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# Executive Summary

Dominican Republic official, presidents of Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Bolivia, and former president of Honduras participate in celebration of Ecuador's independence from Spain (Left to right: Professor Nelson Jose Ramirez, Daniel Ortega, Hugo Chávez, Evo Morales, and José Manuel Zelaya)

*In pursuit of [their] goals, leaders of Al Qaeda and its regional affiliates frequently make appeals for support based on a wide range of political positions and, at times, attempt to harness nationalist sentiment or manipulate local grievances to generate support for their agenda.*

— Congressional Research Service  
February 5, 2010

In this issue, *Joint Force Quarterly* explores potential sources of fuel for regional and global insurgencies, energizing sources for which military remedies are few. In the May–June edition of *Foreign Affairs*, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates predicted that “the most lethal threats to [U.S.] safety and security are likely to emanate from states that cannot adequately govern themselves or secure their own territory.” However, many such countries in Africa and the Americas feature postcolonial ethnic barriers to upward mobility, deviations from which threaten castes in national leadership. If the future effectiveness and credibility of the United States will only be as good as the “effectiveness, credibility, and sustainability of its local partners,” what is the United States to do about allies whose domestic policies, power maintenance, and cultural priorities generate precisely the hopelessness and disaffection that transnational terror groups target for exploitation? When does the objective of “building partner capacity” to defend themselves and fight alongside U.S. forces become an impediment to correcting social injustice for indigenous citizens who populate the lower and frequently disconnected strata in these countries? U.S. engagement strategies must be adroitly crafted to obtain regional stability without the unintended and undesirable consequences of perpetuating social inequities that feed transnational terror agendas.

The Forum begins with a timely update from the commander of U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM), General Kip Ward, teamed with the director of his action group, Colonel Tom Galvin, who propose that U.S. interests in their area of responsibility are best served by the stability that follows economic and social advancement through good governance. The authors outline five priority areas for U.S. regional strategy that require long-term engagement and may involve “occasional setbacks.” Contrary to public perception, the activities of USAFRICOM are closely coordinated with the U.S. Chiefs of Mission, and the disparity of comparative resources and visibility should not be misinterpreted by outside observers. The primary role of USAFRICOM is to build partner security capacity in constructive competencies such as peacekeeping, counterinsurgency, and maritime security rather than in conventional warfare skill sets. Small-scale incremental developments on all fronts are being reinforced and orchestrated to promote a more favorable climate for other critical priorities, such as economic opportunity and public health. America’s newest geographic combatant command plays a quiet yet well-coordinated supporting role in promoting African self-determination.

Our second Forum offering comes from Father Clement Aapengnuo, the former Director of the Center for Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies in Damongo, Ghana, who

seeks to dispel the widespread perception that Africa is trammled to an endless cycle of ethnic conflict developed over centuries, presenting an irresistible inertia. While ethnic identification is the predominant means of social identity formation in Africa, it is typically *not* the animating factor in conflict. Father Clement asserts that ethnicity is a favored tool of politicians intent upon mobilizing “supporters in pursuit of power, wealth, and resources.” In fact, he finds interracial cooperation more the norm than the exception. The well-publicized strife in Rwanda between Hutus and Tutsis is motivated more by resources and power than barely distinguishable physical, language, or religious differences. The author argues that virtually all conflicts in Africa can be traced to emotional attitudes of perceived injustice, lack of recognition, and exclusion from resources and power. In his own words: “People do not kill each other because of ethnic differences; they kill each other when these differences are promoted as the barrier to advancement and opportunity.” Because there is a human tendency to reinforce intergroup differences, a rapid response capability within the security sector must be established to quell tensions before they get out of hand.

In the third Forum installment, Professor Martin Andersen of National Defense University’s (NDU’s) Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies addresses “a new dynamism” that has emerged between indigenous communities in Latin America and their national governments. When Europeans conquered the native populations of Central and South America, huge swaths of Indian groups remained largely isolated from urban centers where capital cities and major centers of commerce were located and dominated by white and mestizo elites observing new cultural traditions. The primary interface between these governments and unincorporated populations has been the military and other assorted security forces operating in remote areas and serving as a less than ideal conduit for native assimilation via conscription. The attendant training has imposed the abandonment of native language and culture in favor of “modern” traditions.

