

# Global Flows: Terror, Oil, and Strategic Philanthropy

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**Abstract:** U.S. involvement in Africa is growing following threats of terrorism and interruptions in oil production and because of desires by foreign corporations to expand their activities on the continent. The response of American policymakers has been to establish a stronger military presence that will engage in counterterrorism initiatives and police oil installations. The goals and extent of this buildup, and the ideology legitimating it, are new. They are departures from Cold War policies. Similarly, the response of American business leaders to weaknesses in the infrastructure and political order of African states leads them to establish their own forms of community development, known as strategic philanthropy, so as to protect and expand local markets. Despite these major developments, the media are not informing the public. This article examines the implications of these military and business initiatives for African nations and the reasons for lack of information about them.

**Résumé:** L'implication américaine en Afrique se renforce aujourd'hui, suite aux menaces terroristes et aux interruptions de la production de pétrole, aussi bien qu'à

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l'intérêt d'entreprises étrangères d'étendre leurs activités sur le continent. La stratégie adoptée par les politiques américains en réponse à ces développements a été d'établir une présence militaire plus importante, pour participer aux initiatives antiterroristes et à la protection des installations pétrolières. Les objectifs et la portée de ces actions ainsi que l'idéologie sous-jacente sont nouveaux. Ils constituent une stratégie différente, se démarquant de celles adoptées lors de la guerre froide. De même, la réponse des chefs d'entreprise américains aux faiblesses de l'infrastructure et de l'ordre politique des états africains amènent les politiques américains à établir leur propre forme de développement communautaire, connu sous le nom de philanthropie stratégique, et destiné à protéger et étendre les marchés locaux. En dépit de ces développements majeurs, les médias n'informent pas le public. Cet essai examine les implications de ces initiatives militaires et économiques pour les nations africaines ainsi que les raisons du manque d'information à leur sujet.

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AT THIS MOMENT of international crisis, Africa is assuming a new and critical role in global affairs. Contrary to popular opinion, United States involvement in Africa is not continuing its post-Cold War decline. In profound ways, the opposite is the case. American policymakers and business leaders see in Africa a special set of threats, a special set of dangers, and a special set of challenges. This essay focuses on three elements in the U.S. response to these perceived threats and challenges, and it looks especially at what this response means for people on the African continent itself.

First, American policymakers perceive a double danger: the threat of terrorism and the risk of an interrupted oil supply. Their response is to establish a new and more substantial kind of military presence in Africa. The quality of the response, and particularly the political logic that legitimates it, is different from anything that has come before. This article examines the consequences of this response for African nations, especially the security and political issues they raise.

Second, corporate leaders see great opportunities for profit in Africa, but they also see special problems: weaknesses of infrastructure and political order as they relate to large-scale business endeavors. In response, corporations are creating their own kind of interventions. They are using strategic philanthropy so they can relate directly to local communities and civil society within Africa. This means they are making their own independent contributions to community development. This article asks what the implications of these major business initiatives are for African societies.

The third concern is with the American media and its response to the major changes just described. With few exceptions, television networks and newspapers are paying little attention to these new forms of military and business activity. It is important to examine that silence and to ask why it exists and what its implications are for the future.

## The Growing Importance of Africa in U.S. Policy

The year 2002 marked a major post–Cold War shift in U.S. relations to Africa. In that year, officials of both the Pentagon and the State Department defined Africa as a significant potential threat to American national security (Volman 2003b:573; Goldstein 2004). Earlier, the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Africa had observed that the policy of putting Africa on the back burner could no longer continue, and later some of Washington’s most experienced Africa policymakers confirmed at a bipartisan meeting that the continent was being seen in a new way (U.S. House of Representatives 2001; CSIS 2004). The reasons for elevating Africa to the level of national security threat were terrorism and oil.<sup>1</sup>

The case for terrorism was made by Paul Wolfowitz, the deputy secretary of defense, when he addressed military officers and government officials from forty-two African countries. He confirmed that Africa is growing in importance, and he stressed that it is imperative to build institutions, including military institutions, which in Wolfowitz’s worldview play a vital role. To Africa’s military leaders he said that he “emphatically disagreed” with people who apply historical and cultural determinism to the future of countries: “I believe that strengthening institutions in Africa has got to be the key to moving forward,” because African states must participate effectively in defeating the “scourge of global terrorism” (Wolfowitz 2004).

The case for oil as a national security issue was made by both the assistant secretary of state for Africa, Walter Kansteiner, and the deputy assistant secretary of defense for African affairs, Michael Westphal. Their moves were critical, because the term “U.S. national security” opens the way to the use of military approaches for protecting oil production (Volman 2003b:573). The events of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent war in Iraq gave emphasis to the fact that this country cannot do without external oil supplies and that African oil and natural gas are critical elements in the supply chain.

## Oil and National Security

The United States consumes one-quarter of the world’s oil supply—twenty million of the eighty million barrels produced every day. Much of it—13 to 18 percent—comes from West and Central Africa. The U.S. National Intelligence Council predicts that within ten years it may reach 25 percent, with most coming from Nigeria, Angola, Gabon, and the newcomer, Equatorial Guinea (Ebel 2004:114; Goldwyn & Morrison 2004:15; *Africa Action* 2003). Currently, due to warfare in the Middle East, Nigeria produces more oil than Iraq, and Angola produces half that amount (U.S. Department of Energy 2004).

