

Securitizing Development through Military Intervention?

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The US Military in Africa: Enhancing Security and Development?

by Jessica Piombo (ed)

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Jessica Piombo's edited collection, *The US Military in Africa: Enhancing Security and*

Development, examines the US Department of Defence's (DoD) shift from traditional to non-traditional role that blends security, governance and development in sub-Saharan Africa. The book shows this shift and examines the nexus in the context of the hegemonic discourse that the world will be a secure place if poor countries and fragile states got the opportunity to develop (Stern & Öjendal 2010). This nexus brought governance into the paradigm of securitization of development since attention to the multiple layers of governance, where security laws are made and brokered, is vital in the quest for development (Luckham and Kirk 2013). In this shift, the role of the United States (US) military goes beyond mere 'training and equipping' to include reconstruction and humanitarian activities (p. 213). The book provides a glimpse of the way the US tried to provide a multidimensional solution to the security problem of Africa with the conviction that its own security is grounded on the success of liberal ideals in other lands (Dexter 2008). It elucidates how the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) was formed in 2007 to integrate security and development and how it assumed the task of designing and enforcing the DoD programs in sub-Saharan African countries. The book also indicates how AFRICOM came to be in charge of those programs that were under US Pacific Command, US Central Command, and the US European Command. The creation of AFRICOM showed how the problem of governance and development in Africa became an indirect security threat to the US after the 9/11 attack.

The war on terror, which came after the 9/11 attack and has been formulated within the humanitarian narrative, is based on the rhetoric that the US's national security relies on the triumph of liberal ideals in countries other than the US (Dexter 2008). It marks a change in the US military's role from traditional to non-traditional security activities where the military plays a significant role in security, humanitarian activities, reconstruction and development. This brought governance into the security-development nexus in Africa, adding governance to Anan's dictum that development and security are two sides of the same coin (Annan in Stern & Öjendal 2010). While some are critical of this security development nexus, claiming that it is reduced to the anti-terror operation and security program of the West without noticeably adjusting the significance of security to boosting development and decreasing poverty, others believe the opposite (Luckham 2009).

The editor and contributors to the volume under review argue that the deeprooted economic and social insecurity, lack of good governance and poverty not only cause national security problems in fragile states but also in the US. Piombo, the editor and author of three chapters of the book, noting that DoD security policies were linked to development and poverty reduction in the anti-terror operation worldwide (Stern & Öjendal 2010), argues that 'efforts to address any single side of the triangle must take into account the others' in the nexus too (p. 1). Secondly, the old ways of treating human security independently of state security are not enough. With the declining of interstate conflict and the rise of conflict within states (Dexter 2008, Kaldor 2013, Luckham 2009, Oberschall 2010), it is true that relying on the old ways of treating human security and addressing the challenges of a 'new war' may not be successful (Kaldor 2013). Furthermore, the DoD's shift from traditional to non-traditional military activities is unnecessary.

Bringing governance to the nexus fills the gap in the securitization of development since it is important to know the way security arrangements are made at the global, regional and local levels, as well as their strengths and inconsistencies in the process of development (Luckham 2009). The editor and contributors not only draw on the wider academic debates in the field but they have also used case studies, besides their analysis of policy and strategy documents of the DoD, USAID, AFRICOM and other state documents. The volume is an important contribution to the academic debate that transcends the security development nexus and considers governance as one of the strands in the nexus, quite apart from the areas of future research that it opens up. A delicate treatment of such concepts as 'fragile states', 'underdevelopment', 'liberal peace', 'governance', 'social movement' and 'humanitarian assistance', among others, enhances the value of the volume.

Framing states as 'fragile' is making ways for intervention using the rhetoric of the responsibility to protect that has a role of sanctioning the intervention of the international community in fragile or failing states in the Global South (Luckham 2009). Walther-Puri, one of the contributors, writes that 'the most persistent and potentially dangerous threats come from fragile states that offers [*sic*] violent extremist organizations a safe haven to exist, plan and carry out attacks... threaten the security and prosperity of not only Africans across the continent but, Europe and the US as well' (p. 83). However, terrorists from the West can be invoked as a counterargument to invalidate this claim. It is also proof that development, which tends to be inherently regulatory (Duffield and Hewitt 2009), by itself cannot bring security. Cognizant of this O'Gorman (2011) argues that instead of reducing conflict, development itself can be harmful and result in discrimination that induces conflict. Unpacking the problem rather than repeating the narratives of the colonial past is important. Taking into account the current shift in the intervention discourse from failed state to fragile state (Duffield and Hewitt 2009), that discourse is founded on streamlining the tools of government to the prevailing social order (Duffield 2012). The discourse in this case is to make African countries fit the label 'fragile' to justify humanitarian intervention. Surprisingly, such interventionism embodies the prolongation of the governance articulated and by the European powers (Duffield and Hewitt 2009).

