



# TERRORISM AND AFRICA

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This article first looks at the relationship between international terrorism and terrorism in Africa. Since sub-state terrorism is already endemic to Africa, the future threat potential in the continent lies in a complex mixture of sub-national and international terrorism. Africa may come to play a central role in international terrorism. The motivation, means and targets all exist and these opportunities will not go unheeded for much longer. Africa presents both a facilitating environment and a target-rich environment for terrorists that seek to attack the United States, and indeed the global system. The article concludes with some remarks on counter-strategies.

## Introduction

Although the events of 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 have come to be acknowledged as a watershed in international concern with the issue, they did not occur in isolation. Nor do these events reflect a sudden new threat, but the symbolic reaffirmation of a trend that had been evident for several years. Where terror had previously been an uncomfortable adjunct to anarchism, liberation wars, counter-insurgency campaigns and the battlefields of the Cold War, the events of that day took terrorism to a new, global level. Hence the modern focus on the impact and potential threat of 'international terrorism',<sup>1</sup> or more accurately, terrorism that threatens the dominant political-economic

system, most cogently reflected by the security interests of the United States.

At one level a description and understanding of terrorism is easy. It is the unlawful, or threatened, use of violence against individuals or property to coerce and intimidate governments or societies for political objectives. More often than not the inevitable political objectives<sup>2</sup> are couched in social, economic or religious terms.

Terrorism is distinguished from common law crimes and other offences because the motivation is not for financial gain—a distinction critical in distinguishing terrorism from other organized criminal behaviour.

The physical targets for a terrorist attack may vary from state to state, from time to time

and from attack to attack and would take into consideration the vigilance or relaxation of anti-terrorist measures related to potential targets. European concerns about future targets in the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Centre have therefore now include attacks on information systems, off shore oil rigs, attacks on nuclear installations and the like. But this is to miss the point. Terrorism serves to terrorise. Its unlucky victim or destructive effect is simply a means to an end. And that end, to paraphrase the leitmotiv of UNESCO, is the minds of men and women who through their actions or inactions, could impact upon the political goal sought by the instigators.

Terrorism is by its nature an organized and planned event or policy. It is not unplanned, although random events may obviously terrorise.<sup>3</sup> Terrorist targets may be developed over time and reflect the premeditation of terrorism, but the common denominator remains the intimidation of a particular target community or undermining/damage of a particular economic-political system. What makes terrorism so fearsome is that attacks are often directed at a group, people or symbol that may not be directly linked to their real target, often a government, system, practice or ideology. It threatens all of us. In the process those that suffer injury and death are generally innocent bystanders, possibly exemplified by the recent bomb attack on the UN in Iraq, resulting in the death of Sergio Vieira and many others, but equally applicable to the vast majority of people killed at the Paradise Hotel close to Mombassa in November 2002.

Key to understanding the thinking behind terrorism is that terrorism seeks to induce retaliation. It is calculated to fuel the flames upon which the original political, religious, ethnic, socio-economic or other motivations feed. Few terrorists believe that single actions, such as the blowing up of an aircraft, the slaughter of entire villages or planting of bombs could change a system. Rather they trust human nature that will see governments and security agencies respond in ever-harsher ways to such threats, fuelling the flames of disaffection and hatred and inducing a spiral of action and reaction much more powerful than

the original incident. In the case of the US this is an objective well achieved by the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan and then Iraq and the extent to which the international terrorist campaign now threaten the core institutions of the existing political system, the United Nations.

The international community has only been able to reach legal consensus on narrowly defined aspects of terrorism. For example, the hijacking of aircraft and ships was criminalized as was the murder, kidnapping or attack of diplomats that were also prohibited by treaty. Even the events of 11 September 2001 could not get the UN Security Council to agree to a common definition of terrorism.

Measuring trends in terrorism obviously depends very much on the associated categorization, but despite the absence of a single binding legal definition, there have been common trends. Most recent legal text avoid trying to describe 'terrorism' but rather to define a terrorist act or deed, and, sometimes, provides a separate description of what would constitute a terrorist person, group or entities.<sup>4</sup> Such an approach provides that a specific action can be considered as being of a terrorist nature, without the necessary implication that the associated group of movement is essentially terrorist in all its aspects. This is an approach also subsequently adopted in a number of African states such as Tanzania.<sup>5</sup> Once an organization has been defined as a 'terrorist organization' most recent legislation provides for it to be banned or declared prohibited. Finally it is also evident that most recent national legislation induced by UN Security Council resolution 1373 of 2001 restricts the description of a 'terrorist acts' to international acts, in an effort to avoid the complexities associated with different national legal systems and the problem of sub-state terrorism. In the process the definitions that relate to international terrorism and transnational organized crime borrow extensively from one another.

