

## Demystifying Africa's Security

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This article has had a brief but chequered history. I was initially invited to comment on this issue, partly because of my earlier criticisms (Keenan, 2008b) of Sean McFate's role and writing on aspects of US militarisation. As he is a contributor to this issue, let me say forthwith, for reasons that will become clear later, that the points he raises in his contribution to this issue (McFate, 2008a) on the likely outsourcing of AFRICOM's mission, are extremely important. ROAPE's editors are to be complemented for publishing it. I had also expressed slightly critical views over the way articles in this issue had addressed certain aspects of both the 'global war on terror' (GWOT) and the US's new military command structure for Africa, AFRICOM. If that were not enough, I also raised concerns about the way articles in this issue, and almost everywhere else for that matter, were using the concept of 'globalisation'!

As these issues digress from the immediate subject of this issue, 'Africa's security', to wider, more 'global' issues, I have consequently framed them within the juxtaposition of America's current crises of imperial over-reach and financial collapse and the implications that both of these have for the immediate and longer term future of Africa.

The four points I address are: 1) The way in which the GWOT<sup>1</sup> has been used by the Bush administration to justify its militarisation of Africa; 2) how and why this justification underwent a 'paradigm shift' with the launch of AFRICOM from the GWOT to the 'security-development' discourse (Keenan, 2008b); 3) two fundamental misconceptions in the use of the term 'globalisation'; and 4) the context and implications of McFate's important briefing on the 'Outsourcing the Making of Militaries: DynCorp'.

## The Role of the GWOT in the US Militarisation of Africa

In their article on the role of private military companies (PMCs) in US-Africa policy, Aning, Jaye and Atuobi (2008) argue that there is nothing altruistic about the US's involvement in Africa. US – Africa relations, they say, are shaped by the GWOT, US interests in African oil and competition with China. However, these three concerns, especially the GWOT, need to be contextualized, as Africa's strategic importance to the US has undergone several significant reappraisals over the last decade or so. I will deal first with oil and China.

Although only rarely admitted by US government spokespersons, the importance of African, especially sub-Saharan, oil has been the dominant of the these three strategic considerations since AFRICOM was first mooted within the US Department of Defense around 1997 (Keenan, 2008b). It was in that year that US dependency on foreign oil reached the psychologically critical 50% mark, leading the neo-conservatives ('neo-cons') to make energy security a key election issue in 2000. However, it was the Cheney Report, published in May 2001 (National Energy Policy Group 2001), that singled out sub-Saharan Africa as the key source of future US oil supplies and prompted President Bush to define African oil as a 'strategic national interest' and hence a resource that the US might choose to control through military force (Volman, 2003). Since then, the strategic importance of African oil to the US, in terms of percentage of foreign supply, has increased further. In contrast, China's economic expansionism in Africa was of little concern to the US in 1997, but has tended to move increasingly higher up the radar during the course of this millennium.

References to US concerns about the GWOT in Africa are, however, more problematic and need to be qualified

very carefully. The reasons for this are complex, but I will deal with them only briefly as I have spelt them out frequently in ROAPE (Keenan 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2006a, 2006d, 2008a) and elsewhere. The essence of my argument is that the Bush administration decided to use a military structure to secure access to and control over African oil and opted to use the GWOT as the justification, rather than acknowledging that US military intervention in Africa was about resource control. Indeed, as Deepak Lal, Professor of International Development Studies at UCLA and former advisor to both the World Bank and IMF, affirmed, 'The war on terror can be seen as merely an extension of defending the capitalist market' (Hanieh, 2006). However, launching the GWOT in Africa was tricky, as most of the continent, especially sub-Saharan Africa, had hitherto not suffered the atrocities of terrorism. The main terrorist incidents in Africa had been concentrated in Somalia, East Africa and the Maghreb.<sup>2</sup> Beginning in early 2003, the US, in collusion with Algeria, its key regional ally in the GWOT, fabricated a string of false flag 'terrorism' incidents in the Algerian Sahara and across much of the Sahel (Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad) in order to justify the launch of a new or 'second'<sup>3</sup> African front in the GWOT.<sup>4</sup>

As this duplicity underpins current US policy towards Africa, all references to US concerns about terrorism and the GWOT in Africa need to be treated with much circumspection, as we are invariably being confronted with facets of the Bush administration's parallel 'information war' (Keenan, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b).