The amount invested in the oil trade is immense. Last year the United

States spent \$17.8 billion on African oil. This amounted to 70 percent of all U.S. purchases from Africa (U.S. Department of Commerce 2004). The U.S. does not just buy the oil, however; in many ways it is dependent on African oil. In the past ten years, U.S. oil companies invested \$30 to \$40 billion in West and Central African oil operations, an investment they wish to protect. If Angolan or Nigerian supplies are disrupted there are few, if any, replacements outside the Persian Gulf. More than one hundred thousand jobs in the U.S. are linked to African oil—many of them in Texas, Louisiana, and California (Goldwyn & Morrison 2004:8,16). And the second leading U.S. export to Africa, worth \$717.3 million annually, is oil and gas equipment (U.S. Department of Commerce 2004:9).

The main problem is that the supply is constantly vulnerable. Oil theft, vandalism, seizures of oil facilities, and riots all reduce oil supplies. Disruptions and strikes, such as those in Nigeria in 2003, have decreased production by as much as eight hundred thousand barrels a day (Goldwyn & Morrison 2004:16). Illegal siphoning provides militias with a way to secure money to purchase arms with which to engage in criminal activities or protest various inequities. Foreign oil workers are kidnapped and held hostage to meet the demands of dissidents. In Angola's province of Cabinda and Nigeria's Niger Delta—the two largest oil-producing regions on the continent—intense anger has erupted in violence against the oil industry and national governments over the unfair sharing of oil revenue, unemployment, and the destruction of the living and productive environment.<sup>2</sup> The well-known writer Ken Saro-Wiwa is one of many activists who lost their lives for engaging in such protests in the Niger Delta.

Local military forces are often used to quell this conflict, but weak governments are not able to bring stability. The consequences may be higher gas prices for consumers, or worse, discontinued operations by oil companies because they cannot function in conditions of extreme high-risk or tolerate conditions that eliminate profit and undermine their investments (Goldwyn & Morrison 2004:12–15).

The oil companies want to regularize the oil supply, and an argument has been made that good governance and transparency on the African side are the key. Many experts worry that the U.S. does not have an effective energy policy with respect to Africa, or the political will to create one. They want an energy policy that is tied to conditions that are as strict as those of the Millennium Challenge Account, but this is unlikely to happen (Ebel 2004:114–16,125–26). Both a U.S. Senate committee and Transparency International have drawn attention to this problem, pointing out that oil companies themselves are not transparent. Corruption in the form of bribes, unpublished fees, and contributions plague every level of the African oil industry, from Western oil executives, to middlemen, to local officials (Stancich 2004).

Corruption goes even further. During Senate hearings in July 2004 it was revealed that a U.S. bank turned a blind eye to the flow of suspicious

money in the accounts of leaders of an oil-rich African country and in violation of Patriot Act provisions. Leaders of Equatorial Guinea had some sixty accounts and CDs amounting to between \$400 and \$700 million in a Washington bank—accounts that were closed by the bank a few weeks after they were exposed. It was also revealed that multinational oil companies engaged in questionable payments—at least \$1 million—to officials of Equatorial Guinea and their family members, and they invested in joint business ventures with the president, high officials, and again their family members. Until the 2004 report, official U.S. government agencies ignored these under-the-counter transactions. A year before, in 2003, the U.S. reopened its embassy in Equatorial Guinea despite having closed it eight years earlier in protest against appalling human rights violations by the current leader (U.S. Senate 2004:3–17). The embassy was reestablished in response to oil industry pressures; more than three thousand Americans work in Equatorial Guinea, almost all in the oil sector. The new embassy is housed in a small villa owned by an uncle of the president (*Agence France-Presse* 2003). While short-term demands may dictate practices such as these, the long-term consequences, as history shows—as it did in the Congo and Somalia but for different reasons—can be nothing short of disastrous and can produce levels of conflict that endure for decades.

Despite experts' complaints that the U.S. does not have an effective energy policy for Africa, the administration does have a *de facto* agenda that resides primarily within the Pentagon. Providing energy security and maintaining open sea lanes are two of the components that underpin this policy.<sup>3</sup> Three Pentagon officials have expressed concerns about insecurities in offshore oil-producing regions of West Africa and offshore East Africa where piracy and small arms smuggling are threats. One is U.S. Navy Secretary Gordon England, who stressed that "security, stability and reconstruction operations are needed" in the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea, and that with the assistance of its NATO allies the U.S. "will be there to help." A second is General Charles Wald, deputy commander of the U.S. European Command (EUCOM), who is reported to spend half his time on Africa-related issues and who indicated that the U.S. is prepared to assist in strengthening African navies. In discussing the strategic interest of U.S. oil imports from West Africa, General Wald was quoted as saying, "You start saying to yourself, 'I'd like to have some forward bases in Africa.'... The world has changed. We're going to have to make our own security. The halcyon days are over." The third is EUCOM's director of plans and policy, Major General Jonathon Gration, who expressed concerns over the inability of African states to patrol their coastal waters. General Gration indicated that this inability is leading U.S. planners to envision a growing potential for maritime terrorism, although this position is debated.<sup>4</sup>

To address these concerns, the U.S. military is preparing itself and especially preparing African militaries to deal with disruptions in oil operations and provide offshore surveillance. The U.S. Navy is increasing its

presence in the oil region by spending more time sailing along Africa's west coast (Lobe 2003).<sup>5</sup> A U.S. aircraft carrier made a brief visit to the Gulf of Guinea during the summer of 2004 during an extensive naval exercise designed as a show of force. Coast Guard capacities in oil-producing states also are being strengthened. Four Coast Guard cutters and four helicopters were given to Nigeria's navy; one Coast Guard cutter was given to Sao Tome; two boats were given to Ghana; and some small craft went to Madagascar, Djibouti, the Seychelles, and Tunisia. In addition, joint naval exercises are being held, and security training is being given to sailors.<sup>6</sup> These and other oil-policing measures are closely tied to the military's counterterrorism initiatives.