Portraying Africa as underdeveloped, full of failures and violence is perpetuating the same stereotype of the hegemonic colonial discourse. This is evident in Talentino's (one of the contributors) generalization that 'Africa demonstrates the wider problem of the link between underdevelopment, civil conflict, and failing states' (p. 12). If the hegemonic colonial discourse of the past is implicit in the current development paradigm and, conversely, if the current development paradigm consists of the colonial discourse of the past, the comparison being made is precisely with the Western liberal model of colonial governance (Duffield and Hewitt 2009). This conception of Africa not only shows how the Global South has been shaped by the hegemonic colonial discourses of the West (Escobar 2012), but also puts various African countries in a single box, disregarding the 'pockets' of success stories. For post-development thinkers, development itself is considered not only as the cause but also as the custodian of the inequalities between individuals and nations instead of being a solution to them (Stern & Öjendal 2010).

Conflict is not always negative. The book misses the positive dimension of conflict. Violent conflict could play a positive role in development beyond being an impediment to it, with the capacity to bring about social and political change (Cramer in Luckham and Kirk 2013; O'Gorman 2011). Moreover, making poverty a root cause is based on a simple assumption that poverty in Africa causes insecurity. Yet, this is not always the case. Poverty cannot always be viewed as a reason for violent conflict. In other words, 'poor' countries are not always fighting one another (O'Gorman 2011). Conversely, development in itself is not a guarantee for peace

and security. Indeed, it might cause conflict in the so-called poor countries in the Global South (Hegre *et al.* 2001).

Emphasizing the US military's role in peacebuilding, Piambo failed to consider the alternative ways of conflict resolution methods that are embedded in the cultures of African societies. AFRICOM, which is based on liberal peace ideals, may not fit the context of African societies. Liberal peace has a tendency to impose liberal ideals which are grounded on a peace building process based on a universalist top-down approach that promotes the involvement of the international community without taking into account the local stakeholders and the indigenous conflict management mechanisms (Luckham and Kirk 2013). As the peace processes initiated by the liberal peace model sidelines local stakeholders (Richmond 2010), it cannot work in African societies. Thus, it is difficult to accept Bouchat's dictum that 'the US military has the ability to not only establish security and stability on foreign soil, but to promote better governance and economic development while doing so' (p.163). In foreign soil and culture, the US has found it difficult even to reduce insecurity, as can be seen from the experience of Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and Libya, let alone promoting good governance and economic development, since local participation, ownership, identity, norms, and historical systems of power, social organisation and peacemaking are excluded by the liberal peace model which highlights the interests and priorities of the Occident (Richmond and Mac Ginty 2014).

The liberal peace model, which suppresses conflict rather than transforming it, is unsuited for African tribal societies, where alternative dispute resolution methods – adjudication, negotiation, mediation and arbitration – have been used for long. We can see these methods, which involve forgiveness and reconciliation, being effective in African societies. Thus, to bring genuine and sustainable peace, peace building should be grounded in and led by local stakeholders instead of the international agencies (Richmond 2010). Peace building relies on the social context and cultural values of specific communities (Luckham and Kirk 2013). In the liberal peace model, which uses force to suppress conflict, however, this forgiveness and reconciliation is totally missing. These alternative ways, which have a proactive approach, provide positive peace that transcends the absence of violence and includes addressing the end of fundamental causes and dynamics of violence in order to avoid its recurrence and to establish a durable peace (O'Gorman 2011) while liberal peace, which has a reactive approach, provides nothing more than negative peace, leaving the conflict to recur.