## 2) AFRICOM's 'Paradigm Shift' from the GWOT to the 'Security-Development' Discourse<sup>5</sup>

The fabricated Sahara-Sahelian 'front' in the GWOT provided Washington with the justification for its militarisation of Africa as well as the ideological rationales

of General James (Jim) Jones, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) and Commander of EUCOM, and other EUCOM commanders in Stuttgart and at the Pentagon as they laid the ground plans for ARICOM.

However, the authorization of AFRICOM in December 2006 coincided with what, on face value, appears to have been a significant 'paradigm shift' in American military thinking in the form of the US military's adoption, during 2005-6, of the security-development discourse.

How and why has the US military made this paradigm shift? The 'how' is very easy to answer: the new 'security-development' discourse was shipped more or less wholesale across the Atlantic from Downing Street to Washington, following the publication of the report of Tony Blair's Commission for Africa in March 2005.<sup>6</sup> In an analysis of 'New Labour's' policies on Africa, Rita Abrahamsen (2005) revealed how Blair's securitisation of Africa enabled Britain's (and Europe's) dealings and interactions with the continent to shift from a discourse of 'development/humanitarianism' to one of 'risk/fear/security' in such a way that Africa was increasingly mentioned in the context of the 'war on terrorism' and the dangers it posed to Britain and the international community. A key element in 'New Labour's' analysis of Africa was the interpretation of poverty and underdevelopment as dangerous (Abrahamsen, 2005). By emphasizing the threat posed by the marginalised and excluded, Africa's 'dangerous classes', and the role of aid and 'development' in containing this threat, the British government succeeded in merging the development and security agendas so that the two have become almost indistinguishable. By means of such pronouncements, Africa and underdevelopment have been subtly shifted 'away from the categories of "development/ humanitarianism" and along a continuum of "risk/threat"' (Abrahamsen, 2005). The securitisation of Africa

has been further promoted by drawing attention to the association between underdevelopment and conflict and the various discourses on 'failed states', which, in no time at all, were linked directly to the 9/11 attacks. It took only a few steps – from 'poverty' and 'underdevelopment' to 'conflict', 'fear', 'failed states' and the black holes of the 'ungoverned areas' – to recast Africa as the 'Heart of Darkness' and to transpose the GWOT into its vast ungoverned spaces: the DRC, Sudan, Somalia and EUCOM's infamous 'swamp of terror', the Sahara.

The 'why' is also easy to answer: it enabled the US military to substitute the overly aggressive, increasingly less credible, global war on terror-orientated and militaristic image that it had been displaying towards Africa for one that enabled President Bush to announce AFRICOM as a new command that:

*will enhance our efforts to help bring peace and security to the people of Africa and promote our common goals of development, health, education, democracy, and economic growth in Africa.*<sup>7</sup>

Such non-aggressive, seemingly un-militaristic and anthropologically seductive language, emphasising AFRICOM's development-humanitarian aims and stressing its goals of strengthening civilian agencies and civilian capacities, now characterises all US government references to and descriptions of AFRICOM. Sean McFate (2008a) shows how in this discourse, security and development are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing:

*To deny the sanctuary in which armed groups incubate and thereby stave off internal conflict, governments must address the root causes of public grievances. These grievances are development based; therefore, the security solution must be development based.*

This shift in Washington's alleged concern for the 'development' of Africa is illustrated nowhere better than in the difference between the EUCOM and AFRICOM websites and associated publications before and after 2006 (when AFRICOM took over most of Africa from EUCOM). Whereas most news stories and pictures prior to 2005-6 reflected the US military's concerns with the GWOT, counter-terrorism and the associated training of African militaries, AFRICOM's more recent top stories (4-11 August 2008)<sup>8</sup> cover military involvement in medical training, provision of safe water, care of livestock, civilian capacity-building, etc.