Eventually, the closest to a universally-accepted description, and one that is appropriate for this paper, is that contained in the UN General Assembly Resolution 54/110 of 9 December 1999 stating that terrorism comprises "criminal acts intended or calculated to

provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes.”<sup>6</sup> Even this description leaves the question of what constitutes a sufficient state of public fear (to qualify an act as terrorist) unanswered nor does it provide guidance that allows the observer to readily distinguish between crimes such as murder and terrorism.

For the purposes of this paper, a simple distinction between international and sub-state (or domestic) terrorism is necessary.

### **International versus sub-state terrorism in Africa**

Drawing from the Palermo Convention<sup>7</sup>, an offence is transnational if:

- It is committed in more than one State;
- It is committed in one State but has a substantial part of its preparation, planning, direction or control takes place in another State;
- It is committed in one State but involved an organized group that engages in activities in more than one State; or
- It is committed in one State but has substantial effects in another State.

Although most contemporary writing on the subject focuses on the international dimensions or manifestations of terrorism, sub-national terror and even state terror has been a long-standing feature of Africa. In fact, by any objective standard, Africa is the continent most afflicted by terrorism—albeit not yet by international terrorism. At the one extreme, those figures provided by the US State Department’s ‘Patterns of Global Terrorism’ indicate that international terrorism is on the increase in Africa, although from a very low base with only 6% of international terrorist incidents committed on African soil between 1990 and 2002. Evaluating the costs of international terrorism in terms of human casualties presents a different and more alarming picture. Africa recorded 6,177 casualties from 296 acts of international terrorism during the same period, second only to Asia in terms of continental casualties, with 1998 as the year with the highest number (5,379) due to the bombings in Kenya and Tanzania.<sup>8</sup>

To confine the debate in Africa to statistics that seek to calculate instances of international terrorism would, however, do a terrible injustice to Africans. Terrorism in Africa is widespread. It is overwhelmingly of a domestic, sub-state nature that kills, maims and affects millions of people. Many latter day insurgent movements and government forces have adopted practices that rely heavily on the use of fear and terror. These include UNITA and RENAMO in Angola and Mozambique, the Mai Mai, Lord’s Resistance Army, the LURD, MODEL, and so on. The list is almost endless. Government policies often rely upon intimidation and terror, including those of Liberia under Charles Taylor, the Zimbabwean government (particularly during the suppression in Matabeleland in the mid eighties and around elections more recently), that of Angola (particularly during the final stages of the campaign that led to the killing of Savimbi), the policies of the present regime in Khartoum in the south and elsewhere.

In seeking to understand the trends in the development of terrorism in Africa, two approaches are needed. The one related to the rise in international terrorism, the other related to the continued reliance upon terror as a characteristic and deliberate strategy in much of the conflict that beset the continent. Obviously any such analysis is necessarily brief and superficial.

#### *The rise of international terrorism and its effects in Africa*

Since the early 1990s terrorism experts have been warning about a new breed of terrorists that would come to replace the earlier era of revolutionary and state-terrorism.<sup>9</sup> In contrast to the close-knit, disciplined groups of the 1980s, the new threat came from loose groupings of people with similar backgrounds and beliefs, who resorted to terror as a way to strike against their enemies. Today’s international terrorism retains some characteristics of those of a previous era, but there are also important differences. Gone are the tightly knit groups of professional terrorists, often in the pay of foreign powers—the characteristic that gave birth to the term state-sponsored terror.<sup>10</sup> In their place are larger amorphous groups within

which people group at the local level, within a religious motivational context. Since activity is at a small local level, often around a charismatic leader, anticipation and countermeasures are extremely difficult.

