

East Timor: A Model For Future United States Involvement in Sub-Saharan Peace Operations?

**A Monograph
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Abstract

East Timor: A Model for Future United States Involvement in Sub-Saharan Peace Operations? by MAJ Kenneth A. Romaine Jr., U.S. Army, 44 pages.

The end of the Cold War shifted the United States' strategic focus from a clearly identified, monolithic national security threat to a less well-defined focus on international engagement. The resultant strategy was an attempt to maintain security through the promotion of democratic ideals and economic prosperity abroad. This shift has resulted in the U.S. armed forces becoming involved in numerous operations which previously had fallen outside – or at least on the periphery – of their primary mission.

The success of operations in East Timor, with Australia as the lead nation and minimal U.S. support, created a potential option for U.S. civilian and military leaders that would reduce U.S. efforts in peace operations. This monograph addresses the likelihood that other nations could take the lead during contingency operations while receiving only limited support from the United States. The paucity of regional hegemony capable of fulfilling this role, especially in Africa, raises the question of whether this is a viable strategy for the U.S. in the short term.

The monograph concludes that the lack of sufficient capabilities in current regional forces makes the East Timor model an impractical standard to set for future U.S. support in Sub-Saharan Africa. The United States will not be able to rely on potential lead nations such as Nigeria or South Africa for both political and military reasons in the near term. As such, the United States should not significantly alter its strategy of preparing its forces for the “full spectrum” of military operations. U.S. forces will be required to fulfill the role of lead nation in operations other than war while still maintaining critical capabilities to conduct full-scale conventional operations in the unlikely event of a major theater war. Continued efforts must be made to improve African nations' ability to conduct large-scale, multinational operations for long-term stability.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

During the previous decade, the U.S. was coerced into taking a leadership role in several U.N. missions, primarily because middle powers were not able – or not prepared – to provide the military resources necessary to cope with the challenges of a Somalia or a Bosnia.¹

Washington Post, January 2001

In October of 1999 the United States sent a contingent of U.S. forces from Darwin, Australia to Dili in East Timor to augment the Australian-led forces of UNTAET (United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor). Several weeks earlier, Australia had taken on the burden as the regional power of being the lead nation in International Force in East Timor (INTERFET), the U.N. element tasked with providing security to U.N. observers of the vote for East Timorese independence. The United States assumed the role of “supporting nation” - offering only those critical capabilities that other nations could not provide.² The forces provided by the U.S. were primarily combat support and combat service support forces in the areas of intelligence, communications, civil affairs, and logistics.³ The U.S. deployment was necessary but short-lived. In December of that same year – only two and a half months after entering East Timor – all but three of the U.S. personnel redeployed from the island.⁴

Some observers correctly considered, though maybe prematurely, that this effort was a great success and should become a model for U.S. involvement in regional

¹ Lewis MacKenzie, “A Look at Policing the World: A Crucial Job, But Not One For a Superpower,” Washington Post, 14 January 2001, B3.

² Craig A. Collier. “A New Way to Wage Peace: U.S. Support to Operation Stabilise,” *Military Review* 81, no. 2 (January/February 2001).

³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 9. The three were officers and planners on the UNTAET staff.

contingency operations in the future. As one proponent stated, “The U.S. effort in East Timor validated the concept of focused U.S. support as a subordinate command in successful multinational peace operations.”⁵ This reinforced an earlier argument which postulated that U.S. efforts as a supporting nation, rather than the lead nation, in peace operations in Africa might be the way of the future.⁶

This conclusion, however, is a hasty one and may constitute another example of the “misuse” of history. Eliot Cohen and John Gooch state in their book *Military Misfortunes* that, “...utilitarian military history...seeks to use experience to demonstrate or validate certain principles or procedures.” This practice leads to “...a reckless ransacking of history for evidence to support a priori positions.”⁷ This may be the case with the argument for U.S. support to future peace operations. The success of operations in East Timor may not be easily replicated in future operations and, therefore, should not be too quickly generalized to all future peace operations – especially those on the volatile continent of Africa. The lessons learned from that experience should be analyzed further before attempting to generalize the results to future situations.

Upon close examination, it is not completely accurate to relate a successful operation in the Pacific, with a significant, capable ally as the lead nation, to activities on the continent of Africa with a regional African power as the lead nation. Though there are similarities between the two scenarios, there are also many differences which necessitate a more thorough assessment before making the conclusion that the U.S.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ William D. Bajusz and Kevin P. O’Prey. “An All-African Peace Force: An Immediate Option or Long-Term Goal for the Region?” National Defense University, *Strategic Forum Number 86*, (October 1996).

⁷ Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch. *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War*. (New York: Free Press, 1990), 35-40. Cohen and Gooch present a detailed theory of why military organizations fail. One reason is that militaries learn the wrong lessons from history.

should conduct operations in Africa similar to actions taken in East Timor. The results of this analysis will influence U.S. planning, force structure, and strategy for future involvement, making it a task that should be given careful attention.

Other considerations add even more significance to the discussion. When President George W. Bush was elected in November of 2000, he promised to review current military deployments in an attempt to decrease the operations tempo (OPTEMPO) of U.S. forces which had been deployed on numerous smaller-scale contingencies over the past decade. The success of operations in East Timor, and the propensity to generalize that success to future operations, could provide a rationale for the withdrawal of U.S. ground forces from other contingencies or the implementation of a national security policy to send only support units similar to those sent in support of Australia. While potentially solving, or at least reducing, the issue of OPTEMPO for a majority of U.S. forces, this short-term approach both overlooks and produces other significant issues that can not be disregarded when determining the viability of this option in the future.⁸

First, who else should take the lead in Africa? Does Africa have nations who are capable of leading a diverse coalition of volunteer countries during a complex contingency? Should the U.S. allow or encourage a European force to assume that role before it provides any support? Second, what message does “minimal commitment” send to U.S. allies, or others, about U.S. dedication to the values it espouses. If America is looking for the easy way out of operations in Africa, other governments might begin to question whether humanitarian concerns and democratic ideals are the true motivations

⁸ While reducing OPTEMPO, these types of potential actions could influence international perceptions of the U.S. and its superpower status.

for U.S. involvement in other places. Third, there would undoubtedly be an impact on U.S. military budget, force structure, and training if the expected U.S. participants in peace operations became primarily combat service support or combat support rather than combat forces.

While some people in the past proposed that military operations other than war did not have significant adverse effects on military readiness for conventional war,⁹ a substantial shift in budget, force structure, and/or training to meet the requirements of a changing U.S. strategic policy would definitely impact the U.S. military's ability to conduct conventional operations – at least in the traditional sense.¹⁰ These considerations complicate the issue of whether participation as a supporting nation is appropriate for U.S. forces in Africa and are addressed in subsequent chapters.

U.S. Strategic Focus

The end of the Cold War fundamentally changed the strategic landscape for the United States and for the rest of the world. First, U.S. forces no longer had to organize and equip to face a monolithic, conventional threat. The realization that the former Soviet Union was not capable of sustained combat freed U.S. strategic thinkers to identify future threats along less traditional lines. On a global scale, this also eliminated the bipolar nature of international politics and created a power vacuum in many third

⁹ Ronald E. Sortor. *Army Forces for Operations Other Than War*. (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1997). Sortor contends that there were sufficient forces for conducting MOOTW and a major regional contingency and that any shortage of specialized personnel was the result of existing force structure and would have been a shortage regardless of the existence of a contingency operation.

¹⁰ The Army's efforts at transformation may change the way the Army conducts conventional sustained land combat anyway. In that case, the changing "readiness" of the military caused by shifting force structure and training may not be as big an issue as it would if military leaders had to choose between preparation for peace operations or preparation for major conventional war.

world countries.¹¹ Combined with the weak central governments of these previously-aligned states, this vacuum created an opportunity for many of these countries to fall into a period of instability and conflict.¹²

Because of this global instability, and the often associated famine, drought, disease, and economic failure, the general consensus among military and civilian leadership is that the U.S. is likely to conduct more peace operations and fewer conventional operations in the near term.¹³ The implication of this reality is that a complete assessment of the military force structure, equipment, and mission essential task list (METL) needs to be conducted and then resources allocated to organize, train, and equip forces for the missions in which they are likely to engage. If combat support and combat service support tasks are the “way of the future” for involvement in peace operations - and peace operations are the near-term future of conflict - the conclusions of this study could significantly impact the future structure of the United States Army.