### *The Hidden Face of AFRICOM*

Since 2005-6, justification for the US's militarisation of the continent has shifted from the GWOT and straightforward counterterrorism to the more humanitarian security-development discourse. The fundamental question with regard to AFRICOM is whether its website news headlines and its 'peace and development' oriented mission statements really do reflect a paradigm shift in US military thinking, or whether they are merely good PR, a further twist in Washington's 'information war': a deceptive mystification process that enables AFRICOM to be portrayed as more benign than it really is.

The answer is found on the ground – in Africa. Whether couched in the language of the GWOT or the security-development discourse, local-regional outbreaks of civil unrest and rebellion ('incursions') by minority-cum-opposition groups, frequently provoked by local US-supported politico-military elites, continue to help legitimise the US military presence in Africa and are being dealt with by military means. Far from bringing 'peace and security' to Africa, AFRICOM is directly instrumental in creating conflict and insecurity. For example, on 7 January 2007, less than three

weeks after President Bush used such soothing words in authorising AFRICOM, US forces killed an unknown number, certainly hundreds, of Somali fighters and innocent civilians trapped in the 'killing zone' between US-backed Ethiopian forces to the north and west, US-backed Kenyan forces to the south, and the sea, reminding the world that the US presence sought to resolve conflicts in Africa by brute military intervention. Post-2006 interventions by US troops in the Sahara-Sahel have been widely documented (Keenan, 2006d, 2008b, 2009b). In May 2006, for example, US Special Forces, flown secretly from Stuttgart to Tamanrasset, accompanied Algeria's secret military services into northern Mali to give support to the Algerian-orchestrated Tuareg rebellion designed to destabilise northern Mali. In February 2008, US Special Forces (possibly contractors – PMCs) accompanied Malian troops on a vindictive raid on a desert town in the same area, at the same time as AFRICOM's commander, General William 'Kip' Ward and US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs, Theresa Whelan, were promoting AFRICOM at a RUSI<sup>9</sup> meeting in London and at which Ms Whelan denied the presence of US 'troops' in northern Mali.

Exactly one month after the Somali killings, the first shots were fired in Niger by Tuareg rebels in what has now escalated into a region-wide conflagration (Keenan, 2008a). The multiple rebellions stem from the US's destabilisation of the region through its GWOT. In Niger especially, US-trained troops have been responsible for appalling human rights abuses and atrocities in a government-directed 'ethnocide' against the Tuareg (Keenan, 2008a, 2009b). The one obstacle to a peaceful settlement of the conflict is Niger's US-backed President, Mamadou Tandja. One wag of Washington's little finger would bring Tanja to the peace table. But no such wags have been forthcoming, for the simple reason that

the regional insecurity caused by the rebellion has furthered US strategic interests, namely that such insecurity justifies AFRICOM and the US militarisation of Africa.

### *The Consequences of AFRICOM*

Does AFRICOM have any prospect of bringing peace, security and development to Africa? While AFRICOM's commanders have been preaching 'security and development', their operations on the ground have so far created insecurity and undermined democratic expressions of civil society. Indeed, the establishment of AFRICOM reflects the Bush administration's primary reliance on the use of military force to pursue its strategic interests. The progressive militarisation of Africa since 2002 has three serious consequences for the peoples of Africa. Firstly, it will militarise US relations with Africa and militarise numerous African countries which, in turn, will be more likely to use force in obtaining their own objectives. Secondly, the presence of the US base at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti and military facilitative arrangements elsewhere on the continent, along with the encouragement given to domestic governments' to use force in preference to more democratic means will create more militants and hence unrest and insecurity, as we are seeing in most countries of North Africa and the Sahel. Thirdly, the US administration's primary reliance on its military has effectively usurped the role of the State Department and specialised agencies such as USAID, whose skills and experience are better suited to achieving the 'peace', 'security' and 'development' that AFRICOM claims to espouse.