### U.S. Military Operations in Africa

Military spending in the four years following 9/11 has doubled the amount expended in the preceding four years. The total spent or allocated for arms, training, and regional peacekeeping operations that focus primarily on training and arming sub-Saharan militaries in the four-year period from 2002 until the end of 2005 will amount to \$597 million, whereas for 1998–2001 it was \$296 million.<sup>7</sup> At this rate it will take a comparatively few years to equal the \$1.5 billion that some believe was spent during the three decades of the Cold War on arms for African allies (*Africa Action* 2003).

Over and above worries about oil security, this expanded level of funding arises out of identifiable concerns that terrorist activities in African states threaten stability and security elsewhere in the world. The concerns are based on the conviction that support networks for Hezbollah are developing in West Africa, terrorist cells are operating in South Africa, the recent capture of Islamic extremists who entered Niger and Chad from Algeria will lead to further unwanted border crossings from North Africa, and that Osama bin Laden's call to followers to make Nigeria a global priority may come to pass (Ellis 2004; Snyder 2003; Goldwyn & Morrison 2004:14; Goldstein 2004). So important are these new counterterrorism initiatives that the U.S. Armed Forces European Command (EUCOM) was ordered to extend operations into West and central Africa and to consider this region a "priority zone in global counterterrorism efforts" (Goldwyn & Morrison 2004:14).

The amounts of military spending cited in this essay do not represent the full picture. Military activity cannot be reduced to isolated amounts of money in publicly accessible budgets; it is an entire strategy whose funding is dispersed among numerous government bodies and programs. Amounts needed to establish and run a full-scale military base, as we will see below in the case of Djibouti, are not included. Funds to send a U.S. aircraft carrier into the Gulf of Guinea, however briefly, or to donate Coast Guard ships and helicopters to African navies, also are not given. The same is true of projects originating in the State Department, which has awarded con-

tracts to private military contractors for services provided in, for example, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>8</sup> The Pentagon has numerous freestanding programs that supply arms and training and that have separate Africa budgets, but it also has three military commands—U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM), and EUCOM—that divide responsibility for Africa. It is not possible to calculate the entire amount that goes into these operations because spending is embedded within budgets that are not necessarily Africa-specific. Figures for operations are provided below where possible. Otherwise it is possible only to provide some idea of their extent.

One side of the funding picture consists of U.S. efforts to establish its own military presence on African soil. The U.S. government does this in several ways.

First, there are full military bases. It is fairly well known that an entire military base was established in Djibouti in 2002 to oversee counterterrorism activities in the Horn, East Africa, Yemen, and adjacent stretches of the Indian Ocean. It consists of about two thousand military personnel and employees of Kellogg, Brown, and Root, a Halliburton subsidiary (CENTCOM 2004a, 2004b). It is less well known that the Island of Diego Garcia has U.S. weapons stockpiles, airbases, and personnel. It is ignored as an African site because both Mauritius and Great Britain claim sovereignty and because it is used primarily to serve American interests in the Middle East (Volman 2003a). A third base is believed to be in progress in Algeria. According to *Jane's Defence Weekly*, "Washington is quietly building a huge military surveillance base at Tamanrasset" in the south of the country and at the same time is training the Algerian military to engage in counterterrorism maneuvers.<sup>9</sup>

A second military strategy is the securing of access points or jumping off places known as "lily pads." A series of such facilities, technically called "secure co-operation locations," are being established to refuel aircraft, temporarily house soldiers, store equipment, or conduct intelligence operations. They are not full military bases. They are being established at existing African military bases or airfields to provide, in Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's words, "freedom of action" in responding to internal conflicts and to security and terrorist threats, and to allow for temporary occupation by U.S. military personnel when necessary. Access posts for U.S. military operations already are in use, some more heavily than others, at Entebbe Airport in Uganda, as well as in Kenya and in Algeria, as indicated.<sup>10</sup> Numerous other agreements have been signed (with Gabon, Ghana, Morocco, Namibia, Senegal, and Zambia) or are under discussion (with Angola, Botswana, Mali, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, and South Africa). Funds for leasing, equipping, and staffing these posts—a not insignificant amount—are not included here.<sup>11</sup>

A third example of U.S. military presence is the existence of several special programs in southern Africa. These include a special program in

Botswana to train police in antiterrorism tactics and a cooperative arrangement with the South African government to support the war on terror through financial, diplomatic, and law-enforcement activities. Funding by the U.S. for military enhancements and training in these two southern African countries for the three-year period from 2002 to 2004 amounted to roughly \$23.2 million (U.S. Department of State 2004:196–97,256–58).

Finally, there are plans to place between five and seven thousand American troops in up to a dozen African locations. General James Jones, the NATO supreme commander and the commander of EUCOM, stated that two to three thousand of these military people will be placed in West Africa to undertake brief assignments as quick-reaction teams of air, ground, and sea forces (Lobe 2003). Because there are now fewer U.S. troops on the ground in Africa than there were twenty years ago, experts are urging that the number be increased quickly (CSIS 2004:32).

The other side of the funding picture involves the ways in which the U.S. is strengthening African military capabilities. The U.S. government does this through several mechanisms.

