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Africa and the War on Terror

Eddy Maloka

The U.S. war on terror is now in its third year, and the bombings in Afghanistan and Iraq are far from over. Many analysts and policy think-tanks have reflected on the impact of this war on Africa; some have put emphasis on the economy, development aid, security questions, and others on implications for U.S. foreign policy. The intention of this piece is to introduce new elements to the reflection.

Titles such as Morgan Norval's *Inside the ANC: The Evolution of a Terrorist Organization* (1990), remind us of how the definition of "terrorism" has evolved over the years, and the fact that definitions are rarely without ideological assumptions.

During the Cold War, the definition of "terrorism" revolved around two clusters of issues. One category of the "terrorism" definition put more emphasis on what was then a common phenomenon of airline hostage-taking and related activities. The second category directly linked to the Cold War and the armed activities of the liberation movements, particularly in Southern Africa, equated "terrorism" with "communism" and the guerilla movement. Indeed, this definition informed participants in Springbok Radio's "Top Level" programme, which was broadcast on October 30, 1983 with the theme "The Modern face of Terrorism in South Africa," when one of them warned: "The ANC, the PAC, SWAPO, the South African Communist Party are names that have become synonymous with the cowardly acts of the covert world of terrorism."

Similarly, armed political organizations that were supported by the apartheid regime and some Western countries — notably Angola's UNITA and Mozambique's RENAMO — were defined as "rebels" and "liberators" fighting the monster of communism.

The 9/11 attacks have opened a new frontier in the debate over the definition of "terrorism." During the Cold War the defining evil was communism, today "terrorism" is equated with "Islamic extremism." In the spirit of Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations," "terrorism" is presented as the manifestation of Islam's resistance to "civilisation" and Western values. Unlike the "terrorists" of the Cold War period who were associated with a state that represented a particular ideology, the "terrorists" of today, carrying the banner of religion, have no states and belong to the domain of "transnational threats."

There are two related definitional issues that must be highlighted. According to the U.S. Department of State annual report on *Patterns of Global Terrorism*, "the

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term ‘terrorism’ means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.” The U.S. National Security Strategy of September 2002 also argues that the 9/11 events have “taught the United States that weak states can pose as great a danger to our national interests as strong states. Poverty does not make poor people into terrorists and murderers. Yet poverty, weak institutions, and corruption can make weak states vulnerable to terrorist networks and drug cartels within their borders.”

These two citations reflect a tendency in the dominant definition of terrorism to marginalize “state terrorism” as a phenomenon and the “cause” factors — that is, the linkage between a country’s level of development and terrorism. *Patterns of Global Terrorism* limits its notion of state terrorism to “state sponsors of terrorism.” Yet, for many, especially in the developing world, the experience of a state engaged in terrorist activities against a section of its population and its neighbors, as it was the case with apartheid South Africa or the regime currently at the helm of the Israeli state, is an essential component of the definition of terrorism. So is the importance of factoring in development concerns in one’s definition of and strategies against terrorism.

The definition debate is also far from over in Africa, especially as many countries, in response to United Nation Security Council Resolution 1373 of 28 September 2001, are currently passing national anti-terror legislation. The definition of terrorism in these anti-terror laws is so broad and could be used against the opposition and other constituencies organized against the state. Also worrying is the measures provided for in the anti-terror law, such as detention without trial, the establishment of special/military courts, and, in some cases, the institution of the death penalty.

These debates notwithstanding, there is an effort here in Africa to define terrorism in accordance with local conditions. For example, Article 3 of the 1999 OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, emphasizes that “the struggle waged by people in accordance with the principles of international law for their liberation or self-determination, including armed struggle against colonialism, occupation, aggression and domination by foreign forces shall not be considered as terrorist acts.” Similarly, “political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other motives shall not be a justifiable defence against a terrorist act.”

So, the “war on terror” is also a “war of ideas.” But ideas are dangerous because they can be translated into action. If states are excluded in the definition of terrorism, then they can get away with serious crimes such as ethnic cleansing. If the “cause” factors are marginalized and not considered, the “war on terror” will be just a simple military operation, even if this entails the destruction of infrastructure and “collateral damage.”

A Post-Post-Cold War World Order?

The “war on terror” cannot be discussed without tracing the developments back to the immediate post-Cold War era, which had presented Africa with a set of new challenges and opportunities which included new forms of globalization and the transformation of the global security architecture. The response of the continent was very complex, thanks to the democratization wave which came with this process and

the rise of civil society which had been dormant since the late 1960s.