There is much evidence to indicate that the resurgence of international terrorism during the 1990s has its roots in the development of a covert alliance to counter and reverse Soviet expansion in Central-South Asia, Afghanistan in particular. When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979 the US counter-strategy sought to draw the former Soviet Union into its own military Vietnam. The problem is that the strategy spawned any number of offshoots. In the process the CIA let a genie out of the bottle for immediate benefit (contributing massively to the collapse of the Soviet Union) but with long-term and unintended consequences. The subsequent withdrawal of the CIA once the Soviet Union retreated from Afghanistan ten years later left former US allies isolated and betrayed. The training of yesterday's liberators (consisting of various factions of the secret anti-Soviet Muslim army in Afghanistan) became terrorist training for a new international guerrilla brotherhood with global ramifications. Aided by the collateral benefits of globalization, this coalition brotherhood is coalescing around a single global target, the United States, Israel and those perceived to be their close allies.

After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, the contagion carried by returning veterans from that war spread particularly rapidly in northern Africa. It soon affected Algeria, Egypt and Sudan. The spread of radical fundamentalism was first financed from countries such as Saudi Arabia, and later by largess from Osama bin Laden and other radical private financiers. In the final years of the Afghan war, from 1986 to 1989, somewhere between 600 and 1,000 battle-hardened Algerian nationals returned home. They provided a nucleus for the terrorist movement that would follow. Previously violent extremism had primarily been orientated towards domestic issues. The return of the veterans from the war in Afghanistan invigorated these groupings and reoriented their focus externally. The ripple effects from that conflict would even add to the motivation for a wave of terror-

ist attacks in South Africa in the late-1990s (through Pagad) and a series of attacks in East Africa. The match to the flame was provided by the annulment of the 1992 Algerian elections.

Tens of thousands of people died and several times this number were wounded, displaced from their homes or disappeared in the events that followed the cancellation of the 1992 elections in Algeria. The country has been in a state of virtual civil war since then, as economic stagnation and massive unemployment in the post-independence *bidonvilles* or shantytowns that ringed its cities provided fertile seed for radicalisation. In one of its most gruesome episodes, 412 men, women and children were hacked to death on the night of December 29th, 1997 in three isolated villages in Algeria's Elizane region.

Only early and effective countermeasures from Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and other Sub-Saharan states managed to halt the spread of radical terror further a field. Despite these efforts, 58 foreign tourists and four Egyptians were massacred in Luxor, Upper Egypt, in November 1997, garnering international attention and damaging that country's vital tourist industry. The subsequent bombing of two American embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam on August 7, 1998—and evident but unsuccessful attempts to destroy others in Kampala (as well as Bangkok and Tirana)—reflected the extent to which Africa, despite its oft reported global strategic marginalization, had been drawn into a new chapter in an old story. The international character of this threat was reflected in the US retaliatory cruise missile attack on a purported chemical factory in Khartoum, Sudan on August 20th, 1998. Further north, the summer 1995 assassination attempt on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, blamed on Al Itihad members, had already increased tension between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia.

In retrospect it is clear that the terrorist threats in a number of countries in the Middle East, in the Magreb and the US Embassy bombings in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi were a preview of the events of September 11th, 2001. Although the bombings in Kenya and Tanzania came as a surprise, danger signs had been evident before then, going back to the

first Gulf War in 1991. For example, on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1991, the US State Department ordered all non-essential government personnel and the families of embassy workers to leave Tanzania because of the threat of terrorism tied to the Gulf War. Apart from the widespread use of terror by local, national and regional groups, a global campaign had been underway for several decades by the time that the attacks on the World Trade Centre in 1993 and 2001 and other symbolic targets in the United States would focus the world's attention on the new threats of the post Cold War era. These events, seminal as they are, reflect public evidence of an intensifying global security problem that will demand a global response, including one from Africa and its constituent individual states.

Globalization is an important factor in the spread of international terrorism. The Internet, cell phones and international travel provide a facilitating environment. Through television and other media the demonstration effect provided by highly publicized acts, such as bomb explosions and aircraft hijackings, the intimate focus on the effects of state and sub-state terrorism in areas such as the West Bank serve to mobilize and instigate others to do the same and to also violently protest against these actions. Population displacement and migration, the establishment of large diaspora communities in many liberal states with their own sub-cultures, unintegrated within their host societies, are further facilitating factors that serve to internationalize terrorism.

#### *Algeria and Afghanistan*

All terrorism, including international terrorism, has domestic roots and is originally fuelled and driven by domestic injustices in a particular country or region. It is, for example, simply not possible to understand the factors that drive Bin Laden without a clear understanding of the origins of his quest - the prevailing political-economic situation in Saudi Arabia. According to Botha

Unlike the Al-Qaeda network, most [Islamic] extremist groups are not transnational, despite links with similar movements in neighbouring countries.