First, there are plans to increase African countries' peacekeeping capacities. One of the most dramatic plans, announced in June 2004, is a project to train seventy-five thousand military peacekeepers worldwide, with most coming from African nations. This project is part of the \$660 million Global Peace Operations Initiative to which the U.S. has tentatively committed \$100 million.<sup>12</sup> Second, there are ongoing programs involved in training the military in African countries. From 2002 through the end of 2005 these programs will have spent \$250.6 million. One of the programs trained some two thousand military officers from forty-seven African countries in 2003; at that time similar numbers were projected for 2004 and 2005.<sup>13</sup> Third, there have been joint military exercises in recent years involving ten African countries (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda), and joint naval, air force, and military medical operations (Volman 2003a). Fourth are informational seminars that include networking activities between U.S. and African military officers. These are staged regularly in the U.S. and in Africa by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, an arm of the Pentagon's National Defense University.<sup>14</sup>

A fifth mechanism exists in the form of ongoing weapons supply programs. For the four years 2002–5, \$211 million was allocated to give weapons to, or authorize purchases of weapons by, African countries through the Pentagon.<sup>15</sup> Sixth, there are two new counterterrorism initiatives for the whole Sahel region, for which \$225 million is being spent. They are the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Initiative, a \$125 million training and weapons-provision project involving nine Western African countries (Mali, Mauritania, Chad, Niger, Senegal, Nigeria, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco) on which \$7.75 million has been spent so far; and the East Africa Counter-Terrorism Initiative (EACTI), a \$100 million–project



designed to carry out military training for security and control of people and goods at borders and along the coast and involving five East African countries (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania) (Pope 2004).<sup>16</sup> Seventh, a special Africa Regional Fund supports counterrorism training and assistance in a select number of African countries using initiatives not included in the programs listed above. It was authorized in 2004 to spend \$3 million of a \$12 million budget (U.S. Department of State 2004). And finally, the U.S. provides funding to United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa which also is separate from the direct military assistance mentioned above.

There are puzzling inconsistencies in these efforts to ensure stability and security, just as there are contradictions in U.S. policy with respect to transparency in the oil industry. One of them is that efforts to promote stability and strengthen the African military by providing arms, military training, and peacekeeping operations are undermined by America's failure to help block a huge small arms trade that operates illegally in Africa. At the same time that the U.S. builds military capacities, it leaves in place the conditions for the emergence of illegal militia and criminals and the violence they perpetrate. Former Assistant Secretary of State Chester Crocker calls this violence an "outrage" that will not end until the U.S. joins cooperative international attempts to bring it to a halt (CSIS 2004:30).

## A Global Military

A profound ideological divide exists between those who favor a Pentagon-centered involvement and those who want U.S.–Africa relations to include a broader combination of diplomacy, humanitarian aid, and poverty eradication. A recent Heritage Foundation report favors the Pentagon and maintains that if the military gives Africa high priority, U.S. political leaders and policymakers will have access to more knowledge of the continent, better intelligence, more awareness of African issues, and greater success if and when Washington needs to intervene to protect its interests. To these ends, the report proposes that CENTCOM create a subregional command structure for Africa—something that does not now exist (Carafano & Gardiner 2003).

A stronger rationale, one that takes a global perspective favoring military domination in foreign policy determinations, is the one put forth by Thomas Barnett of the Naval War College. Early in 2003, *Esquire Magazine* published an excerpt from Barnett's soon-to-be-published book, *The Pentagon's New Map* (Barnett 2004). *Esquire* honored Barnett as one of its "Best and Brightest" and asked him to make a presentation to its staff similar to the one he makes repeatedly at the Department of Defense. After the briefing, the magazine's editors were impressed and wrote that they will "never read the news the same way again" (*Esquire*, March 2003, 56). Barnett's

guiding question is: How can a superpower today influence history for the better? He responds by arguing against past policies of containment, and instead sees “empire” as the answer to problems of conflict and instability.

Barnett divides the world into three unequal parts, in much the same way that Immanuel Wallerstein’s world systems theory sets out three regions of the world in relation to the rise of global capitalism (Wallerstein 1974). One category comprises the so-called core states—the global North—which are wealthy, stable, and thick with global network connectivity, particularly in terms of security arrangements and financial and media flows. A second category consists of the peripheral, or gap, states—the global South—in which there is poverty, neither security nor global connectivity, and in which the poverty, political repression, conflict, and disease incubate the next generation of global terrorists. There are also, according to Barnett, mediating, or seam, states which sit at the borders of gap states, allow terrorists into the core, and need to be cultivated to “suppress bad things coming out of the gap”; his only seam state on the African continent is South Africa (Barnett 2003:174–75).

Barnett believes that economies and democracies cannot be strengthened unless conflict is eliminated, and conflict can be eliminated only through the military. In his view, security is the “most influential public-sector export” the United States has to offer. If a world region is peaceful, he writes, there will be strong links between that region’s military and the U.S. military; there will be permanent U.S. military bases and long-term security alliances (Barnett 2003:228).

Much of this security export already is in place. America now has 725 military bases placed strategically throughout the world, not counting numerous secret bases and 969 bases on U.S. soil. One scholar warns that this is an empire not of colonies, but of military bases (Johnson 2004).

## The Role of the Military in Postcolonial Africa

On the other side of the ideological divide are policymakers—primarily from the State Department, Congress, NGOs, and international bodies—who argue against a lopsided military and Pentagon-based approach to foreign affairs. They see in Africa another Cold War buildup in the making, and warn that when the U.S. propped up dictators who were friendly to the West and armed weak African militaries, these policies destabilized the fragile mechanisms of governance that were inherited at independence. Therefore, they advocate policies that focus on a mix of tactics: diplomacy; enhanced intelligence; assistance to indigenous NGOs that are involved in local governance; promotion of transparency in business; and even some military policies—but especially those that privilege military training. No policy, they argue, can be weighted in a single direction (CSIS 2004).