Accompanying this response was, first of all, the ideology of the “African Renaissance,” which was an attempt to reconceptualize the new challenges, especially as these pertain to issues of governance and the promotion of the culture of human rights and the rule of law; efforts aimed at eradicating violent conflicts on the continent; economic development; the affirmation and protection of African culture; and improving Africa’s global standing. Second, and much later, was the transformation of the OAU into the African Union; and, indeed, third, NEPAD as a programme of action for continental socio-economic renewal.

But the post 9/11 period introduced a new dimension to the post-Cold War era. The Clinton Administration’s approach to the world was developed in *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, which was released in October 1998. The document identified as U.S. objectives: to enhance U.S. security; to bolster U.S. economic prosperity; and to promote democracy abroad. The document put U.S. interests into three categories, namely: vital (threaten the survival of the United States); important (threaten the well-being); and humanitarian and other interests. Five threats were identified: regional and state-centered threats; transnational (terrorism, international crime, drug trafficking, etc); spread of dangerous technologies (weapons of mass destruction); foreign intelligence collection and “failed” states. The document argued for the need for an integrated approach that should include diplomacy, multilateralism, and the use of the U.S. military might as a deterrent. The approach to Africa, according to the document, was to be informed by the promotion of democracy; enhancing security, and promoting prosperity.

In the aftermath of 9/11, the Bush administration released *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* wherein the practice of deterrence is rejected in favour of “preemptive strikes.” Terrorism is also elevated in the threat level scale to a principal priority. The approach of the Bush administration, notwithstanding 9/11 as a trigger of the “preemptive strikes” doctrine, was informed by the *Rebuilding America’s Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century* — a document that was released in the presidential election year (September 2000) by the neo-conservative think-tank (The Project for the New American Century), as a blueprint of how the new administration was going to approach global security matters. Members of the think-tank included figures, some of whom now hold key posts in the Bush administration. The document tried to argue for a strategic shift in how the United States approaches the post-Cold War, and advocated for a significant increase in defense spending with the view to defending the U.S. territory; fighting and decisively winning multiple, simultaneous major theatre wars; performing the “constabulary” duties associated with shaping the security environment in critical regions; and transforming U.S. forces to exploit the “revolution in military affairs.” According to the document, the security system of the 21st century will be unipolar; U.S. strategic goal should therefore be to preserve *Pax Americana*. The main military missions should, among others, be to deter the rise of a new great-power competitor; and, according to the document, the main military threat is the potential theatre wars spread across the globe (as opposed to global war across many theatres as was the case during the Cold War). The focus of strategic competition, argued the document, is to shift from Europe to East Asia (primarily because of China).

It has since become apparent, especially with the occupation of Iraq in mind, that the Bush administration is committed to implementing elements of the *Rebuilding*

America's Defenses and *The National Security Strategy*. Thus a new global order is emerging whose key elements include, first, the strategic shift from "states" as threats to "terrorist." So, the "war on terror" can be fought anywhere, and against anybody, with little regard to the rules of the game; hence "regime change" as an approach to "rogue states"; second, the abandonment of the practice of deterrence in favor of "preemptive strikes" doctrine; third, the onslaught on multilateralism and broad principles of global governance, in favour of vulgar unilateralism; fourth, growing militarism; and, finally, the selective use and politicization of "human rights" and "democracy."

Some key figures in the Bush administration have characterized this new era as the "post-post-Cold War," because Russia and China, in particular, are potential U.S. allies in the fight against the new evil — that is, transnational threats (especially terrorism and weapons of mass destruction). According to the U.S. Department of State's Director: Policy Planning Staff, Richard Hass (in his April 2002 lecture to the Foreign Policy Association), the immediate post-Cold War was a "decade of transition defined by uncertainty." Accordingly, he continued, "then came the tragic events of September 11. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon did not create the post-post-Cold War world. But they helped end the decade of complacency." The challenge, according to him: "U.S. foreign policy, therefore, will succeed or fail in the post-post-Cold War world by how well it copes with this era's diverse security challenges, traditional and transnational alike." He then argued for a "doctrine of integration," because "the principal aim of American foreign policy is to integrate other countries and organizations into arrangements that will sustain a world consistent with U.S. interests and values."

Africa's Response to the War on Terror

The importance of Africa in the "war on terror" is relatively insignificant if one were to use Africa's share of the total global terror attacks and casualties as reported in *Patterns of Global Terrorism*. According to this report, between 1997 and 2002, Africa ranked fifth in the "total international terrorist attacks by region" after Latin America, Asia, Western Europe, and the Middle East. The continent is followed by Eurasia and, last in the ranking, North America. In terms of casualties, between the same period, with the exception of 1998 when U.S. embassies were bombed in Kenya and Tanzania, African casualties are comparatively insignificant, with figures for Asia leading the ranking.