One reason given for transforming the United States’ military forces now is that there is currently no peer competitor capable of defeating the U.S. legacy force. Arguably, now is the time that acceptable risk can be taken to skip a generation of modernization and still have forces capable of defeating a potential adversary while creating the force necessary to secure the nation’s security interests in the future. While accepting risk during this transition, the U.S. military must still be prepared to conduct conventional war at any time. Increased deployments for specific combat support and combat service support military occupational specialties (MOS’s), however, would

¹¹ Jeffrey Herbst. “African Peacekeepers and State Failure.” in *Peacekeeping and Peace Enforcement in Africa*, ed. Robert Rotberg (Cambridge, MA: World Peace Foundation, 2000), 16-20.

¹² William Durch, ed., *UN Peacekeeping, American Politics, and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s* (New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 1-2.

exacerbate the OPTEMPO issue for these soldiers and result in shortages of those critical assets for training or deployment to a major theater war.¹⁴

With a congressionally-mandated Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) scheduled for 2001, this has the potential to significantly influence the way the United States organizes and trains its forces for the future. Especially with some strategists advocating funding an “analysis-based” force structure rather than a “capabilities-based” structure,¹⁵ the expectation of greater numbers of peace operations, combined with the reduced possibility for conventional conflict with a peer competitor, make this a critical time in U.S. strategic thinking. If this analysis results in a substantial change in U.S. force structure, it would only exacerbate the problem for future conventional combat potential.

According to Steven Metz, a strategist at the United States Army War College’s Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. policymakers have five strategic challenges facing them in the near future. In general, these challenges are to: 1) reconcile long-term and short-term imperatives, 2) maximize efficiency, 3) maximize the political utility of landpower, 4) undertake a controlled Institutional Revolution, and 5) preserve public support for effective landpower.¹⁶ The anticipated force structure issue is one of short-term capabilities versus long-term strategic dominance.

The pressure of these imperatives requires military and civilian leaders to carefully assess the use of land forces in support of national strategy. It also requires a

¹³ David R. Segal and Dana P. Eyre. *U.S. Army in Peace Operations at the Dawn of the 21st Century*. U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, 1996.

¹⁴ Sortor. *Army Forces*.

¹⁵ An “analysis-based” force structure is one based on the perceived threat. A “capabilities-based” force structure is designed with certain inherent capabilities regardless of the perceived threat.

¹⁶ Strategic Studies Institute, *The Future of American Landpower: Strategic Challenges for the 21st Century Army*, U.S. Army War College Army After Next Project (12 March 1996), 11-12.

deliberate articulation of U.S. interests when forces are used – especially in operations that are not clearly considered a threat to national security or economic interests. To do this, senior Army leaders “...must persistently and convincingly explain the roles that landpower plays in deterring violence, defending against aggression that does occur, and helping resolve conflicts through peace operations.”¹⁷ This will prove especially difficult when dealing with instability in Africa.

Metz goes on to say that one way to be more efficient is through cooperation and burden-sharing with other military forces. However, he adds that “...in the case of a global power, it would be difficult to structure several regional coalitions each with a division of labor similar enough to achieve such efficiencies.”¹⁸ In other words, attempting to determine a specific subset of tasks toward which to tailor your force structure is a difficult, if not impossible, mission. While certain U.S. forces were needed to augment Australia’s forces for UNTAET, there would be similar, yet undoubtedly different requirements for augmentation of other coalition-led forces for other contingencies. It would be difficult to optimize U.S. forces to increase efficiency giving the various levels of capability exhibited by future potential partners – especially on the continent of Africa.

Additionally, as one group of researchers from the Strategic Studies Institute argued, “If the functions of landpower continue to diverge in terms of the skills, concepts, and organizations they require, it will become increasingly difficult to craft a military organization that can perform all of its required tasks.”¹⁹ This leads to the possibility that the U.S. focuses its force structure on one end of the spectrum of conflict while limiting

¹⁷ Ibid., 19.

¹⁸ Ibid., 11-12.

its capabilities at the other end due to a perceived reduced threat. The long-term implications of that decision would not be known – perhaps until it is too late to do anything about it.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it was fortunate that in the case of East Timor, Australia was a regional power who: 1) had a vested interest in the area, 2) had a desire to intervene, and 3) had the capability to do so (albeit with minor deficiencies and only for a limited period). Though African leaders and organizations have made substantial improvements in the past decade, there are no current African nations, with the possible exceptions of South Africa or Nigeria, capable of fulfilling the role played by Australia in East Timor.²⁰ These two countries, however, have a history of social, military, political, and economic shortcomings that limit their utility as a leading nation in a U.N.-sponsored, multinational action in Africa.

Methodology

To determine the viability of the East Timor model, it is necessary to identify the potential threats to the United States in the future and determine whether or not serving as a supporting nation to other lead countries in peace operations meets U.S. strategic objectives. To do this, it is necessary to analyze the role the U.S. played in East Timor as well as the perceived success of those activities in terms of national strategy. The next chapter describes the U.S. involvement in Operation Stabilise and the results of that involvement. Several specific areas of the environment are addressed including; the nature of the operation, the types of support provided by the U.S. as well as other nations,

¹⁹ Ibid., p. ix.

²⁰ Steven Metz. *Refining American Strategy in Africa*. (Carlisle, Pa: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, February 2000), 4.

the nature of the threat, and the consensus perception concerning the outcome of the operation.

To determine the transferability of East Timor actions to actual or potential conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa in the near future, the environment in Africa must be described and compared to that in Indonesia. Chapter Three addresses the areas in Africa in terms of the threat to U.S. interests, the nature of the prospective conflict, and the possible roles that U.S. forces might play in each. The chapter concludes with a description of the potential lead nations for each of these contingency areas and the pros and cons of these nations providing the majority of forces and/or effort to each operation.

Chapter Four identifies the shortcomings of the East Timor model based on the criteria of feasibility, acceptability, and suitability. First, the issue of whether or not there are African nations who could serve as the lead nation in peace operations within Africa is addressed. Another aspect of feasibility, however, is whether or not the United States force structure is also suited to this new model of involvement. Second, the acceptability of the U.S. playing a supporting role is addressed in terms of the cost/benefit analysis of sending support personnel in a subordinate capacity. Finally, the suitability of the East Timor model is assessed based on its impact on national security and the Armed Forces' ability to conduct its primary, conventional-war mission.

The author shows that the execution of U.N. operations in East Timor is an unsuitable model for use in most African scenarios. Though similar, the situations in the two regions are sufficiently different to negate the viability of a regional hegemon taking the lead in establishing and maintaining the peace in a neighboring country. The author

makes several recommendations on actions that could be taken (or maintained in some cases) in order to prepare African regional powers to handle the myriad of tasks they will be asked to conduct in the complex environment in which they will have to lead. With continued efforts, these countries will eventually be able to lead peace operations in Africa and the U.S. could become the supporting nation. Until then, the United States or some other non-African power, (i.e., France, Britain), will have to be the leading force.

CHAPTER TWO

East Timor: “Operation Stabilise”

Most often, the American role will be to lead or support an alliance or coalition effort. The greater the range of options available to policymakers, though, the greater the chances of an outcome favorable to U.S. interests.²¹

In accordance with the above quotation, Operation Stabilise in East Timor created a new option for U.S. policy makers. When the United Nations passed Security Council Resolution 1264 on 12 September 1999 authorizing the establishment of a multi-national force “to restore peace and security in East Timor, to protect and support UNAMET in carrying out its tasks and, within force capabilities, to facilitate humanitarian assistance operations,” Australia agreed to take the lead.²² As a supporting effort to INTERFET, and then to UNTAET, the range of options available to the United States during peace operations expanded to include the supplying of only critical items to an ally serving as lead nation.