Virtually all are the products of particular states or internal and/or regional conflicts.<sup>11</sup>

Any research on domestic terrorism leads, inevitably, to an approach that the international community seeks to avoid: a discussion on the 'root causes' of terror.

In examining the rise of terror in Algeria, for example, it is important not to attribute the civil war that has spanned nearly a decade with around 150,000 people killed since 1993 to the single causal return of Afghan veterans.<sup>12</sup> As motivational context, Islam had been a source of identity and a motive for liberation long before Afghanistan—a key feature of 132 years of colonial subjugation and exploitation by the time that Algeria recovered its independence in 1962. It was a feature of the Algerian struggle against the French that was done not only in the name of Algeria, but also of Islam. For the colonialists, Algerians were distinguished not by race, ethnicity or nationality, but largely by religion. In the years that followed independence, the emergence of radical Islam in Algeria is largely attributed to the disillusionment of large sections of the populace with the prolonged rule of the Front de Liberation Nationale (FNL), and its army-party hierarchy that held a monopoly on politics and on Islamic discourse. For Algerians it was Islam and its concepts of right and wrong, justice and equity that provided the first foundation of a moral critique of their society and eventually bred pockets of people deeply frustrated by their social, economic and political prospects in a country that is the second biggest exporter of natural gas to the European Union.

The key to the armed resurgence of terrorism in Algeria in recent years was the annulment of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) election victory in 1992 and the subsequent campaign by the Government to uproot and destroy the FIS as a political and social force. Since most of the founding members of the Groupe Islamique Armée (GIA) in 1993, still the most brutal of the Algerian groupings, were 'Afghans', violence in Algeria rode on the wave of Islamic militancy brought into the country by the veterans of the war in Afghanistan. And in this struggle within which the Algerian government is

accused of tactics as brutal as its opponents, democracy is no panacea. Having been denied victory through the ballot box in 1992 the Afghans and their radical followers have no interest in elections. "Blood and martyrdom" they proclaimed in their inflammatory sermons "are the only way to seize power by force and establish an Islamist state." Apparently neither suppression nor constitutional reform can quell Islamic fundamentalist terror. The most active Islamic group in Algeria, the group led by Hassan Hattab, known as the Salifist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), was founded in 1998 by a dissident of the GIA, apparently at the part instigation of Osama bin Laden.<sup>13</sup> As recently as January 2003 terrorist links were uncovered in the United Kingdom, following the discovery of the deadly poison ricin. Seven North Africans were subsequently arrested, mostly of Algerian decent. According to Swart, Solomon and Botha "Algeria...represents a specific case where terror has been exported beyond the confines of Algiers and the rest of the country and could well come to pose a transnational threat in future if not effectively dealt with by the Algerian authorities."<sup>14</sup> According to Jane's Defence Weekly<sup>15</sup>, 2,800 Algerians were trained in Al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan, making Algeria the third biggest contributor of foot soldiers to international terrorism after Saudi Arabia and Yemen. As with Egyptian nationals, Algerians fled the tough counter-terrorism campaigns in their own countries to Europe, Chechnya and Pakistan. Reflected in the earlier sections, Algerian nationals subsequently established terror cells in London specifically to generate funds through crime.

While Algeria represents the country in Africa most closely intertwined with international terrorism, it is also important to reflect upon the much more complex characteristics that drive the much larger scourge: domestic terror, generally occurring in the absence of fundamentalist religious extremism.

#### *The tide of sub-state terrorism*

It is generally recognized that African conflicts are of an increased regional and unregulated character within which business, government, crime and conflict are often dif-

ficult to distinguish from one another, flowing across borders and involving numerous national and international actors. Insecurity and stability in Africa has become a single complex and interrelated problem that can only be viewed as intrinsic part of the debate about the nature and capability of the African state. While there are only a few collapsed or failed states in Africa, most African states are weak. For a variety of reasons, both domestic and global, African governance has contracted rather than expanded in recent decades in parallel with the acute economic crises experienced by the continent.