Nonetheless, most African countries condemned the 9/11 attacks and cooperated with the U.S. government in the apprehension of suspected terrorists, including the freezing of the bank accounts of suspected organizations. An African anti-terrorism summit was convened in Dakar, Senegal, a month after the 9/11 incident and adopted a Declaration Against Terrorism that proposed, among others, an additional protocol to the OAU Convention on Terrorism. In November, the OAU Central Organ issued a communiqué against terrorism which (among others), and consistent with the continent's definition of terrorism, stressed "that terrorism is a universal phenomenon that is not associated with any particular religion, culture or race," and that terrorism "should be combated in all its forms and manifestations, including those in which States are involved directly or indirectly." In September 2002, the Africa Union (successor to the OAU) convened a senior officials' anti-terrorism meeting in Algiers, Algeria, which adopted a Plan of Action on the Prevention and

Combating of Terrorism with the view to addressing capacity problems on the continent, including the need to accelerate the ratification of the Terrorism Convention. All in all, particularly in response to UN Security Council Resolution 1373, African countries' focus is in four areas.

First of all, is the signing and ratification of international and regional anti-terror instruments, particularly the twelve United Nations conventions and protocols that were developed between 1963 and 1999. African countries' reports to the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee established in terms of Resolution 1373, as well as the *Patterns of Global Terrorism*, are a good source on the state of accession to and ratification of the 12 UN instruments on the continent.

This global drive for activating international anti-terror instruments gave momentum to the continental effort towards the ratification of the OAU Terrorism Convention that was inoperative at the time of the 9/11 attacks. Thanks to this global drive, the OAU Terrorism Convention got into effect in 2003.

Within countries, the expectation, as per Security Council 1373, was that national anti-terror agencies, with executive authority, will be established and a legislative framework put in place for combating terrorism. This has happened and is continuing in many countries across the continent as reflected in the reports to the Counter-Terrorism Committee. But this process, especially the passing of enabling legislation, is not without contradiction as human rights groups and opposition forces in many of these countries, including South Africa, attack the anti-terror law as an onslaught against basic freedoms and, in the case of South Africa, a reintroduction of apartheid-era's brutal internal security regime. But some countries are using the OAU Terrorism Convention and the United Nation's *Legislative Guide to the Universal Anti-Terrorism Conventions and Protocols* as their guide.

The fourth area is in the collaboration with the U.S. global anti-terror military campaign, especially (in the case of Africa) in East Africa and the Horn. The U.S. anti-terrorism policy towards Africa has historically been focused on Sudan and Libya as "states sponsoring terrorism" and Somalia as a "failed state." This policy was given impetus by attacks on U.S. targets in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998.

A number of U.S. military projects are currently in full swing across the continent. One example is the Africa Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA) which was established by the Bush administration in 2002 to replace the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) which was set up by the Clinton Administration to provide training largely in African peacekeeping operations. The program involves troops from Senegal, Uganda, Malawi, Mali, Ghana, Benin, Ivory Coast and Kenya. The main difference between ACRI and ACOTA is that the latter includes, and in line with the "war on terror," training for offensive military operations. Complementing this program is the U.S. Department of State's Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI) aimed at assisting Mali, Niger, Chad, and Mauritania in, among others, protecting their borders and combating terrorism.

Military bases in Africa are another interesting new development. The U.S. European Command is responsible for most African countries, while Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Sudan, Kenya, and Seychelles fall in the sphere of the U.S. Central Command. Comoros and Madagascar, including the Indian Ocean, are the responsibility of the U.S. Pacific Command.

Until recently, only Kenya had a formal agreement that allowed the U.S. to use the country's local military facilities, including the port of Mombasa, which was used during the U.S. intervention in Somalia in 1992-94. From 2001 a process was

put in place which culminated in the establishment of the Headquarters of the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa in Djibouti as a military base for U.S. counter-terrorism operations in six East African countries and Yemen. This development makes Djibouti host to the only U.S. military base in Sub-Saharan Africa.

As to allies to U.S. operations in the Horn and East Africa, Kenya, and Ethiopia remain the most important, and to some extent, Uganda. And thanks to the “war on terror,” the Bush administration reversed Clinton’s policy of isolation towards Sudan by getting involved in the peace talks between the south and the government in Khartoum. A breakthrough is now imminent in the talks, and a peace agreement is about to be signed.