With regional stability interests and economic ties to both Indonesia and East Timor, Australia’s willingness to participate in this operation is not surprising. Nor is it surprising that Australia would willingly assume the lead nation role in a crisis so close to its own shores. With a western, developed country as the lead nation, it was fairly easy to get political and social support for allowing U.S. forces to assume a supporting role. This allowed the U.S. to send minimal forces in support of Australia’s efforts because U.S. leadership, and the general American population, trusted that Australia’s interests in the

²¹ Metz, et al., *The Future of American Landpower: Strategic Challenges for the 21st Century*. (Carlisle, Pa: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 1996), 21.

conflict were in accordance with U.S. national interests. This might not be the case in other future operations, especially in Africa.

History of East Timor

East Timor was administered by Portugal until 1974. In 1974 Portugal decided to pull out of its colonies for economic and political reasons and to allow an East Timorese popular assembly to determine whether to be independent or become an autonomous region within Indonesia. Unfortunately, the factions on either side of the debate became violent and a civil war began. The government of Portugal could not control the violence and left East Timor without establishing a self-sufficient government or economy. As a result, Indonesia, who had “no historical or legally valid claim” to the island, immediately entered the country in December of 1975 and declared it the twenty-seventh province of Indonesia.²³ The United Nations did not recognize Indonesia’s annexation but could do nothing about Indonesia’s presence other than to repeatedly call for their withdrawal and condemn the Indonesian government’s actions in the Secretary General’s annual report.

Indonesia administered the island from their invasion in 1975 throughout the 1990s. Various movements within East Timor posed problems for Indonesian stability in their new province. Three main parties had vied for power prior to the Portuguese withdrawal. One favored independence (FRETILIN), one favored administration by Portugal for a short time and then independence (UDT), and one favored integration with Indonesia (APODETI). Once Indonesia annexed the island as a province, independence forces

²² United Nations Peacekeeping Web Site. “East Timor – UNTAET Background.” available from <http://www.un.org/peace/etimor/UntaetB.htm>, accessed 13 February 2001.

²³ Sharif Shuja. “Australia’s Role in East Timor.” *Contemporary Review* (September 2000): 1.

were targeted and executed by pro-Indonesian militias.²⁴ Though resistance was reduced, the independence movement, led by FRETILIN forces, continued to promote unrest in East Timor prompting attention from the international community.

After the Indonesian financial crisis of 1997-8,²⁵ Indonesia began to give in to international pressure to allow the East Timorese people to determine their own status as an autonomous region within Indonesia or as an independent state. Whereas Australia's interest previously was to maintain stability in the region and keep a peaceful relationship with their economic partners in Indonesia, the economic collapse gave them an opportunity to support East Timor's independence so that they could trade directly and hence reap greater profits from the resources there.²⁶ Finally, on May 5, 1999, Portugal and Indonesia signed the "5 May Agreement" which allowed the United Nations to organize and conduct a popular vote on the issue of East Timor's future status.²⁷

UN/US Activities

Based on the 5 May Agreement, the United Nations established the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) whose purpose was to oversee voting on the referendum and the implementation of the decision. When nearly eighty percent of the registered voters chose independence from Indonesia, pro-Indonesia militias began a series of violent attacks throughout the countryside. Thousands of East Timorese were

²⁴ British Foreign and Commonwealth Office. "East Timor: Historical Background," *Focus International* (London: Foreign and Commonwealth Office, October, 1999), 2-4. Since Indonesia did not allow outside observers in the years following their annexation of the island, there are varying reports on the numbers of people killed during that time. Indonesians acknowledge about 80,000 while NGOs suggest up to 200,000. The actual number is probably somewhere between the two.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Shuja, "Australia's Role," 139. During the UNTAET administration, Australia signed a lucrative trade agreement concerning the natural gas resources in the Timor Gap between Australia and East Timor.

²⁷ United Nations Peacekeeping Web Site. "East Timor – UNTAET Background." available from <http://www.un.org/peace/etimor/UntaetB.htm>, accessed February 13, 2001.

killed and up to 500,000 people were displaced from their homes and fled to the hills or into West Timor.²⁸ Indonesia failed to respond in accordance with previous agreements but finally gave in to diplomatic pressure and asked for international assistance.²⁹

With eventual Indonesian acquiescence, the U.N. Security Council authorized the formation of an International Force in East Timor (INTERFET) to restore peace and ensure the security of the UNAMET personnel. Since the pro-Indonesian authorities had fled so quickly, there was little or no infrastructure or civil administration available for the people who remained. Australia, therefore, was asked to provide security forces to protect the U.N. workers from the disgruntled masses and militias. The Australians led a multinational Task Force to accomplish that task. U.S. forces provided significant capability to facilitate this effort, including intelligence, signal, civil affairs, and logistics assets.³⁰

Once the INTERFET forces were able to restore security in the critical areas of East Timor, U.N. Security Council Resolution 1272 on the twenty-fifth of October 1999, established UNTAET “...as an integrated, multidimensional peacekeeping operation fully responsible for the administration of East Timor during its transition to independence.”³¹ The role of UNTAET was to:

“...establish an effective administration, assist in the development of civil and social services; to ensure the coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance; to support capacity building for self-government, and to assist in the establishment of conditions for sustainable development.”³²

²⁸ Collier, *Operation Stabilise*, 3.

²⁹ United Nations Peacekeeping Institute. “East Timor - UNTAET Background,” available from <http://www.un.org/peace/etimor/UntaetB.htm>, accessed January 25, 2001. Indonesian forces were not adequately quelling the violence but the United Nations would not legitimize sending international forces until the Indonesian government requested assistance.

³⁰ Collier, *Operation Stabilise*, 3-5.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

By December of 1999, Australia could assume this mission with organic, coalition, or contracted personnel and U.S. forces were no longer needed. Other than the MEU (a contingency force) offshore and a few planning officers on the UNTAET staff, U.S. forces redeployed. In February of 2001, the U.S. reaffirmed its commitment to support the ongoing operation with limited numbers of military observers, engineers, and civil military personnel.³³ Because of the minimal cost to the United States, this model appeared to be a desirable one for future conflicts.

Summary

Operation Stabilise was a successful operation. Australia, a regional power with a vested interest in the stability of East Timor and other areas in the region, took on the lead role and coordinated a successful effort to first establish security and then establish an infrastructure to begin the normalization of life in East Timor. Though the Secretary-General's report from January 2001 said East Timor "will still require substantial international support that goes well beyond the kind of assistance normally provided to a developing country," it appears that most measures of effectiveness are positive.³⁴ Australian forces were able to enter East Timor under Article VII of the U.N. Charter and then re-establish security when violence erupted following the vote.³⁵

Despite the

³³ White House Press Release, 13 February 2001. available from <http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/ops/2000/000211-timor-wh1.htm>, accessed 27 February 2001.

³⁴ Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor. UN Security Council, 15 January 2001. This report describes progress made towards full independence including the status of schools, finance, foreign affairs, justice, infrastructure, health, and economics. While the training and establishment of the local police forces will take longer than anticipated, the remainder of the programs are reportedly going well.

³⁵ The United Nations Charter describes two different conditions under which peace operations are conducted. In Chapter VI, both parties are in agreement and the operation is primarily an observe and

absence of an established administration when Indonesia pulled out, Australia and the rest of the U.N. forces were able to begin establishing a functional government in preparation for transition to full independence.

Though the ultimate success of operations in East Timor depend on long-term economic and political viability, the conduct of the operation to date can be considered a success. Though lacking in some critical capabilities, the Australian forces were able to command and control the multinational forces required for INTERFET's success. Can this success, however, be replicated in future peace operations? More specifically, can African nations play the same lead role in peace operations within their own region?

report mission. Under Chapter VII, there is at least some disagreement about UN involvement and forces enter under much more ambiguous and dangerous conditions.