No one is more eloquent than Senator Russell Feingold, who cautions

that the Pentagon should not drive foreign policy or be in a de facto position to use its vast resources whenever or wherever it decides to engage. In his words, “subordinating basic human rights to accommodate larger strategic goals . . . comes back to haunt us.” In the past, institutions of state and civil society were “utterly destroyed[,] . . . leaving civilians few tools for building a better future and warlords ample opportunity” to loot the wealth of their own countries (CSIS 2004:149–57).

The destructive consequences of supporting dictators and building military strength are palpable. In postindependence years, up to 2001, there were 80 successful military coups d’etat, 108 failed coups, and an additional 139 well-documented coup plots (McGowan 2003:339). Coups lead to factionalism, which leads to more coups. Military regimes are not accountable to the public, and therefore they promote even greater levels of corruption and authoritarianism than those of their predecessors. When the U.S. supports conditions that strengthen the military, its policies fly in the face of its own stated position, which is to promote democratic forms of government. The paradox is that the U.S. national security interest can lead to a military buildup that subverts the very premise—the reduction of conflict—upon which it is based.

Again, Equatorial Guinea is instructive. At the same time that experts warned the U.S. government not to repeat Cold War mistakes of propping up dictators, the State Department authorized a private, for-profit military company of former Pentagon officers to work with President Nguema to strengthen Equatorial Guinea’s Coast Guard and its ability to protect offshore oil operations being conducted by Exxon.<sup>17</sup> Nguema came to power through a coup; he leads a one-party state; and he has been charged with glaring human rights abuses. Yet relations with Equatorial Guinea were reestablished at the urging of oil companies, and military expertise was provided to help protect them (Frynas 2004:527–28; Wayne 2002).

While I cast my lot with the policymakers who favor practices that lean mainly toward diplomacy, humanitarian aid, and assistance to grassroots NGOs that promote democratic forms of participation in the public sphere, I believe there is one military effort that may prove worthwhile. A case can be made for providing logistical support to regional peacekeeping entities such as the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS) or the African Union (AU). They have been critical in quelling civil war in Sierra Leone and now are playing a role in policing the Darfur conflict. This kind of assistance places responsibility for security in the hands of an African multinational collectivity and neutralizes a military buildup within a single state. It also neutralizes the influence of any single state, including the United States. Of course, the notion of fighting terror or reducing conflict militarily is a thorny issue, and it is one for which I do not have all the answers. I do know, however, that this is a key problem and one the U.S. must solve with honor and with honest concern for the consequences any policy will have for African people in twenty to thirty years.

## Global Capitalism and Corporate Philanthropy

At the same time that the U.S. is establishing new and more elaborate military security in Africa, the corporate world is providing its own form of security. The message that conflict and poverty are bad for business is giving rise to a fresh set of business practices that are making their way throughout the world by means of a new kind of corporate philanthropy. In the past three to five years, corporations have been attempting to increase their value and shield themselves from a multitude of negative forces—including the ramifications of working in weak states—by engaging in local community development projects. These projects are known as “strategic philanthropy” (Porter & Kramer 2002:57).

The strength of this phenomenon is shown by how much is being invested. Multinational firms spend from 1/2 to 4 percent of their annual in-country operating budgets on community development. In Guinea, Alcoa (a leading Bauxite mining firm there) spends about \$5 million a year, an amount that slightly exceeds 4 percent of its annual operating budget.<sup>18</sup> General Electric is spending \$20 million on a project to improve health infrastructure in South Africa (Roner 2004). Of the five Shell companies operating in Nigeria, four have community development offices. One devotes \$60 million a year, or 3 percent, of its in-country operating budget, to community development. The USAID budget for Nigeria is about the same—\$63.9 million.<sup>19</sup> The amounts are not extravagant if it is true, as former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Chester Crocker claims, that large companies realize a 26 to 28 percent rate of return from Africa—one of the highest rates in the world (Snyder 2003).

This new type of corporate social development should not be confused with old-style company philanthropy—which certainly continues. It does not include random contributions to charitable causes or one-time donations—say, an orphanage in Nairobi, or Merck’s dramatic donation to international agencies of the drug ivermectin, which controls river-blindness. Neither does it include the work of foundations that have been created from corporate earnings, such as the Gates Foundation.

The new philanthropy is an in-house operation, although two consulting firms have been established recently to advise companies on how best to enter the development field. It is devoted to sustainable development projects such as improving infrastructure, education, and agriculture, or providing seed money for growing local businesses. Some of the community projects are innovative and creative, such as one undertaken by Daimler-Chrysler in South Africa. This company developed ways to use sisal in the interiors of their automobiles and then helped local farmers return to sisal production so they could supply company needs. Richards Bay Minerals, a mining company also in South Africa, set up a training and advising center for vendors, street hawkers, and other informal sector workers, simultaneously providing them with microcredit opportunities and sub-

contracting relationships (Forstater 2002:37–40). Most companies try to fit their own core strength to the local community and find ways to maximize their development investments. To demonstrate that social development adds value, corporations increasingly subject their projects to stringent evaluation and performance standards known as “performance-based development.” These standards, as a former corporate development officer explained, are equivalent to, or possibly exceed, anything in the NGO, foundation, or government world.<sup>20</sup>

Corporations point out that strategic philanthropy is inevitable because intensive competition in the global marketplace will soon force them to function in the poorest regions of the world. Rather than compete for an ever-smaller slice of existing markets, they must create “opportunities at the bottom of the pyramid,” which in turn require them to create conditions in which they can operate more successfully (Forstater 2002:38). Recently companies have begun to use promises of community development to compete with one another. For example, business interests in China and India are locked in a bidding war in which each is offering millions of aid-for-oil dollars in return for oil concessions in Gabon and Angola (*Agence France-Presse* 2004).