As shown later, West Africa has largely been a focus area in U.S. policy because of its oil reserves. Indeed, the NATO Supreme Commander U.S. Gen. James Jones remarked in 2003 that: “The carrier battle groups of the future and the expeditionary strike groups of the future may not spend six months in the Mediterranean Sea, but I’ll bet they’ll spend half the time going down the West Coast of Africa,” because, according to him, the region included “large, ungoverned areas . . . that are clearly the new routes of narco-trafficking, terrorists’ training, and hotbeds of instability.” The recent coup attempt in Sao Tome and Principe prompted reports to the effect that the United States was planning to open a military base in that small island.

One area where the African Union and many African countries differed with the U.S. anti-terrorism campaign was in the motivation for the war against Iraq. The U.S. campaign to mobilize global support for the war in Iraq did indeed win some sympathy among African countries such as Uganda and Ethiopia, but in general, most African countries were not convinced that a peaceful route to the settlement of the issue was not possible.

Africa’s Development Forgotten?

The U.S. reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq must be teaching us a good lesson down here in the Dark Continent. We must be sitting and watching with great concern how countries around the world and international organizations are being mobilized to dig deep into their pockets to support reconstruction efforts in those two countries.

This demonstration of political will and the mobilization of the rich of the world are not new. The Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of post-World War II Europe is one example. During the Cold War, those who were friends of the West were rewarded with golden hand-shakes to the extent that, especially in East Asia, some of those countries are today economic success stories.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and East Europe was also greeted with joy, and resources flowed to that part of the world to build new institutions and construct capitalist economies.

The Afghan and Iraqi experiences are, however, unprecedented in some respect. Reconstruction support websites are in place for the two countries, hosted by the U.S. government, to mobilize donors and the private sector. Ministerial meetings are being convened to urge the rich to come on board. For example, at the ministerial Conference on the Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan held in Tokyo, Japan, in January 2002, over twenty countries pledged U.S. \$1.8 billion for the first year, and U.S. \$4.5 billion for the successive two-and-a-half years. An Afghanistan

Reconstruction Trust Fund was established four months later. In one of its donor reports of 2003, actual paid-in contributions to the Fund by October 1st of that year were U.S. \$366.9 million, with U.S. \$95.9 expected by March 20, 2004.

The elections scheduled to take place in Afghanistan in June 2004, have also added a new momentum to the resource mobilization effort for the country. One important gesture was the allocation of U.S. \$ 1.6 billion to the country by the U.S. government from the U.S. \$ 87.5 billion supplemental appropriation fund signed into law recently by President Bush. This gesture was well received by, among others, the U.S. Under Secretary of Treasury for International Affairs: "A surge in our reconstruction effort can now yield big payoffs both economically and politically. Afghanistan is an extremely poor country. Without strong economic growth, it will stay poor for a long time. An acceleration of the economic reconstruction effort now will help stimulate that economic growth. It will also help to lock-in politically the important gains that have been achieved thus far. When the Afghan people go to the polls next June, how will they view the improvements in their own lives? Will they feel that the progress lives up to their expectations? We want the answer to be 'Yes.'"

However, a chunk of the fund appropriated recently by the Bush administration will be for "Operation Iraqi Freedom." Of course, U.S. \$50 billion will be for military operations, and U.S. \$5 billion for "public law, order and safety." U.S. \$15 billion from this fund will be used to "build... clinics; provide safe, clean drinking water; open ports, railroad and airports; restore oil production; [and] provide reliable electrical service."

Iraq has also had its international donor conference which was held late 2003 in Madrid, Spain. The conference concluded on a positive note: "Donors noted that priorities for Iraq's reconstruction in 2004 and beyond include strengthening institutions for sovereign, transparent, and good government, restoring critical infrastructure and core human services and supporting economic and social transition that provides both growth and social protection." U.S. \$33 billion was pledged, including U.S. \$5 billion from Japan and U.S. \$500 million from Kuwait.

The World Bank had estimated that the Iraqi reconstruction effort will need an injection of U.S. \$56 billion over the period 2004–07, hence the BBC could lament after the Madrid donor conference: "With \$20 billion already pledged by the United States, the \$33 billion total falls short of the estimated \$56 billion needed to rebuild the war-torn country."

Reading this BBC lament from down here in the Dark Continent, one could ask: does the difference of just \$3 billion really matter?