CHAPTER THREE

The African Situation

...every step forward brings one backwards.³⁶

Africa has been severely affected by the dynamics of the post-Cold War geopolitical situation. Many African countries had been previously supported by either the United States or the Soviet Union during the Cold War. With reduced support, and significant ethnic tensions created by haphazard boundaries and weak or corrupt central governments, Africa has become a region of instability and conflict.³⁷ As just one example of many, U.N. and U.S. efforts in Somalia were a direct result of previous Soviet, and then American, support to governments in both Somalia and Ethiopia.³⁸ Problems in Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Ethiopia also have ties to colonial boundaries or weak and corrupt governments.

For the past several centuries, Africa has been a location for colonialism and exploitation of natural resources. In the 1960s, with the rise in African nationalism and increased global awareness of international actions due to improved information technology, major powers began to relinquish control over their possessions and allow former colonies to establish self-rule. The manner in which these powers left Africa, however, created significant issues from which both African leaders, and the former colonial powers, are still feeling the effects. Arbitrary boundaries and weak administration precipitated the quick demise of quasi-democratic governments left

³⁶ Metz, *Refining American Strategy*, 1.

³⁷ Herbst, "African Peacekeepers," 16-19.

³⁸ Daniel P. Bolger. *Savage Peace: Americans at War in the 1990s* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1995), 266-274.

behind.³⁹ While many of the states have failed or suffered much instability, the natural resources that drove colonial powers in the first place remain. The need for continued access to these raw materials, and the desire to promote democracy, provide continued incentives for developed nations to promote peace and stability in the region.

Peace and stability in Africa, however, is not easy. Many of the conflicts in Africa are a direct result of failure on the part of colonial powers to prepare local governments for success. Often, the borders established by colonial powers did not follow along natural ethnic, religious, or tribal delineations.⁴⁰ Local governments were created to support colonial endeavors, not to establish independent, functional governance over the territory. When colonial forces left Africa, they created a vacuum of power where border disputes and ethnic confrontations became the norm. According to Steven Metz,

Today the most pervasive security problem in Africa is what are called 'complex emergencies' growing from the combination of weak states, ethnic tensions and the suppression of minorities, corrupt and dictatorial regimes, support for these regimes by international arms traders, chronic poverty and underdevelopment, and the debt burden.⁴¹

The weak and unprepared governments that were left behind did not have the knowledge, or capabilities, to overcome the animosity that resulted. In fact, these governments often exacerbated existing problems of underdevelopment, drought, and disease through corruption, favoritism, and incompetence.

A few examples of recent problems in Africa highlight the peculiarities of the region. Ethnic disputes between Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda and Burundi, violent coup attempts in Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire, and border disputes in Ethiopia and Eritrea

³⁹ Herbst. "African Peacekeepers," 16-20.

⁴⁰ Howard W. French. "A Century Later, Letting Africans Draw Their Own Map," *New York Times*, November 23, 1997.

demonstrate the prevalence of territorial ambiguity, intra-state instability and weak central governments in Africa. The complex nature of these situations makes it difficult for African nations to solve their own problems. Many times the conflicts have been going on for hundreds of years and it is difficult to determine which side is “right” in the dispute or what the end state should be. Who is “right” is often decided by which side commits fewer atrocities in the struggle. The overarching concern of the international community in these instances is humanitarian assistance and the promotion of stability in the region.

These problems make the situation in Africa somewhat unique and very difficult for the international community. Because of the nature of the conflicts, articulation of the end state is one major difference between the East Timor example and potential operations in Africa. As one researcher said, “the status and future of East Timor as an independent state is clearly established.”⁴² While there was internal conflict concerning the status of East Timor, the international community’s commitment to the democratic process, combined with the admittance by Indonesia that it had no legal rights to East Timor, made the end state apparent to all involved. In other conflicts, especially in Africa, there is often no easily determined right or wrong belligerent in the conflict. Even when there is, it is difficult to determine an end state other than the absence of conflict.

To make matters worse, Africa-specific norms and cultural idiosyncracies produce a tendency toward corruption which make conflicts in Africa both more frequent and more

⁴¹ Steven Metz. *Refining American Strategy*, 13

⁴² John R. Bolton. “United States Policy on United Nations Peacekeeping,” *World Affairs* (Washington D.C., Winter, 2001), 129-147.

complex. Often times, those who are in control of the government generate popular discontent due to their own cultural or tribal biases. According to some researchers, Africans have a cultural inclination to support those in their extended family.⁴³ This “family” is often extended further to include those with similar religious or ethnic backgrounds who then receive the benefits of power.

This favoritism is combined with an inherent lack of trust in the government and military personnel due to African history and the nature of colonial rule.⁴⁴ As one researcher points out,

With the exception of the states of Zimbabwe and Angola, where the contemporary military can trace its roots to a liberation force, most African armed forces are the direct descendents of colonial security establishments. They were originally designed to suppress internal threats and sometimes are still seen more as a tool for government control or for the military’s own self-enrichment than as the protector of the citizenry.⁴⁵

The result is a power struggle between groups of people seeking control of the resources available rather than an impartial government that is promoting justice, fairness, and security within its borders.

Given that Africa is so unstable, why should the U.S. concern itself with peace operations in this region? There are several reasons. First, sixteen percent of all U.S. petroleum imports come from Africa. In addition, many precious metals and minerals such as gold, platinum, chromium, and copper are mined in African states.⁴⁶ Due to the

⁴³ The tribal nature of African society promotes adherence to tribal unity and familial ties. Access to the government brings access to resources which, naturally, are then shared with those in the extended family at the expense of others who become disenfranchised.

⁴⁴ In colonies, colonial powers hired local military forces to control the populace. Their mission was to quell any uprising in support of the colonial government. This has led to a culture of distrust between the general population and any military force of those in power.

⁴⁵ Metz. *Refining American Strategy*, 23.

⁴⁶ National Defense University, Institute for National Strategic Studies, “Strategic Assessment 1999,” Chapter 10, 154-158.

precarious nature of many regimes, instability in any country could spill over into other nations in the region and interrupt the flow of these vital strategic resources.

Stability in Africa, however, is about more than just the natural resources there. U.S. national security, and global security, is linked to Africa in many ways. As Steven Metz wrote,

...some neo-isolationists feel the U.S. can disengage from the conflict prone parts of the world, thereby obviating the need for direct involvement. But the multidimensional interdependence of the future global system will make this impossible. Over the long term, disengagement will endanger U.S. national interests.⁴⁷

With increased globalization, engagement is necessary to remain a global power in the broader sense of the term - which includes more than just military might. The potential of asymmetric threats means that the U.S. must not only be strong militarily, it must also improve its image around the world. Political viability is also an issue. The U.S. must be seen as an integral part of the global community's progression – not just as a powerful military force.

Maintaining global leadership requires an active role in global affairs. On one hand, the U.S. has a stated interest in supporting human rights and reducing humanitarian issues caused by violence, famine, and disease.⁴⁸ The U.S. also has an interest in continuing to support the fledgling democracies that they have fostered over the past several decades.⁴⁹ The 1999 Strategic Assessment asserted, "...the United States would be hard-pressed to do nothing and still claim global leadership."⁵⁰ A perceived lack of interest could

⁴⁷ Strategic Studies Institute, *The Future of American Landpower*, 21.

⁴⁸ White House, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, December 1999)

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ National Defense University, *Strategic Assessment*, 163.

jeopardize United States' relations with developing countries and affect the long-term strategic environment as African nations attempt to modernize and develop economic and political partnerships.