Although it is important to recognize the way different levels of security hierarchies are made, including their strengths and weaknesses, to succeed in the process of peacebuilding (Luckham 2009), a narrow view of governance, which is limited to 'accountability', is used in the book (p. 65). Sharp, the author of the chapter that links accountability to governance, failed to see the US as one of the multilayers of actors from the local to the supranational level in Africa. Governance – one of the strands of the nexus – is not treated adequately. This broad concept is reduced to accountability, as is seen in the statement that 'accountability is an essential public good – one of the core strands in the rope – inextricably intertwined with both security and development' (p. 78). This equation of governance with accountability implied a twofold limitation: failure to realize the structure of African states and the workings of global governance. A broader view of the concept that encompasses local and supranational levels is required since security is an essential public good at the local, national and international level (Luckham 2009). This broader view enables one to see 'all actors' in the picture of the nexus, for security arrangements are often decided at various levels – local, national and international (Luckham and Kirk 2013). Furthermore, it also helps to understand whether the US can achieve its goal of examining the relationship between different actors – US and African countries on the one hand and US and

other actors on the other hand. It helps to examine whether the 'post-American world' and 'the rise of the rest' is imminent with the expansion of Africa-China relations (Hettne 2010).

The Social Movement approach, which has been suggested for the success of peace operations, is not sufficient as this theory emphasizes the micro level to the neglect of the macro. As Sharp writes, 'central to these efforts will be "bottom-up" citizenled initiative to pressure local governments and security sector institutions and actors for accountability and reform' (p. 79). This is a rather one dimensional perception of the issue. To be successful in security and peace operations at both levels – micro and macro – is indispensable. The social movement theory might enhance its one sided perspective of regime social control with Kaldhor's new war theory (Obreschol 2010).

The editor depoliticizes the already politicized humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian assistance is embedded in politics since development aid has been already subordinated to a politically induced humanitarian intervention (Hettne 2010). Despite the UN's 'responsibility to protect', which brought a political and strategic shift from military intervention to humanitarian intervention, the new humanitarian assistance has been attuned to the interests of supranational organizations and global powers (Luckham 2009). While it is true that aid is given to those countries that are 'strategically important, rather than those merely "objectively" in need of development assistance' (p. 39), Piombo failed to see the already politicized humanitarian assistance. The already politicized humanitarian assistance is also noticeable in the international community's reaction to the recent acts of extremism is militarized, which leads to Chomsky's concept of 'new military humanism' (Dexter 2008). Moreover, Duffield's (2012) *Risk Management and the Bunkering of the Aid Industry* also shows the 'militarised' nature of humanitarian assistance.

Finally, the US should reconsider its dominant security narratives since such narratives not only disempower those who are affected but they are also based on the decisions and social forces that those who suffer the most cannot control (Luckham 2009). These narratives have been producing the radicalism, which is threatening the US and its allies on, their own soil (Dexter 2008). The US should change its 'conflict attitude' policy, which is inspired by Huntington's concept of 'the clash of civilizations' – the thesis behind the war on terror after the 9/11 attack (Huntington in O'Gorman 2011) -towards what it calls 'radicals' (O'Gorman 2011). Refusing individuals their desires and aspirations beyond the basic needs, preventing them from realizing their potential, and depriving them of the chances to fulfil their basic needs are themselves a kind of violence (O'Gorman 2011). Besides, the US and its liberal allies should make these people engage on equal terms by changing the power balance among various social groups in a way that promotes social peace (Duffield and Hewitt 2009). To succeed in ensuring peace and security, it is crucial to give due recognition to those who are affected by insecurity, violence and poverty and the various ways in which they try to stand up for their rights and engage the powers that be (Luckham 2009).

Thus, a new policy and strategy should be devised to ensure that the US and Europe ensure security to their citizens. The new policy and strategy should recognize and acknowledge 'everyone' in his or her own right for security entails not only the right that citizens need to have as an entitlement to be protected from violence but it also presupposes their ability to fully practice this right (Luckham and Kirk 2013). Today, the US and Europe need to engage their Muslim communities in order to work together for a better future since through more inclusion it is possible to reduce and even cut off the flow of new members to extremist organizations (Duffield and Hewitt 2009). Failure to do this would incur a higher price than has been paid already.

These days, particularly when the Occident is in a state of war (Dexter 2008) and a significant number of radicals are emerging from its midst, the US and its allies need to devise a de-radicalization strategy rather than resorting to arms. We have witnessed such a resort to arms creating more hostility and duplicating terror threats in Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq and Libya, to cite just a few examples. The increase of the 'new war' that Kaldhor (2013) speaks about can only be managed with a governance system that acknowledges everyone despite his or her status. Considering that positive and sustainable peace can be realised and that everyone is duty bound to his or her fellow human to work for its fulfilment (Dower 2009), this review recommends a pacifist approach to peace and security, which in turn would enhance development.

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