### *The Implications of AFRICOM for the Peoples of Africa*

AFRICOM is showing signs of serving to protect unpopular, repressive regimes supportive of US interests. In the case of North Africa and the Sahel regions, the

US military intervention of the last 5-6 years has served to reinforce the authoritarian and repressive methods of states in the region, not only through the provision of more high-technology surveillance, weapons and security systems, but also by emboldening the state security services in their abuse of power. One prominent local citizen in southern Algeria expressed the views of many when he said: 'Now that they [the Algerian authorities] have the Americans behind them, they have become even bigger bullies' (Keenan, 2009b). The US intervention is thus prolonging and perhaps even entrenching fundamentally undemocratic regimes, while weakening or delaying the development of autonomous and more democratic civil societies.

Social scientists unfamiliar with the new 'security development' discourse may find its emphasis on 'security' and 'development' seductive. What more does Africa need? However, as Abrahamsen (2005) has already pointed out, London and Washington have used this discourse to link Africa's underdevelopment with the threat of terrorism. And the regimes of Africa have followed suit: many are now using the pretext of the GWOT to repress legitimate opposition by linking it with 'terrorism'. US-backed regimes across the Sahel have provoked elements of civil society, usually minority groups of one sort or another, into civil unrest or taking up arms. Indeed, such actions across the Sahel have come close to making the GWOT a self-fulfilling prophecy. Moreover, and as Abrahamsen (2005) also emphasised, the link between underdevelopment and terrorism has served to generate a negative image of fear around the continent, and has created suspicion and hostility towards its people, with a consequent deterioration in race relations, stricter European-wide immigration controls and asylum laws<sup>10</sup> and the erosion of civil liberties in the face of perceived terrorist threats.

Above all, the 'security-development' discourse explicitly links Africa's poor, her 'dangerous classes' as Abrahamsen calls them, the marginalised and excluded to international security 'problems' and 'terrorism' (Abrahamsen, 2005).

### 3) Misconceptions About 'Global/Globalisation'

Abrahamsen & Williams (2008) locate their timely focus on Africa's security governance within the dynamics and structures underpinning and driving the processes of privatisation, which, in turn, are located within the changing nature of contemporary capitalism. The issue is punctuated liberally with references to aspects of both neo-liberalism and globalisation. Indeed, it would be strange if that were not so, as neo-liberalism has been the root cause of many, perhaps most, of Africa's political-economic and social problems over the last generation or so: weak/'failed' states, poor governance, underdevelopment, marginalisation, exclusion, poverty, etc., while it is the nature of contemporary capitalism, in its 'globalised' form, which enables us to understand much of what I have already said about Africa's strategic importance to the US.

However, there are two aspects of neo-liberalism and contemporary capitalism to which I would like to draw attention, as they have an important bearing on our understanding of security in Africa and how we address it.

#### *The Implosion of Capitalism*

My first problem with the term globalisation, especially in its neo-liberal economic context, is that I believe it is mistakenly associated, almost synonymously, with the idea of the 'expansion' of capitalism, both socially and geographically, in some sort of 'ultimate', 'total' or 'global' sense. Globalisation is

understood as meaning literally 'global', in the sense that capitalism (now triumphant) has or is in the process of finally permeating or expanding into all corners and to all peoples on the planet. While it is almost certainly true that everybody on the planet is now touched in one way or another by the world capitalist system, being 'touched' or 'affected' by the world capitalist system is not the same thing as being 'part' of that system, either as producer or consumer.