Other Complicating Factors

While sub-Saharan Africa is rich in minerals and is full of potential economic opportunity, the lack of development creates unique challenges for existing governments as well as for potential providers of humanitarian or military support. An inability on the part of the government to provide basic necessities for the population creates tension that gives rise to insurrection and unrest.⁵¹ Information technology has made the problem worse as more people are made aware of social imbalances. As one source says, "That region is characterized by increasing violence and instability as governments, facing the pressures of globalization and the information revolution, lose the ability to control pent-up discontent."⁵²

Several factors lead to discontent in the African population. First, the impact of the AIDS epidemic in Africa has further strained already failing economies in many nations. With fewer workers capable of going to work, entire businesses are failing, leaving the healthy workers without jobs and without an income.⁵³ In addition to the economic impact, AIDS is also impacting security. According to Metz, "About a quarter of the police force in South Africa is HIV positive or has AIDS," which

⁵¹ Robert Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War*. New York: Random House (2000): 4-20.

⁵² Metz, *Refining American Strategy*, 1.

⁵³ Metz, *Refining American Strategy*. In South Africa – the continent's most developed country and its potential economic locomotive – the AIDS infection rate among adults is expected to climb from 11 percent to 18 percent by the year 2005. The Health Minister of Nigeria estimated that 5.8 million Nigerians were HIV positive or had AIDS, and it was spreading at a rate of one person per minute.

negatively impacts the government's ability to provide a well-trained and viable police force.⁵⁴

In addition to the AIDS epidemic, many countries in Africa are inundated with drugs, corruption and crime. For example, "Nigerian organized crime groups are heavily involved in the global heroin trade, and South Africa, Ghana, and Cote d'Ivoire are becoming important transshipment points for drugs."⁵⁵ The lucrative nature of drug trafficking and the need to generate funds to stay in power, have caused many governments to turn to corruption to maintain control. This corruption, ironically, prevents the countries from getting what they really need, an influx of international capital investment. "At a time when Africa desperately needs capital to fuel development, foreign investment is dissuaded not only by Africa's lack of infrastructure, educated workforce, and functioning legal systems, but also by the depths of corruption and nepotism."⁵⁶ Short-term resistance to corruption by existing governments might provide the alternative resources necessary to avoid the need for corruption and reap the long-term benefits of international investment for the future.

Finally, even those nations that are managing the AIDS crisis and have minimized the drug trafficking and crime are not militarily or politically capable of effectively leading during a complex emergency. African and world leaders have recognized this fact and are attempting to remedy the situation through various means. Within Africa, leaders established the continent-wide Organization of African Unity (OAU) to diffuse potential conflicts. Regional lead nations have gone a step further and

⁵⁴ Ibid., 21.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 17.

established economic institutions and regional security functions to facilitate trade and the stability necessary for an effective market economy.

Each of these organizations serves a unique purpose but is still lacking in capability to deal with major complex emergencies. Leaving peace operations to a regional or sub-regional organization raises significant issues in terms of the political and military viability of the forces available for such a mission. As Morrison-Taw and Grant-Thomas state, “political viability can exist only when the coalition members have strong mutual interests.”⁵⁷ The degree of conflict within and between states in Africa makes political viability an issue from the onset of any potential operation. Concerning the Congo, for instance, “...the neighbors are already fighting over the country like hyenas round a corpse.”⁵⁸ This immediately adds an element of distrust between the factions and the peacekeeping or peacemaking force, making the operation much more difficult.

Morrison-Taw and Grant-Thomas go on to state that, “...military viability is relative only to the requirements of the operations at hand.”⁵⁹ Military viability is also an issue in Africa. “Regional peacemaking sounds good. But few regions, Europe apart, have either the men or the money to mount such an operation.”⁶⁰ This is especially true in Africa. Many African countries cannot afford to organize, train, equip, and sustain a military force large enough to parcel out for regional peacekeeping duties. Those that have the force structure, do not have the money to keep the equipment functioning or to adequately train forces for the mission. In a 1996 article it was noted that African nations “...lack military capabilities to conduct successful humanitarian or peace

⁵⁷ Jennifer Morrison-Taw and Andrew Grant-Thomas, “U.S. Support for Regional Complex Contingency Operations: Lessons from ECOMOG,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 22, No. 1 (Winter, 1999), 53.

⁵⁸ *The Economist*. “Special: The UN’s missions impossible,” (London: August 5, 2000), 25.

⁵⁹ Morrison-Taw and Grant-Thomas, “Lessons from ECOMOG,” 53.

operations on their own” and “...lack the military capabilities to handle any but the most benign contingencies.”⁶¹ Specific shortcomings mentioned included the size of the military forces available, the capabilities of the force, and experience. Though progress has been made in some of these areas by various countries, this general conclusion still holds true in 2001.

Complicating the various shortcomings of these regional organizations is the fact that peace operations have gotten increasingly complex over the past 15 years. Peace operations are no longer simply an observer mission between two parties to an established agreement. Although that is still a possibility, as is likely in the border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, it is the least likely scenario for most African crises. Peace operations usually entail some measure of resistance to any accord, if there is one, and are highly politicized and publicized events. In addition, peace operations are now almost always multinational in nature – complicating the command and control issue for less developed countries who have no money to establish training programs to facilitate communication flow with other nations’ militaries.

⁶⁰ *The Economist*, 24.

⁶¹ Bajusz and O’Prey, *All African Peace Force*, 2.

CHAPTER FOUR

LIMITED POSSIBILITIES

Australia led a successful coalition into East Timor. But it is rare for a threatened third-world country to have a first-world godfather of that sort, with the political will to lead a charge and the capability to succeed.⁶²

A Strategic Studies Institute report recommends that future U.S. responses to African crises should look very similar to U.S. support in East Timor. Specifically, it says, “In nearly all cases, American military support to such interventions should take the form of planning, intelligence, training, logistics, and mobility rather than the use of U.S. combat forces.”⁶³ This is the same force structure used in support of Australia. This recommendation, however, does not take into consideration the significant differences between the crisis in East Timor and the likely scenarios requiring international support in Africa. There are limited possibilities in Africa for a lead nation, thereby limiting the practicality of the East Timor model to only certain regions.

Several deficiencies prevent many African nations from being considered for the lead nation role in a regional peace operation. A National Defense University report says, “...none of the potential Sub-Saharan African contributors possess the capability to deploy an effective headquarters for a multi-brigade (e.g. 12,000 personnel) peace operation in any but the most peaceful of environments.”⁶⁴ Most African nations are also deficient in terms of numbers of forces available, critical capabilities such as communications and transportation, and level of experience in conducting and leading peace operations.

⁶² *The Economist*, 25.

⁶³ Metz, *Refining American Strategy*, 50.

⁶⁴ Bajusz and O’Prey. *All African Peace Force*, 1.

In terms of forces available for peace operations, the report states, “Even by skimming equipment off the rest of their military units in order to equip their peace force units, only eight countries could contribute reasonably equipped units that are basically ready to participate.”⁶⁵ These eight nations are: Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. Capability shortages are the same as those that were absent in East Timor: signal, transportation, and logistics.⁶⁶ Logistically, “none...possess enough skilled logisticians or a deployable network for its forces, let alone a multinational force. Indeed, they often have trouble keeping their forces supplied even when deployed within their own borders.”

Two additional factors are also important and are relevant differences in the situations between potential scenarios in Africa and the operation in East Timor. One is the ability to command and control forces available. The diverse nature of African forces, constant turmoil within and between countries, and the tension between ethnic, tribal, and religious groups make this a difficult task in the African region. Second, the legitimacy of the lead nation in the eyes of the belligerents and the international community is a critical component that was obviously present in East Timor but may be difficult in Africa. With such a bleak picture, what are the possibilities to consider?