This new wave of corporate philanthropy has its own ideological foundations that date to 2002. One of Harvard Business School’s well-known theoreticians of corporate competition, Michael Porter, argues that modern business succeeds only if it engages with the totality of society and only if it considers economic and social goals as interconnected. Porter positions himself in opposition to Milton Friedman, who held for a generation that business has a social responsibility only to increase profits.<sup>21</sup> Porter counters that in today’s business environment, an enterprise cannot expect to compete and survive unless it is integrated into and contributing to the full social context in which it operates (Porter & Kramer 2002:58–60).

The new turn in corporate social development has structural ramifications that are at the very heart of the relationship between the corporate world, local communities, the state, and global entities. At the deepest level are issues of accountability. Multinational corporations occupy an anomalous position in the politico-economic fabric of the African state. They are accountable to the state and dependent on it for their very ability to function. They pay taxes, a percentage of profits, and even rents to the state and its elite leaders. But these payments rarely trickle down to citizens in the localities where a business is located. Angola is now rife with violence over this very issue (Williams 2002:31–33; Goldwyn & Morrison 2004).

There often are no structural mechanisms whereby multinational firms are accountable to the local public outside of the institutions of the state, even though they may provide jobs, contracts to local service providers, and other benefits that can help grow a local economy. They may even advocate on behalf of a community, serving as informal mediators between local and state layers of government. The levels of involvement are varied; some cor-

porations are well integrated into local community life, while others function within walled enclaves that are intended to protect them from their communities of operation.

The point is that strategic philanthropy intensifies local–corporate relationships. It provides an avenue for corporations to become integrated into the civic and social fabric in which they operate. Community development is a mechanism through which corporations can be subject to the ebb and flow of political life and to the approval or anger of local people. But it is a relationship of inequality. Corporations are the powerful givers; local communities are the receivers. By setting themselves up as donors in the development sector, and by inserting themselves into civil society, corporations place recipients in a position of dependence in which responsibility for performance is reversed and in which the local public becomes accountable to them.

Corporate philanthropy does have the power to provide great benefits to the recipients, and it does offer some solutions to problems of world development. The secretary general of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, recently encouraged corporations to join the fight against poverty in Africa, warning that the unequal distribution of global wealth can only produce conditions that will “undermine and ultimately unravel the open world economy” (quoted in Forstater 2002:37). One important positive response is that companies are leveraging funds and creating huge community development partnerships with U.N. organizations, other international bodies, governments, and globally based NGOs.<sup>22</sup> Among other benefits, these leveraged partnerships can help dilute the patron–client relationships that permeate community development projects run by single donors such as corporations. Another significant response is a law passed recently by the civilian government of Nigeria requiring oil companies to contribute 3 percent of their operating budgets to the Niger Delta Development Commission, which a short time ago completed a master plan for community development in the Niger Delta region. In addition to providing such mandatory development contributions, some companies maintain their own separate and internally run development programs.<sup>23</sup>

Many firms realize that in order to maintain a place in the global economy they must take extreme measures to address global inequalities. Yet there are contradictions embedded in current philanthropic practices. Mechanisms have yet to be developed to deal locally with power imbalances produced by strategic philanthropy. Companies have yet to deal with islands of privilege—corporate enclaves or targeted communities—that are created when development is localized. They have yet to address conditions that create additional layers of in-country haves and have-nots and the conflict this situation produces. No case is as powerful as that of the Niger Delta where violence is the response to perceived inequalities among receivers and nonreceivers of corporate benefits (Cesarz et al. 2003). Multi-national firms have yet to deal with corrupt practices that divert taxes, roy-

alties, and profits paid to the state into private coffers rather than to in-country spending that would benefit the general public.

I do not wish to take away from the welcome contributions firms are making to development endeavors. But despite these benefits, the new strategic philanthropy does not address the systemic problems that plague African economies. In subtle ways, in fact, this approach contributes to even greater levels of dependence on external capital flows than existed previously. More than thirty years ago, Walter Rodney described Africa's structural position within the global economy, and his description still is salient. On the eve of independence, the wealthy industrialized states of the North dominated the capacity to extract resources from poor states. They controlled the means to produce commodities from extracted resources, and they dictated the terms of trade by which resources and the commodities manufactured from them circulated throughout the world. There has been no change. Rodney's vivid portrayal of "flag independence" still holds (1982 [1972]:13–28, 279).

There are no provisions in the new strategic philanthropy to address the systemic power imbalance in the global flows of capital that produce and reproduce African poverty. This structural imbalance—nothing more, nothing less—is the Achilles heel of global economic and political systems today.

## Global Media

As I have stated, I am concerned with information that flows through the media about the security measures just described. How much of the popular media is devoted to these issues? I ask this question because it relates directly to how much the general public knows about military operations and corporate philanthropy and the specific ways these global flows of power and resources are playing themselves out in Africa.

Nearly four hundred articles about Africa were published during the last three months of 2003 in four major U.S. newspapers: the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Chicago Tribune*.<sup>24</sup> Not one article discussed the growing U.S. military presence in sub-Saharan countries, although three discussed terrorism or radical Islam. The U.S. newspapers were silent, even though a French news service during that same period pointed out that the U.S. was inaugurating its new "lily pad" policy and even though National Public Radio had already described the new military installation in Djibouti and questioned its effectiveness for counterterrorism. The media said even less with respect to oil, about which there were only three peripheral articles, or corporate philanthropy, about which there was nothing.