However, what we have been seeing, most noticeably since the early 1980s, during the age of neo-liberalism and the increasingly unfettered march of its destructive forces, is not so much the expansion of capitalism, at least not socially and spatially, but its implosion, as increasing numbers of people in almost all parts of the world have been marginalised and excluded, as neither producers nor consumers, from the capitalist system. Ankie Hoogvelt (1997, 2001), who wrote about this in the mid-1990s, reckoned that as many as 52% of the world's population was excluded.

Hoogvelt's exclusion has nowhere been greater than in Africa, where poverty levels and extreme maldistribution of wealth have forced increasing numbers of the continent's population to resort to the vestigial and transformed elements of their precapitalist formations, and other means which have more than a passing bearing on the rise of the private security companies (PSCs) for survival. It is these social elements, the progeny of a colonial past and neo-liberal present in which those two key agents of western, not global, capitalism – the World Bank and IMF – have played a lead role, that comprise the bulk of Africa's 'dangerous classes' against whom the better off elements of the population are minded to ensure their security. It would have been interesting if the contributors to this issue had been able to show us the correlation between the contribution of PSCs to each African country's labour

market and that country's Gini coefficient (a measure of wealth distribution). The fact that South Africa<sup>11</sup> has by far the largest PSC market in the world (as a percentage of GDP; Abrahamsen, 2008) as well as one of the world's highest Gini coefficients, is as much a relic of the apartheid era as it is the outcome of the present government's pro-business neo-liberal economic policies. Indeed, the combination of the government's neo-liberal Growth, Employment, and Redistribution Program (GEAR) combined with government redistribution programmes that have favoured an emergent class of wealthy black entrepreneurs has ensured an increase in the economic and social inequality that was inherent in the apartheid system. Tony Twine, an economist at Econometrix (Johannesburg), claimed in 2006 South Africa's distribution of income was worse than anywhere in the world, with the exception of Venezuela and Brazil.<sup>12</sup> Is it any wonder that South Africa leads the world in PSCs?

Security and the security industry need to be located more firmly in the implosion of neo-liberal capitalism since the late 1970s and early 1980s. Two dimensions of this implosion are of critical relevance to global security issues. One, as Hoogvelt and others have noted, is the increasing marginalisation, indeed exclusion, of increasing numbers of the world's population from the capitalist system. The other is the current crisis caused by western capitalism's reliance for its profitability on what Walden Bello (2008) has called its 'financialization'.

### *Differential Asset Bases*

This brings me back to the question of the changing nature of contemporary capitalism, especially the notion of its globalisation. As an economic concept, globalisation refers primarily to the removal of barriers to capital flows and is a process which picked up momentum after the 1970s. However, the world

economy is not as 'globalised' as our colloquial usage of the term might suggest. Let me explain.

The underlying driver of capitalism is wealth creation, which is ultimately measured in assets, which, we assume, can be converted into capital in the form of money and transferred around the world as capital flows. In practice, things are not as straightforward as that, for the simple reason that the 'meaning' of 'asset' differs between national/regional markets, making the world's economic financial system far less globalised than we assume it to be.

The world capitalist system comprises a number of regional/national 'components'. For simplicity's sake, I will ignore the Russian and Japanese 'components', the 'global South' and the ASEAN and deal only with the 'West', in which the financial markets and systems are distinguished from those of continental Europe, and the 'Orient', which comprises Muslim countries, especially those of the Gulf region, India and China. However, these components are far from 'integrated' into one 'globalised' economic financial system in so far as they are characterised, amongst other things, by their differential asset bases, which are a function of the different financial instruments used in their national/regional markets which, in turn, are to some extent culturally determined.

