\_machar.html](http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Hornet/sd_machar.html), (accessed January 10, 2009).

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<sup>15</sup> Greg Mills, Terence McNamee, Mauro De Lorenzo, and Matthew Utley, "AFRICOM and Africa Security: The Globalisation of Security or the Militarisation of Globalisation?," *The Brenthurst Foundation*. April 2007, [www.thebrenthurstfoundation.org](http://www.thebrenthurstfoundation.org) (accessed November 12, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> Sean McFate, "U.S. Africa Command: A New Strategic Paradigm?," *Military Review*, January-February 2008: 10-21.

<sup>17</sup> Secretary Colin L. Powell, "The Crisis in Darfur," <http://www.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/36042.htm>, (accessed January 10, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> U.S. State Department, "United States Policy on Sudan," <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/65973.htm>, (accessed January 10, 2009).

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<sup>20</sup> Michael Brown and Richard Rosencrance (ed). *The Costs of Conflict*. (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 2.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 221.

<sup>22</sup> Marielle Debos, "Porous Borders and Fluid Loyalties: Patterns of Conflict in Darfur, Chad and the CAR." *Africa Policy Forum - Center for Strategic & International Studies*. June 8, 2008. <https://forums.csis.org/africa/?p=119&print=1>, (accessed December 12, 2008).

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<sup>27</sup> Chau, "U.S. Counterterrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa," 51.

<sup>28</sup> Tripodi and Belyeu, "Whatever Happens in Somalia," 222.

<sup>29</sup> Christopher Varhola, Major, USAR and Laura Varhola, Lieutenant Colonel, USA, "Avoiding the Cookie-Cutter Approach to Culture: Lessons Learned from Operations in East Africa." *Military Review*, November-December 2006: 73-78.

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<sup>30</sup> Salmoni and Holmes-Eber. "Operational Culture for the Warfighter: Principles and Application," 218.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Debos, "Porous Borders and Fluid Loyalties."

<sup>33</sup> Varhola and Varhola, "Avoiding the Cookie-Cutter Approach to Culture: Lessons Learned from Operations in East Africa." 73-78.

<sup>34</sup> Luann Grier, "Africa: Tomorrow's Strategic Challenge." *Marine Corps Gazette*, 1989: 58-60.

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<sup>39</sup> Debos, "Porous Borders and Fluid Loyalties."

<sup>40</sup> Salmoni and Holmes-Eber, "Operational Culture for the Warfighter: Principles and Application." 218.

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