A few publications have begun to call attention to military initiatives and their relation to oil production and counterterrorism programs in

Africa.<sup>25</sup> But these stories seldom spread widely within the newspaper world or into nonprint media outlets, especially television. The little information that is made known about the military buildup in Africa has not had a snowball effect, with one significant exception—the radio. In October 2004 National Public Radio devoted a two-part broadcast to military training initiatives in the Sahel, commenting that they represent a fundamental shift in U.S. tactics toward Africa. The broadcast stated that some African military officials find current U.S. military aid self-serving, and that instead of training they would prefer logistical support like the support the U.S. is supplying to the African Union for its work in Darfur.<sup>26</sup>

Serious information about the growing U.S. military presence in Africa, while marginal in the popular media, is found in print and on the Internet in limited-circulation publications such as *Africa Action*, the *ACAS Bulletin*, *Africa Focus*, the *Africa Society of the National Summit on Africa*, *Washington Notes on Africa*, and the British-run *Jane's Defence Weekly*. They are doing a conscientious job of informing professional Africanists, interest groups that lobby for Africa, and policymakers. With the exception of *Jane's*, these publications are often led by Africanists who bridge the divide between academia and the public sphere.<sup>27</sup> It was from *Africa Focus* (2004), for example, that one could learn about the Senate hearings on Equatorial Guinea. It was from the *ACAS Bulletin* (2003), *Africa Action* (2003), and the writings of Daniel Volman (2003a, 2003/2004) that one could learn of the volume of weapons and training that is being supplied to African countries.

If the mainstream media fails to inform the public on the issues discussed here, what does it find newsworthy? Unfortunately, I can only echo the well-worn litany that insofar as Africa is concerned, “if it bleeds it leads.” During my own three-month survey conducted at the end of 2003, mostly pessimistic articles about African politics, conflict, or the health crisis appeared in the news. Much of the rest was devoted to human suffering, culture and the arts, and blatant sensationalism—a small but powerful genre.

The point is that the choices made by the media of what to stress and what not to stress shape public knowledge and public understandings. Contributors to the journal *ISSUE*, a publication of the African Studies Association, make a convincing case that during a forty-year time period, 73 percent of the news stories about Africa were negative about both politics and society (Schraeder & Endless 1998:32).<sup>28</sup> Added to this negativity is an acute lack of depth in explanations for the causes of conflict and disaster. To be sure, the media have time and space constraints. But this means writers often resort to short-hand explanations for unfortunate events. Nothing is as familiar as the consistent attribution of violence to ethnic, tribal, or religious cleavages in situations that cry out for historic, socioeconomic, and contextually nuanced explanations. Instead the short-hand explanations are converted into stereotypical notions that simplify the human con-



dition with easy essentialist labels. Howard French, the former dean of Africa reporters for the *New York Times* and a passionate believer in the importance of representing African affairs as fully as possible, laments the fact that identity issues—by which he means that overused pigeon-hole known as ethnic conflict—are far more complex in reality than they are in news reports (French 2004).

Equally troubling is the silence that surrounds U.S. involvement in Africa. A study of news services and television indicated that less than 1/3 of 1 percent of the coverage—some of it measured for eight years—is devoted to African countries. The percentage goes up a little during times of extreme violence, as in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the Sudan. Yet this study found that the amount of coverage is more sensitive to GNP and imports of goods and services than to any other factors. Violence may temporarily increase coverage in a particular country, say, the Sudan. Yet for a country in which there is conflict but also a more robust economy—Bosnia, for example—the amount of coverage is disproportionately higher.<sup>29</sup>

But there is another factor at work. In the U.S. the silences as well as the choices of the media are shaped by America's special relationship to its African American population and the deep history of racism that pervades every sector of American society. The interpretation of events by the media and then by the audience is shaped by this historical legacy. This goes a long way toward explaining the disproportionately large degree of negativity that permeates our knowledge of Africa and the sometimes dismissive and preemptive ways in which Africa is treated in American policy determinations.

Despite its paucity, media information can and does influence the agendas of people who shape foreign policy. It is even a key source. But the degree of negative spin put on that information can have dramatic consequences. The journal *ISSUE* demonstrated that the U.S. was first drawn into Somalia by media coverage but was then forced to disengage when coverage intensified and public pressure on legislators increased. An instructive comment came from Senator John McCain, who told a Senate committee that most of what he knew about Somalia came from the media (Schraeder & Endless 1998:29–30).

## Conclusion

This essay concludes with the media because I believe there is power in knowledge. I believe that there are profound ramifications when knowledge is consistently mired in negative idioms. Afropessimism is rampant. We tolerate—by which I mean the general public tolerates—what is happening because we have few models with which to construct complex explanations for unfortunate events or hopeful scenarios for what is to come. We expect negativity; we are conditioned to accept the worst. We

shrink from involvement because the outcomes are never good.

I also believe that our silence legitimates the actions we observe. We tolerate military buildup and the possibility of policing oil installations because we have too little information with which to construct an understanding of what is happening or why. We have insufficient knowledge to comprehend the consequences of actions taken by those who make policy on our behalf. We laud corporate philanthropy, yet we have little understanding of the systemic conditions that undermine its ultimate effectiveness. We tolerate security measures surrounding the extraction of oil because it relieves us from dealing with the Middle East. We promote the militarization of Africa, ignoring the fact that once again, as with the Cold War, we are creating client states, playing into the hands of powerful military elites, and strengthening the hands of corrupt leaders. We have failed to interrogate the meaning of “terrorism” itself, and instead we accept the label without delving into the political and economic conditions out of which it evolves. The notion of terrorism—like that of other “isms” such as socialism, conservatism, or liberalism—allows us to legitimate self-interest indiscriminately and demonize whoever and whatever deviates from that self-interest.