What does this mean and what are its implications? Take, for example, Muslim countries whose financial/legal systems are based on the principles of *shari'a*. *Shari'a* law precludes 'making money from money' as, for example, in the form of interest, with the consequence that many of the financial instruments used in the West, such as 'shorting', buying on 'margin', hedge funds and derivatives which have an interest component and even fixed income instruments such as bonds, are precluded. There are certain limited, complicated and expensive

ways of circumventing these restrictions, such as 'swaps' that are arranged outside the region. Thus, to take a hypothetical example, if a speculator wanted to take advantage of his/her knowledge/intuition that housing bubbles in both, say, the USA and Abu Dhabi were about to burst, he/she could use a considerable array of *instruments* to 'short' building, housing, mortgage and other such stocks on the US market and thus contribute to, perhaps even trigger, and certainly profit from the bubble burst. In Abu Dhabi, however, that would be impossible, except perhaps through extreme and expensive 'swap-type' arrangements probably made 'offshore', as there are effectively no such instruments to manipulate the market in Abu Dhabi in the same way as in the US. The most an investor can do with such knowledge is not to invest in the Abu Dhabi market! The net result is that the Abu Dhabi market is left relatively stable.

The use of many of the instruments used in Western, especially US-UK markets, is also severely limited in both China and India, not because of *shari'a* compliance (these not being Muslim countries), but because their legal-regulatory systems, which are partly culturally determined, restrict them.

The existence of such differential asset bases means that individual, corporate and sovereign players in these different regional/national markets operate very differently within the supposedly 'globalised system'. In particular, it means that there are major limits on the extent to which they can *financialize* their systems as a route to increased profitability.

The world economic system is 'globalised' to the extent that what happens in one part of the world has implications in another. But there is nothing very new about that, except for the changes in 'real time' afforded by accelerated communications systems. For instance, when the

Phoenicians over-exploited the *Murex* shells of the Levant coast, which were the source of their monopoly on the much sought after Tyrrhenian purple dye, they sought new deposits of the shell at Mogador, on the Moroccan Atlantic coast, thus radically shifting the economic orientations of the known world at the time. The current implosion and threatened 'meltdown' of much of the West's financial system and associated asset base is leading to a similar geographical and socio-political re-orientation in the contemporary world economy. There is a difference, however, in that this current reorientation, broadly from the West to the Orient, is not being facilitated by the 'globalisation' of the world economic system. On the contrary, it is a consequence of its fundamentally 'unglobalised', differential asset bases.

Western capitalism's assets are based on, transacted through and measured by a range of financial instruments which simply do not exist, or only in simple form, in other parts of the world, such as the Orient. Asset wealth, the basis of the world's economic system, is measured essentially in commodities, which are a function of commodity prices. But how are these 'prices' derived? The first difficulty is that we are dealing almost entirely with 'futures' prices' which are largely determined by traders who rely heavily, although not exclusively, on inventories, which, in turn, are notoriously opaque. That is especially true of the hydrocarbons and metals markets; less so in the grain and other such markets. The second difficulty is that most of their purchases, which are in 'futures', are bought 'on margin' and/or 'hedged' through a range of derivative-based financial instruments, which are often extremely complex and which simply do not exist in most Oriental markets. Indeed, the complexity and 'sophistication' of the instruments available in the West is such that it has taken traders a matter of metaphorical minutes to devise means of circumventing the recently

imposed ban on the 'shorting' of financial stocks!<sup>13</sup> The West's system of financial capitalism is based on financial instruments that have enabled the massive, mind-boggling leveraging of assets. In short, they are bought on 'borrowed' money, or rather money (assets) which does not exist. Indeed, the creation of almost unlimited 'debt' (as currently seen most spectacularly in the western mortgage markets) has been traded (until the current implosion of the western banking system) as an asset, but through instruments that are so complex and opaque that few banks even know the value of their 'debt'.

The problem with creating these dubious ('fuzzy') financial instruments and using them to invest in the financial sector, as Walden Bello (2008) recently wrote, is that 'it is tantamount to squeezing value out of already created value. It may create profit ... but it doesn't create new value.'

Even if we try and assess holdings in stock (and commodity) markets, we are likely to find that they have been bought 'on margin' and have been so leveraged that they may ultimately be worth little more than the paper the contract was written on. Indeed, this is what we are currently witnessing as central banks, mostly western and notably the US Federal Reserve, try to ease the process of 'de-leveraging' and prevent the whole house of cards from tumbling down. In short, western capitalism's financialization had reached the absurdity of being based increasingly on the creation of debt that became re-denominated and traded as an asset, through derivatives that were increasingly highly leveraged!