Organization of African Unity – OAU

Understanding the need to create an African organization to handle African crises, African leaders created the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The organization was established in 1963 to promote peace and stability on the continent of Africa. In its

⁶⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

original charter, the organization focused primarily on interstate conflicts and economic cooperation between African nations. As the Cold War ended, the organization realized the need to address the larger and more complex issues of intra-state conflicts and its role in them. In 1993, the OAU established a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution. This mechanism was aimed at “anticipatory and preventive measures and concerted actions...to...obviate the need to resort to complex and resource demanding peace-keeping operations.”⁶⁷

This statement is indicative of the OAU's reluctance, from the outset, to get involved in member states' internal affairs, especially if it involves a peace enforcement role. The organization was designed to prevent conflict – not to respond to it - and has stayed true to that intent in its relatively short history. The OAU's first attempt at peacekeeping in Chad from 1980-1981 was considered a disaster and resulted in organizational resistance to future direct involvement.⁶⁸ For that reason, and others, most outsiders say, “The OAU has the potential to be very significant but remains ineffective.”⁶⁹

With help from the United Nations, the OAU is trying to improve its capabilities. The United Nations Department of Peacekeeping (UNDP) has implemented a “system-wide initiative on Africa” to increase the OAU's capabilities in peace-making and peace-building. Specifically the UNDP is focusing on three actions: 1) strengthening the OAU's capacity for peace-building by improving communications and planning cells; 2)

⁶⁷ Chris J. Bakwesegha. “Conflict Resolution in Africa – A New Role for the Organization of African Unity?” In *Out of Conflict: From War to Peace in Africa*. eds. Gunnar Sorbo and Peter Vale (Sweden: Motala Grafiska, 1997), 79-96.

utilizing mass media to enhance communications within countries to generate popular support for action; and 3) strengthening selected civil society organizations to interact with, and participate in, governmental activities to preserve human rights.⁷⁰ In the meantime, the organization is still “reluctant to undertake peace enforcement” as a mission and relies heavily on sub-regional organizations and the United Nations to conduct missions that go beyond election observing or mediation.⁷¹

Sub-Regional Organizations

With the OAU unable, or unwilling, to become decisively engaged in more complex peace operations, leading nations in the various sub-regions of Africa have had to fill the gap. Steven Metz says,

Facing thunderstorms of violence and diminishing interest by outside powers, Africa’s leaders have attempted to forge some sort of new, post-Cold War strategic framework. Regional economic organizations such as the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and, to a lesser extent, the East African Community (EAC) have assumed security functions, in part to compensate for the weakness of the continent-wide Organization of African Unity.”⁷²

Although created as predominantly economic organizations to promote trade and economic expansion within specific African sub-regions, they “have expanded into the security realm” in an effort to promote the stability required for economic progress.⁷³

In 1997, it was noted that there was “a pressing need to restructure and strengthen these sub-regional organizations, which have no meaningful tradition in getting involved

⁶⁸ John P.J. Brooks. “A Military Model for Conflict Resolution in Sub-Saharan Africa,” *Parameters*, (Winter, 1997-98), 108-110.

⁶⁹ Metz, *Refining American Strategy*, 5.

⁷⁰ UNDP – UN Initiative on Africa, available from <http://www.synapse.net/acdi20/reports/un.htm>. accessed April 20, 2001.

⁷¹ Metz, *Refining American Strategy*, 5

⁷² *Ibid.*, 1.

in conflict resolution, so that they become an integral part of the partnership of the United Nations...”⁷⁴ This expanded role for regional forces is in accordance with Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter which allows regional organizations to intervene in conflicts as long as there is Security Council authorization.⁷⁵

Though there are five distinct sub-regions in Africa, the two regional organizations most able to take the lead in peace operations in the near term are the Southern African Development Community (SADC), led by South Africa, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), led by Nigeria. Both of these organizations have experience with regional peace enforcement and stability operations.⁷⁶ They also have relatively advanced military capability, sustainable economic systems, and democratically elected governments. Though both are newly emerging democracies (South Africa in 1994 and Nigeria in 1999), their significance in the region makes their success as democracies important to U.S. national strategic interests.⁷⁷

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

One of the two major regional organizations in Africa is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). ECOWAS was formed as an organization for economic cooperation but has since established a military capability to support regional objectives. In its relatively short history, this military arm has already been involved in two significant peace operations. The first, in Liberia, was an all-African force led by the ECOWAS Military Observer Group (ECOMOG). For seven years Nigeria led the

⁷³ Ibid., 5-6.

⁷⁴ Bakwesegha, “A New Role,” 87.

⁷⁵ Institute for National Security Studies, McNair Paper #58 (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, June 1998).

⁷⁶ Metz, *Refining American Strategy*, 3-4.

regional force in an effort to restore stability to a country that had been torn apart by violent civil war.⁷⁸ While some laud this effort,⁷⁹ others criticize ECOMOG actions to the point of saying, "...the ECOMOG operation embodied serious flaws which make it an imperfect model upon which to build future African intervention capabilities."⁸⁰ As evidenced by Nigeria's actions in Sierra Leone in 1997, the flaws demonstrated in Liberia have not yet been remedied.

With a civil war continuing in Sierra Leone, and still basking in the perceived success of restoring the government in Liberia, Nigeria again led the ECOMOG contingent in support of stability in the region. Many of the same issues that emerged in the earlier conflict in Liberia, however, arose again in Sierra Leone. For instance, "The ECOMOG intervention encountered substantial difficulties...and several of its initial forays were routed by the junta and the RUF."⁸¹ In January of 1999, the rebels attacked and almost captured the capital, Freetown. The situation was so precarious that the U.N. Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) evacuated its personnel.⁸² Even though ECOMOG forces retook the capital shortly thereafter, this action seriously undermined the credibility of the force and reinvigorated rebel activity.

With increased violence, the UN changed the mission from UNOMSIL, a predominantly observer mission, to the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), a peace enforcement operation, and authorized several thousand additional soldiers. Even so, ECOMOG encountered difficulties in handling the rebel forces.

⁷⁷ Former Secretary of State Madeline Albright listed Nigeria as one of four emerging democracies that were critical for U.S. support. The others were Colombia, Indonesia, and the Ukraine.

⁷⁸ Metz, *Refining American Strategy*, 32.

⁷⁹ Morrison-Taw and Grant-Thomas, 53-77.

⁸⁰ Christopher Tuck. "'Every Car or Moving Object Gone': The ECOMOG Interventions in Liberia." available from <http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v4/v4i1a1.htm> accessed 21 April 2001.

⁸¹ Bolton, "United States Policy," 129-147.

“After several incidents in which UN peacekeepers were stripped of their weapons by various rebel forces, the Security Council, in Resolution 1289 (Feb 7, 2000), authorized an expansion of UNAMSIL to 11,000 troops.”⁸³ The fact that the predominantly Nigerian forces of ECOMOG had such difficulty with the RUF rebel forces leads to questions about their ability to provide the majority of combat forces for successful peace enforcement missions in the future.

Just as importantly as their military capability, the Nigerian forces continued to undermine their own legitimacy by engaging in acts contrary to the mission’s success. Various sources report that ECOMOG troops engaged in numerous atrocities and the operation was fraught with “...systematic rights violations by both insurgents and peacekeepers.” In fact, “A UN human rights mission has charged that regional peacekeepers in Sierra Leone have summarily executed dozens of civilians...including children and some 20 patients at Connaught Hospital on January 20th.”⁸⁴

Aside from the atrocities, Nigerians were also accused of participating for selfish rather than humanitarian reasons, further undermining their legitimacy. General Jetley, the force commander in Sierra Leone, noted in a secret report that Nigerian forces in Sierra Leone were “...undermining the UN mandate and pursuing their own agenda.”⁸⁵ Though the Nigerian military and civilian leadership learned from these experiences, perhaps the most important lesson to be learned is that the international community can not yet trust Nigeria to be the lead nation in neighboring countries during peace operations.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ This information can be found on the United Nations Web Site for Sierra Leone – UNAMSIL Background. Located at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/unamsil/UnamsilB.htm>, accessed April 30, 2001.

⁸⁴ Bolton, “United States Policy,” 129-147.