There are those who believe, and I agree with them, that public attention has been diverted to issues of terrorism and the kinds of military buildup and economic security measures that hinder true economic and political growth (*Reuters* 2004). We dare not lose sight of the fact that the most threatening problems facing the world today are poverty and equity. Only by addressing these problems at their most fundamental, structural, systemic levels will the world have a chance to experience the kinds of security and stability that I would like to call a global flow of peace.

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## Notes

1. Africa's growing importance in U.S. policymaking circles also is due to factors not considered in this essay, those being the HIV/AIDS health crisis and continuingly high levels of internal conflict.
2. Anger over revenue-sharing and lack of transparency in oil company payments to government have resulted in a separatist movement in the Cabinda region of Angola (Williams 2002:31–33; Goldwyn & Morrison 2004:2, 12).
3. See U.S. Secretary of Defense (2004).
4. See *Jane's Defence Weekly*, May 6, 2004, August 4, 2004, October 6, 2004, and January 4, 2005; *Los Angeles Times*, May 30, 2003; See also Jaffe (2003).
5. Lobe (2003) based his article on remarks made by General James Jones, Supreme Commander of NATO and Commander of EUCOM.
6. See *Jane's Defence Weekly*, August 4, 2004, October 6, 2004, and January 4, 2005; Goldwyn and Morrison (2004:15); Colombant (2004); *National Public Radio* ([www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4079474](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4079474)).
7. A breakdown of amounts is given below.
8. The firm Pacific Architects and Engineers was hired by the U.S. State Department for \$10 million to assist in the Liberian operations of 2003. The same firm also has worked for the U.S. in Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire (U.S. Department of State 2003; Cilliers 2003).
9. A U.S. Navy P-3 aircraft and about one hundred U.S. soldiers used Algeria as a base from which to assist Chad in March 2004 in a successful attempt to eliminate a guerilla group believed to be sympathetic to al Qaeda (*Jane's Defence Weekly*, August 4, 2004).
10. The U.S. reportedly is using the Entebbe base to assist the Ugandan government with its counterinsurgency campaign in the northern part of the country (Plaut 2004).
11. Goldwyn and Morrison (2004:15); Jaffe (2003); *Jane's Defence Weekly*, August 2, 2004 and January 4, 2005; Klare and Volman (2004:230–31); *New York Times*,

- July 5, 2003; Volman (2003).
12. *Jane's Defence Weekly*, October 13, 2004; Swigert (2004); USIP (2004).
  13. The three programs and amounts being spent are as follows: (1) The ACOTA program (Africa Contingency Operations Training Assistance) is budgeted at \$15 million for 2005 and from 2002 until the end of 2005 will have spent \$53 million; (2) The ARP program (Africa Regional Peacekeeping), which trains, equips, and assists African soldiers in local peacekeeping efforts, is budgeted at \$45 million for 2005 and will have spent \$154 million for the same four years; (3) The IMET program (International Military Education and Training) in 2005 is budgeted at \$10.8 million and will have spent \$43.6 million from 2002 to the end of 2005. See U.S. Department of State (2004); U.S. Department of Defense (2004).
  14. The most recent seminars were held in Uganda in October 2004 and in Washington, D.C., in February 2004. See [www.africacenter.org/Dev2Go.web?Anchor=acss\\_programs\\_sls04&rnd=32498](http://www.africacenter.org/Dev2Go.web?Anchor=acss_programs_sls04&rnd=32498).
  15. Annual amounts spent by and authorized for weapons purchases through the Pentagon are: 2002 = \$57.2 million; 2003 = \$68.9 million; 2004 = \$39.9 million; and 2005 = 44.9 million. See U.S. Department of State (2005); U.S. Department of Defense (2004).
  16. The Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Initiative was originally called the Pan-Sahel Initiative. See Ellis (2004:459–64); *Christian Science Monitor*, September 17, 2004; EUCOM 2004; *Jane's Defence Weekly*, October 6, 2004.
  17. The company, MPRI, trains military personnel in Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, and South Africa, and is helping to establish and operate the Africa Center for Strategic Studies as part of the Department of Defense. See [www.mpri.com/subchannels/int\\_africa.html](http://www.mpri.com/subchannels/int_africa.html).
  18. Larry Grace, personal communication, December 22, 2004.
  19. Deirdre LaPin, personal communication, March 18, 2004; USAID (2003).
  20. Some of the corporate performance standards are set by the International Standards Organization (Deirdre LaPin, personal communication, March 18, 2004).
  21. I thank John Riggan for bringing this to my attention.
  22. Business Partners for Development, located in London, was created by the World Bank, the British Department for International Development, CARE, and mining, oil, and gas companies. The organization's goal is to find ways for business, government, and civil society to engage together in sustainable community development. See [www.bpd-naturalresources.org/](http://www.bpd-naturalresources.org/).
  23. I thank Deirdre LaPin for bringing this to my attention.
  24. Cynthia Ntini conducted the survey.
  25. They include the *Christian Science Monitor*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Asia Times*, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, and *San Francisco Chronicle*.
  26. The broadcasts can be heard at [www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4079474](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4079474).
  27. They include Salih Booker, Caleb Bush, Imani Countess, Bill Minter, Michael West, and many others.
  28. The journal was recently renamed *African ISSUES*.
  29. See Zuckerman (2004). See also "Africa's Forgotten Wars: Coverage of Wars and Conflicts in Africa in International TV News programmes [sic]": [www.agendasetting.com/agenda/sa/pdf](http://www.agendasetting.com/agenda/sa/pdf).