In the Orient, such manipulation (leveraging, buying on margin, shorting, etc.) is only possible through comparatively simple instruments and to a very limited extent. For example, Saudi Aramco, the world's largest oil supplier, does not trade derivatives, insisting on 'cash only', except, quite possibly, for a

few highly credit-worthy exceptions. That is true, at least in general terms, throughout most Indian, Chinese and other Gulf markets. If I want to short an Indian or Chinese stock, it is virtually impossible for me to do so.

I have so far limited my argument about the limits of globalisation to the differential use of financial instruments and their impacts on capital flows. What, it might be asked, of 'cash' in the form of currencies and their transferability? Without going into depth, let me merely point out that even here, at the most liquid end of the market, global flows are impeded by a surprising number of restrictions in the form of non-convertible currencies and restrictions on the movement of investment capital, especially in the form of limitations on the repatriation of profits.

I have raised these points not merely to 'nit-pick' over what I regard as the often analytically meaningless usage of the term globalisation, but to encourage more focus and debate on the contemporary nature of capitalism and the implications that the current implosion of Western capitalism and the reorientation of global assets eastwards has for Africa, especially now that Africa is becoming sandwiched increasingly between the imperial interests of both the US and China. The last thirty years of capitalism, far from being 'globalised', have seen the world's financial markets structured and operating through a quite different array of financial instruments and under quite different legal-regulatory systems. Their respective routes to profitability have therefore differed accordingly, with the outcome, in the form of the collapse of the West's financialization pathway, likely to have significant implications for the way in which future dealings on the African continent are undertaken.

#### 4) The Lesser of Two Evils

Sean McFate is a well-known proponent of US militarisation and the security-

development discourse (McFate, 2008a). However, his Briefing on the 'Outsourcing the Making of Militaries: DynCorp' (McFate, 2008b) raises what is probably the most important point in this volume.

AFRICOM is faced by two major problems. One is that no African country, apart perhaps from Liberia, is prepared to house its HQ; for the time being, it will therefore remain in Stuttgart. The second and more important problem, addressed by McFate, is that AFRICOM has a huge mandate but is without the means to accomplish it. As McFate confirms, no dedicated or new military units will be created for AFRICOM. Nor will AFRICOM be able to 'borrow' troops because of the huge demand for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. If that is not bad enough for the Pentagon, the House of Representatives' Appropriations Committee believes that 'traditional U.S. military operations are not an appropriate response to most or many of the challenges facing Africa' and accordingly wants to cut AFRICOM's requested budget of \$390 million to just \$80 million.<sup>14</sup> In the wake of Wall Street's current implosion, AFRICOM will be lucky to see even \$80 million.

We thus have two illustrations of the combination of crises now facing the US: a spectacular case of imperial over-reach combined with the implosion of its financial system.

How then will AFRICOM accomplish its mission? The answer, according to McFate, is what EUCOM and AFRICOM have been doing in Africa since at least early 2004, by outsourcing it to PMCs, whose propensity towards corruption (as seen in Iraq) and disregard of human rights are part of the package. That, as McFate knows from his own personal involvement with PMCs, is exactly what PMCs have been waiting for:

*This [PMC] multi-billion dollar industry is looking for the next US-sponsored conflict market once the Iraq and Afghanistan 'bubble bursts,' and they see that market as Africa, a continent of crisis (McFate, 2008b).*

If McFate is correct, and all the signs suggest that he is, we are thus facing the likely privatisation of AFRICOM's mission. While that is in keeping with the US administration's commitment to neo-liberalism, it opens Africa up to the potentially horrific prospect of these mercenary forces, and not only American ones, turning Africa into their own 'plunder economy' where their self-interests will be served and their fortunes made through the promotion and maintenance of conflict.