One thing that is very clear is that the strategic interests of the West determine donor enthusiasm more than mere moral outrage against hunger and deprivation. The positive thing, however, is that we should now rely more and more on ourselves if we are to place our continent firm on the renewal path. Depending on the West to build our future, is like planning a harvest entirely upon the whims of rainfall.

We must come to terms with the reality of our situation that, for now, we do not matter to the West; we will not receive huge sums of money to grow our economies, develop our private sector, strengthen our institutions, provide a social safety net for the vulnerable, and build roads, schools and clinics.

Alas, Our Oilfields a Target!

President Bush, following on the footsteps of his four predecessors, has identified his country's dependence on imported oil as a critical energy, economic and security matter. Imported oil currently accounts for 50 percent of total U.S. consumption, and this figure is expected to rise to 64 percent by 2020. The "war on terror," including the strategic fall-out with Saudi Arabia, coupled with the political unrest in Venezuela, have now complicated the picture. Africa and the Caspian area are now being explored as long-term, alternative, dependable sources of U.S. oil needs.

Whereas Africa currently holds 6 percent of the total world's oil reserves (as opposed to 66 percent for the Middle East, 12 percent for Latin America and 4 percent for North America), the continent only accounts for 3 percent of the total global primary energy consumption (as opposed to 3.3 percent for the Middle East, 5 percent for Latin America and 28 percent for North America). The top four African oil producers are, in order: Nigeria, Angola, Gabon, and Congo Republic. Chad, Equatorial Guinea, and Sudan, are considered up and coming oil producers with a lot of potential. Nigeria is the fifth largest crude oil exporter to the United States after Canada, Saudi Arabia, Mexico and Venezuela. Angola is in ninth position.

The pro-African oil lobby in the United States is not missing the opportunity. These include the U.S. Geological Survey which, among others, produced its "Studies of Energy Resources in Sub-Saharan Africa." The Corporate Council on Africa also organized in 2002 its "West Africa oil and gas forum," a high-level conference aimed at encouraging U.S. corporate investment particularly in Nigeria, Cameroon, and Angola. Similarly, the African Oil Policy Initiative Group's report of 2002 on "African Oil: A Priority for U.S. National Security and African Development," was described as a welcome development by the Republican Chairman of the Africa Subcommittee: "Africa's emerging potential as a major oil producer, and supplier to the United States, has been of interest to the Subcommittee on Africa that I chair for some time. The subcommittee held a hearing to look at this topic in 2000. It's clearly in our national interest to diversify our energy supply, especially given the turbulent political climate in key parts of the world today. The expansion of energy production in Africa matches that interest. Today, over 15 percent of our oil imports come from Africa. This figure will increase substantially in the years ahead."

Thus, African oil-producing countries, under the guise of the "war on terror," are subjected to a U.S.-led invasion on two fronts. One front is the Sudan, where the Bush administration has abandoned Clinton's hardline stance toward the government there, and has taken an active and special interest in the settlement of the conflict in that country. The second front is the West African coast stretching from Nigeria to Namibia. U.S. activities in that region include giving unprecedented attention to Sao Tome and Principe because of the belief that the island is sitting on 4 billion barrels of oil reserves; the launch of the U.S. \$ 3.6 billion Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline project (the United States' single largest investment in Africa); and in Angola, abandoning its long-time ally, UNITA, to establish cordial relations with the once-hated MPLA government.

Diplomatic manoeuvres are also part of the package. High-level visits into the region include Secretary of State Colin Powell's trip to Gabon and Angola, which was followed by Bush's five-nation tour of Senegal, Uganda, Botswana, Nigeria, and South Africa. The U.S. embassy in Equatorial Guinea, which was closed some

eight years ago due to human rights concerns, was to be reopened.

Corporate giants reaping the fruits of this invasion include, indeed, Exxon Mobile, Chevron Texaco and Vanco Energy of Houston. Recently, at the Ninth Annual Africa Upstream 2002 held in Cape Town, Chevron, ExxonMobile and BP-Shell revealed their multibillion dollar investment plans, which will entail investing up to U.S. \$45 billion over the next few years in African oil. The truth of the matter, however — and a sad one indeed — is that in spite of their oil wealth, these African oil producing giants are homes to people who are among the poorest on the continent. This is simply because these oil fields are in the hands of foreign corporate interests, and their proceeds end up in the pockets of a collaborating comprador elite.

Conclusion

The impact of the “war on terror” on Africa has many dimensions and long-term implications for the political stability and development of the continent. Only the future will tell, but Africans can do something to determine their destiny. For now, this destiny is, in many respects, in foreign hands. ❀