As the lead nation for ECOMOG's efforts in both Liberia and Sierra Leone, Nigeria established itself as a nation willing to take action to build security in its region of the continent. Combined with the country's recent transition to a democratic government, the future is looking more positive for West Africa. Nigeria is so important to regional security that Secretary of State Albright "designated Nigeria's democratic transition one of four in the world which the U.S. has a vital interest in supporting (along with Colombia, Ukraine, and Indonesia)."⁸⁶ According to Howard Jeter, Dep. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, "Nigeria now has the best chance in decades to turn a new democratic chapter in its history."⁸⁷

There are problems, however, with potential Nigerian leadership. While many assert, and some hope, that Nigeria "could conceivably become the U.N.-legitimized regio-cop of western Africa,"⁸⁸ there are still questions concerning the ability of Nigeria to do so. For one, operations in both Liberia and Sierra Leone were violent and, in some cases, questionable. Accusations of atrocities and hidden agendas are not conducive to effective peace operations and would constitute a mission that U.S. forces would not want to be associated with.

Other issues in Nigeria's quest for regional leadership involve issues with drug trafficking and internal instability. Nigeria is known as the "hub of African narcotics trafficking."⁸⁹ Drug trafficking is inconsistent with the ideals of democracy and human rights. Whether true or not, the perception that Nigeria is participating in the

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Metz, *Refining American Strategy*, 28.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Michael Hirsch, "Calling All Regio-Cops," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 79, no. 6, (November/December, 1996), 6.

⁸⁹ Metz, *Refining American Strategy*, 32-3.

trans-shipment of illegal drugs would undermine the country's ability to be a lead nation during a peace operation. Additionally, the fact that Nigeria is still in its infancy when it comes to democratic reform requires a period of observation to ensure that it is going to remain stable. The recent firing, resignation, or retirement of all three of Nigeria's service chiefs could be an indication that the civilian leadership has firm control of the military or it could be a sign of instability and lack of support between the military and the civilian government.⁹⁰ All of these reasons have led some to say that, "Nigeria's political regime and poor record in ECOMOG rule it out of an all-African force absent dramatic change."⁹¹

Southern African Development Community – SADC

The other major regional organization gaining support as a potential lead nation for peace operations in Africa is the Southern African Development Community. Like ECOWAS, the SADC was initiated as an economic institution for "economic cooperation and integration," but created a formal organ for defense, politics, and security in 1996, under the leadership of South Africa. Also like ECOWAS this organization has problems that it must overcome if it is to be a viable force for helping to solve regional crises.

One of the main problems is that effective leadership in the SADC is still lacking. For example, three of the fourteen members of the SADC split with the organization during the crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DROC). During the

⁹⁰ BBC article "Heads of Army, Navy, and Air Force Retire." This article can be found online at <http://www.nigeria.com/dcforum/DCForumID1/703.html>, accessed 10 May 2001.

⁹¹ Bajusz and O'Prey, *All African Peace Force*.

crisis, “Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia sent forces to back President Kabila’s regime, which South Africa opposed.”⁹² An inability to reach consensus regarding regional actions undermines the credibility of the organization and threatens to keep it from becoming a viable peacekeeping entity.

South Africa’s economy and military capabilities make it the obvious leader of the southern Africa region. It must, however, overcome the biases of its history and build trust and cooperation throughout the region to be successful. Unfortunately, according to Metz’ article on refining American strategy in Africa,

...South Africa is unwilling to step out on its own and assume a regional leadership role. South Africa has great economic, political, and military potential, but is haunted by its history of racial repression and regional destabilization. They simply are not accustomed to the responsibilities and burdens of power. ...the net result is an abdication of the potential for leadership.⁹³

The problem is more than one of just South Africa’s unwillingness to lead in the region. Other nations are leery of allowing South Africa to take the lead because of its blemished history. One of the main issues for southern African security is that, “...the politics of the region demand that someone keeps an eye on ‘big brother South Africa’ and ensures it does not become the ‘neighborhood bully’.”⁹⁴ In order to assume the leadership role and make the SADC a capable force, South Africa will have to work to re-establish itself as part of the African community. According to Holtzhausen, “South Africa will have to gain the trust and respect of its neighbors to really fulfill its leadership role.”⁹⁵

⁹² Strategic Assessment 1999, National Defense University Institute for National Strategic Studies, 1999, 160. available at <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/sa99/sa99cont.html>

⁹³ Metz, *Refining American Strategy*, 32.

⁹⁴ H.G. Holtzhausen. “The Main Challenges to Security in the Southern Africa Region,” available at www.mil.za/csandf/cjsupp/trainingformation/defensecollege/researchpapers2000_02/Holtzhauses.htm.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

LIMITED OPTIONS

Given the capabilities and limitations of the major organizations and forces available, is a paradigm shift for U.S. involvement in future African peace operations appropriate? To determine the answer to that question, it is necessary to take a holistic approach and look at both the tactical aspects of the question and the strategic implications of a changing policy. The criteria of feasibility, acceptability, and suitability are used to determine whether the United States' policy and actions in Africa should change to mirror the East Timor model or if some other response is required.

Feasibility

Given the experiences of the past decade, it is apparent that the regional organizations and potential lead nations of Nigeria and South Africa have the ability to conduct peace operations in Africa – either with or without substantial support from the international community. Nigeria's actions in Liberia were ultimately successful and were accomplished without military forces from non-African states. The possibility for success, however, does not imply an optimal solution.

Even with shortcomings in certain areas, the SADC and ECOMOG can conduct peace operations within their respective regions. In areas where they are deficient, they can be trained and augmented in a fairly short period of time to facilitate success. This capability is currently not available in all regions, however. Other regions in Africa either do not have the capability or present unacceptable alternatives to surrounding nations. While most regional nations in southern and western Africa can accept the lead of South Africa and Nigeria respectively, other regions do not have an obvious lead nation. For example, "...no one in the east of the continent wants the recalcitrant

Ethiopians or the Kenyans, the dominant powers of that region, moving in to solve their problems any time soon.”⁹⁶

While the two major powers of Nigeria and South Africa make the concept of an African-led force a feasible alternative in some instances, there are conflicts in other areas that cannot be adequately responded to by these forces. Therefore, limited U.S. (or non-African) support is currently feasible only in the the southern and western African regions. Attempting to expand Nigeria’s or South Africa’s lead to other regions would be unacceptable both in terms of regional credibility and the increased costs to both economies in expanding to include too many conflicts. Conflicts in other regions will require U.S. or other developed nation support to be successful.

Acceptability

Assuming regional organizations are capable of conducting these operations, would it still be in the best interest of the United States to support them as lead nations with critical assets? Acceptability for the United States should be assessed based on the costs and benefits of relinquishing a major role and allowing an African nation to lead an operation with U.S. support. There are both short term and long term implications of accepting this model.

In the short term, the potential savings to the U.S. in terms of OPTEMPO for combat troops makes this an attractive option. There would be little actual cost savings, however, as the U.S. would undoubtedly support any operation both through U.N. dues and direct assistance to the lead nation. This is what the U.S. did for Nigeria

⁹⁶ Hirsch, “Regio-Cops,” 6.

during its several years in Liberia. According to a White House press release from August of 2000, the U.S. “contributed over \$100 million to these ECOMOG efforts.”⁹⁷

More important than monetary cost, however, is the potential cost in terms of world leadership. First, there is the potential of a tarnished image associated with supporting an effort that might fail. There is always the danger that sending an incapable force would undermine both the UN’s and that state’s credibility – reducing their potential utility in future operations. Similarly, supporting a force that commits atrocities or promotes hidden agendas would also undermine world opinion of both nations. Given the performance of Nigeria in its recent operations, this is a distinct possibility. At a minimum, direct involvement of either U.S. or other western forces improves the likelihood that international norms will be adhered to. As Bajusz and O’Prey argued,

“If recent peace operations experience in Africa teaches one lesson, it is that African militaries tend to perform far better when they are working with a degree of Western participation (e.g. UNITAF), than when they are all alone (e.g., ECOMOG).”⁹⁸

Finally, what are the potential repercussions in terms of relations between African countries as potential regional hegemons assume a larger role? As Sharif Shuja wrote in reference to the repercussions for Australia in the Pacific, “The greatest risk to Australia is that independence for East Timor will actually complicate bilateral relations with Indonesia and pose a new set of political, economic and security problems.”⁹⁹ The relationships between nations in Africa are sufficiently tenuous to argue that the use of

⁹⁷ White House Press Release, “U.S.-Nigerian Cooperation on Peacekeeping and Military Reform.” (August 26, 2000) available at <http://www.faa.org/man/dod-101/ops/war/2000/08/war-000826-sleone.htm>

⁹⁸ Bajusz and O’Prey. *All African Peace Force*.