Will it come to that? The crisis currently working its way through western capitalism's financial system, and quite possibly bankrupting the USA (at least in a technical sense) may mean that future US budgets may not stretch to the luxury of PMCs in Africa. That may, in a sense, let Africa off the imperial hook. But there is also the prospect that US budget constraints will encourage US PMCs to look towards Africa's 'plunder economy' to make themselves more financially 'self-reliant'. And that also means even more unaccountable.

However, this crisis of western capitalism has other equally serious consequences for Africa. These are that the Orient, with its 'hard assets' (cash, arms, commodities, etc.) will become even more attractive to Africa's rulers (as distinct from their subjects) than the offerings of the West, which are backed by a range of credits, loans, conditionalities and all that 'fuzzy stuff' (discredited financial instruments). Indeed, this process is already well under way with the Saudis and Chinese providing hard asset payment for leases/purchases of land in Ethiopia, Sudan, DRC and elsewhere. If that process continues to develop in the

way that it has already started, it is conceivable in a few years time that AFRICOM will be looked back on as the lesser of two evils.

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## Endnotes

1. The current GWOT was launched after 9/11 and is distinguished from the Reagan administration's war on 'international terrorism' (Paull, 1982).

2. In 1993, 18 US soldiers were killed in Mogadishu. US military sources subsequently and incorrectly defined this incident as an act of 'terrorism'. In 1998, some 200 people were killed when US embassies were bombed in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. In 2002, a hotel was bombed in Mombassa, allegedly by al-Qaeda 'terrorists', and two surface-to-air missiles fired at an Israel-bound airliner. Northern Algeria has been subjected to both Islamist and state terrorism since the early 1990s, while there have been incidents in Morocco (bombings in Casablanca on 16 May 2003) and Tunisia (el-Ghriba synagogue, April 2002).

3. In his State of the Union address of 29 January 2002, President Bush spoke of the expansion of the 'war on terror' to new fronts. Since then, the term 'front', and especially the term 'second front', has become almost synonymous with the attempt to globalise the GWOT. Afghanistan is usually understood to be the first front. The term 'second front' has been applied at one time or another to most parts of the world, including SE Asia, Iraq, Latin America (in the context of the election of left-wing presidents in Brazil and Ecuador, and in terms of the FARC campaign in Colombia) and, after 2003, the Sahara. In the latter case the 'first' front is sometimes understood to be the Horn of Africa and East Africa; see, for example, Clays (2003).

4. The front's two major initiatives were the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI) of 2004 and the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI) of 2005. The later increased the countries involved from 4 (Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad) to 9 with the inclusion of Senegal, Nigeria, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia and thus linked Africa's two largest oil and gas producing states, Algeria and Nigeria, through an architecture that was uniquely American.

5. Much of this section on AFRICOM is taken from Keenan (2008b)

6. <http://www.commissionforafrica.org/english/report/introduction.html#report>

7. The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 'President Bush Creates a Department of Defense Unified Combatant Command for Africa', 6 February 2007.

8. <http://www.africom.mil/AboutAFRICOM.asp>

9. Royal United Services Institute, London, 18 February 2008.

10. On 18 June 2008, the European Parliament voted 369-197 (with 106 abstentions) in favour of the draconian 'Return Directive'. The measure allows undocumented migrants to be held in detention centres for up to 18 months and banned from EU territory for five years.

11. And surrounding countries such as Lesotho, Botswana and Namibia.

12. Reported in the *Wall Street Journal*. Quoted by Laura Starita, 'Can Africa learn to share its wealth?', *Philanthropy Action*, 10 August 2006.

13. For example, by shorting the FTSE 100 Index future and then buying all stocks except the financials!

14. *Inside Defense*, [www.insidedefense.com/](http://www.insidedefense.com/) quoted by David Axe, RIP, AFRICOM? 11 September 2008; <http://blog.wired.com/defense/2008/09/rip-africom.html>

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