The passage of time has not served to reconcile these populations. On the contrary, Native Americans have grown increasingly restive in the face of persistent social barriers to advancement and other points of friction, challenging the status quo and thereby

threatening those in positions of power. In Peru and Ecuador and from Bolivia to Nicaragua—where the entire eastern region has been declared an independent state by the indigenous—there is potential for a “geostrategic hecatomb.” Professor Andersen argues that in Latin America, the military plays a dual role of defending the state against external foes while simultaneously enforcing government control over the national population. With millions of people in Latin America living outside the myriad benefits of democracy, the unfinished business of decolonization, particularly within state security and defense establishments, must continue with greater haste.

As a sidebar to Professor Andersen’s contribution, the Naval Postgraduate School’s Barry Zellen contrasts the loss of indigenous sovereignty through force in southern climes with its loss and steady recovery in the Arctic through soft power and treaty negotiation. There are many lessons in this short yet insightful essay that reveal the mutual value of accommodating and preserving indigenous culture through mediation.

The fourth article carries the Forum’s topical inquiry to America’s doorstep. Ambassador Curtis Ward argues for proactive measures against transnational crime in the Caribbean to prevent the development of “cataclysmic security events.” The Ambassador underscores the increasingly urgent refrain that the United States has not kept pace with regional security and development imperatives and asks: “which comes first?” Threats from increasingly sophisticated transnational crime and terrorism are forcing Caribbean countries to adjust their priorities without the necessary resources to obtain success. The underpinnings for stability and security on America’s “third border” are economic growth and development, as well as ensuring democracy, good governance, and the rule of law.

Our concluding essay finds its way into the Forum because it ties the preceding manuscripts to the potential for irregular war on new fronts, and as extensions of current conflict. Dr. Sebastian Gorka of NDU’s College of International Security Affairs wonders whether increasingly dear national security resources should be spent on defusing the root causes behind violent extremism, or aimed more directly at the irregular forces arrayed against vital U.S. interests. If the latter, Dr. Gorka begins his

investigation where Sun Tzu would have it: a clear-eyed self-assessment. He concludes that despite new capabilities and doctrine, the U.S. national security establishment is entrenched and inflexible.

His analysis then moves to the context of contemporary actors in the global security environment and core assumptions that animate U.S. strategic analysis and planning. For the balance of his work, he examines irregular warfare through a familiar, yet evolved, Clausewitzian prism, where the Westphalian era’s triangle of government, governed, and defenders of the state is displaced by ideologues, global sympathizers, and nonstate threat group(s). He asserts that the most obvious change to the Prussian theorist’s model is the sheer magnitude of resources that the enemy can potentially bring to bear in the modern era. Dr. Gorka concludes with the observation that today we face a foe who is aware that war starts with—and depends upon—ideas far more than it does upon weapons.

Not unlike a virus, al Qaeda has evolved under pressure and its affiliated movements similarly adapt or die in the ill-governed or ungoverned spaces of Africa and the Americas. Hard-pressed elements of the franchise increasingly abandon religious pieties and join with allies of opportunity to persevere in efforts to impose pseudo-religious tyranny. As political scientists Joshua Goldstein and Jon Pevehouse have observed, when social inequities and ethnic tensions cross the line from “who gets what” to “I don’t like you,” conflict is harder to resolve. This is precisely where transnational terror meets untapped opportunities for cooperation and safe harbor. The rise of powerful gangs in Central America and the self-serving activities of opportunistic politicians insinuating the destructive inefficiencies of socialism add to the complexity of theater security cooperation.

As Secretary Gates has noted, advising and mentoring indigenous security forces has moved from the periphery of institutional priorities, where it was considered the province of the Special Forces, to being a key mission for the Armed Forces as a whole. This is a core competency that, if adroitly executed, harbors the potential to preempt requirements for combat operations for decades to come. **JFQ**

—D.H. Gurney