⁹⁹ Shuja. “Australia’s Role,” 138-146.

regional organizations might actually increase the number of conflicts in the region. Having potential regional hegemony respond may actually increase the number of UN-endorsed operations as regional powers “volunteer” to assist neighbors with the real intent of furthering their own agendas.

In summary, the short-term savings to the U.S. are indeed an acceptable outcome of a changing U.S. paradigm of support. However, the potential negative consequences, which are more likely than not in the current environment of Africa, make this shift an unacceptable one for U.S. leaders to make at this time.

Suitability

Finally, allowing African regional forces to lead in peace operations is not suitable given the environment in Africa. Regional hegemony may be perceived as having too much of an interest in the regional issues and therefore cannot remain impartial during the conduct of the operation. For example, in reference to Nigeria’s actions in Sierra Leone, John Bolton notes that,

...the Lome Agreement and its subsequent implementation were fatally defective in not dealing with the inherent problem of involving Nigerian and other ECOMOG forces. From the public record, it seems simply to have been assumed that it was proper for Nigeria, far and away the largest country in the region, to have a major role, without considering either the Nigerian agenda or the view of Nigeria and ECOMOG within Sierra Leone...¹⁰⁰

U.S. doctrine, and U.N. intent, is that the international forces involved in peace operations remain committed to the idealistic concept of human rights via impartial

¹⁰⁰ Bolton. “United States Policy,” 129-147.

treatment to both sides in the conflict.¹⁰¹ This does not appear to be the case in recent operations.

Finally, does it meet U.S. intent to support regional organizations rather than individual national leaders? According to Hirsch,

The entire U.S. government is still built around bilateral relations. U.S. ambassadors to nations are far more powerful than their counterparts to regional organizations; within the State Department, weak desk officers run most regional policy.¹⁰²

He goes on to add, “To pursue regionalism, the U.S. really has to have a tolerance of regional objectives...and of regional methods.”¹⁰³ The problem with this is that the U.S. espouses certain principles and values that may not be professed by the regional lead nation – or at least by member nations in a regional organization. Theoretically, what would be the strategic implications of U.S. interacting more with regional organizations and less with national governments? Would this signal the further demise of the dominance of the nation-state in international politics? Would it have a significant impact on the global political/military environment? The answers to these questions are obviously yes but are beyond the scope of this paper. Given the implications, however, the regional approach may not be a suitable alternative in the near term.

¹⁰¹ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 100-23 Peace Operations*. (Washington, D.C. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994), 16-19. Impartiality is essential in promoting legitimacy during peace operations. Legitimacy is one of six principles of peace operations in U.S. doctrine.

¹⁰² Hirsch, 8.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

...a number of developing nations with inadequately trained troops and inferior equipment have provided the bulk of the world's peacekeeping needs. Many of them are not exactly role models at home in the enforcement of human rights. This is not a model that can succeed.¹⁰⁴

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Futurists, strategists, military officers, and civilian leaders all agree that peace operations and humanitarian relief activities will continue well into the future. Any location where “innocent men, women, and children are being expelled and exterminated is an important place. It is a place that asks about the philosophy by which we claim to live.”¹⁰⁵ This ideology, combined with the effects of increased media attention and global accessibility to the carnage of the world's crisis locations, ensures that there will be pressure on the United States to participate as a partner in many of these operations. The U.S. responsibility as the world's only economic and military superpower is to respond accordingly. It is the nature of that response that is the critical issue for the United States and the international community.

CONCLUSIONS

The Organization of African Unity is weak and unable to lead Africa into the future without substantial changes. The organization is still unwilling, and unable, to take on a role broader than mediating conflicts and attempting to prevent escalation. While these are noble and necessary tasks, the OAU could potentially do much more. With significant training on joint operations, planning, and commanding and controlling forces

¹⁰⁴ MacKenzie, *Policing the World*, B3.

in the field, the OAU could add legitimacy to regional peacekeeping efforts. The organization could ensure that lead nations such as Nigeria or South Africa do not get involved in the internal affairs of other states solely for their own benefit. The OAU must increase its capabilities and take on an expanded role for there to be sustained peace in Africa.

At the sub-regional level, there are potential lead nations who are capable of conducting peace operations, but only over minimal distances and for short durations. Most, if not all, of the African nations lack the military forces, training, and resources to take on the lead-nation responsibilities for complex contingencies over extended periods. Although there are significant attempts being made to improve capabilities, South Africa and Nigeria are still years away from being able to successfully lead this type of operation in a manner acceptable to the U.S. and the international community. Even though they currently possess the capability to conduct operations with only minimal assistance, political and social factors inhibit their ability to maintain credibility and legitimacy as peacekeeping forces.

The United States must be involved in African peace operations to a greater extent than it was in East Timor, at least in the near term. Given that “pressure for near total disengagement from the third tier will be particularly strong,” U.S. leadership will be compelled to find ways to minimize U.S. involvement while at the same time protecting strategic interests.¹⁰⁵ Though it may be tempting to stay out of the complex situations in Africa, it is this very complexity which necessitates U.S. involvement. The lack of an established democratic government with an acceptable human rights record or the means

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Strategic Studies Institute, *The Future of American Landpower*, pp. vii-viii.

to command and control a complex peace operation suggests that U.S. forces must get involved if America wants to reap the benefits of an eventually peaceful continent. The significant differences in the social, political, and military aspects of East Timor versus the current and future crisis situations in Africa require a different response from the United States.

There is no doubt that the U.S. cannot lead in every contingency around the world. Where there is a viable alternative, the U.S. should allow others to take the lead – and provide the necessary support to facilitate success. This would demonstrate commitment to the ideals of democracy, free trade, and human rights without overtaxing the U.S. military. In Africa, however, this capability does not yet exist for major complex contingencies. One assessment is that potential African lead nations,

...could develop the capacity to plan, lead, and control complex peacekeeping operations within 5 years if given appropriate assistance. It will be at least 10 years before most African militaries could deploy and sustain peacekeeping forces for extended periods of time far beyond their national borders without assistance.¹⁰⁷

In the meantime, the U.S. must decide how to support these nations as they progress towards the capability for independent action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Even if it is not feasible, nor acceptable, for the U.S. to supply the majority of forces for each African crisis, the U.S. must supply more than just critical support personnel similar to East Timor. To prevent the potential atrocities that have occurred in recent operations and to add legitimacy to the African forces being utilized, U.S. ground troops

¹⁰⁷ Metz, *Refining American Strategy*, 48.

must be present and visible – both to the belligerents and to the African forces on the ground.

There are other actions the U.S. can take to improve the long-term prospect of an all-African peace force. Efforts at building military capability, such as the African Crisis Response Initiative and the African Center for Strategic Studies, must be continued and expanded. African regional and sub-regional organizations must get more training, and practice, in the command and control of large numbers of forces across a dispersed area. Efforts must be taken to strengthen the resolve and capability of the Organization of African Unity. Finally, there must be increased military officer and unit exchanges to expose as many African soldiers as possible to the key concepts of civil/military relationships, professionalism, democracy, and human rights. The same values must be translated through diplomatic means to the civilian leaders of each African nation.

It is strategically important that the U.S. continue to build the capabilities of international forces to respond to crises in their particular parts of the world. Providing ample support now demonstrates and reinforces U.S. resolve to assist in creating a peaceful world. Efforts in the short term to create the capabilities for long term stability will ultimately benefit the United States as well as the people of Africa. Though African nations do not have the capabilities at this time, it does not mean that they will never be able to conduct these operations successfully as lead nations. On the contrary, the fact that African leaders have the desire to solve their own problems, and the economic and political necessity to do so, makes it imperative that the U.S. seize this opportunity to help them in this transition.

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