In much of Africa rebels and governments alike had been terrifying civilians for years in many civil wars. For decades these had caused much more death and destruction than international terrorism.<sup>16</sup>

In Liberia armed attacks on civilians by both government and rebel forces had become commonplace over the past four years. Displaced people, who had been forced to leave their homes by the fighting, were particularly vulnerable to harassment by gunmen. The general climate of heightened fear and insecurity in Liberia had been heightened by the abduction and killing of civilians and aid workers. In his September 2003 report to the Security Council, the UN Secretary General noted that the Liberian conflict had unleashed armed groups and criminal gangs which had destabilised the entire sub-region. "The armed conflict in Liberia resulted in serious abuses of human rights and humanitarian law, including deliberate and arbitrary killings, disappearances, torture, widespread rape and sexual violence, arbitrary arrests, forced conscription, use of child soldiers, systematic and forced displacement and indiscriminate targeting of civilians," Annan said.

Some 250,000 people are believed to have died in war-related circumstances in Liberia since 1989 - about one in 12 of the country's three million population. At least half were civilian non-combatants. The report noted, "All sides have been responsible for violations and abuses. Torture was widely used by all parties to the conflict. Government militias, police and paramilitary units are known to maintain torture chambers". According to the New York

based NGO Human Rights Watch<sup>17</sup> hundreds of thousands of civilians had been uprooted from their homes repeatedly as they fled in terror from these armed groups. "Soldiers systematically extort money and other goods from those seeking refuge and block them from moving to safety. Fleeing civilians fall victim to rape and abduction by the armed groups. Thousands remain hiding in the bush, where adequate food, water, shelter and medical care are scarce or non-existent."

There are many other examples.

In Burundi, some 300,000 people had been killed over the past decade and fighting between the government and Hutu militias forced about 100,000 to flee their homes each month.

In the DRC, an estimated 3 million people had died during the last three years of conflict. The conflict in Bunia and the surrounding mineral-rich Ituri province has cost at least 50,000 lives since 1999. It is part of a wider war held responsible for millions of deaths in Africa's third biggest country over the past five years. In neighbouring Rwanda 40% of the population had been killed or displaced since 1994.

To the north the civil war in Sudan has claimed the lives of two million people and caused the greatest displacement of people in Africa. The country had been plagued by 20 years of bush fighting in the south and 92% of its population lived below the poverty line.

The use of violence and terror in much of Africa is undeniable. Not all of this, possibly only a small portion, may be characterized as terrorism, (that is, criminal violence with a clear political purpose through the use of terror) but it remains significant. The extent of this violence is as much a reality as the growing sense of division between the developed and the Islamic world (a definition that includes a number of African countries) is a feature of the global political scheme in the early part of the twenty first century. Terror is part of the daily lives of millions of Africans that no amount of first world political obscuration can deny.

Acknowledging this fact, and the sense of fear amongst many westerners about Islam does not imply that counter-terrorism strate-

gies should now (only) seek to address the social, economic and the political context that breed disaffection, alienation and radicalism. The implication of such a linear relationship would imply that terror will continue for generations and that effective countermeasures are beyond immediate impact. There are many steps and causal relationships that translate structural inequality into violence and/or eventually terrorism and effective countermeasures can and should impact upon these relationships at every step along the way. For example, it is a general truism that a society that is committed to advancing and protecting human rights and that benefits from at least moderate and relatively equitable economic growth considerably reduces the risk of violent resistance including terrorism and in a substantial way minimises the kind of support such groups are able to garner. A repressive state (or ineffectually repressive state such as Algeria), or authoritarian and corrupt system that denies individual space and/or disallows increases the risk of violent disaffection including terrorism. Economic decline and rising inequality massively compound the associated risks. But the relationship is a distant one. It requires appropriate structural conditions that are politicized by relative deprivation or other social change. It requires an appropriate motivational context and any number of triggers or incidences that focus action towards violence. It requires leadership, recruitment, mobilization and organization. Finally it requires a facilitating environment including resources and targets.

If we are to visualize the factors, events and perceptions that could culminate in an act (or policy) of terrorism it can at one level be visualized as a chain with many links stretching back from a terrorist incidence into the mist. Each link in that chain is important as a discrete unit that leads to the final event and until that last link is completed, there is no social theory or model that can predict, with certainty, that these factors will culminate in a particular action. Obviously the closer one gets to the end of that chain the more clear the probable outcome, but as many have noted, only hindsight is a perfect social science.

Having made the point that many factors combine in a complex manner to produce terrorism, the question follows why sub-state terrorism is virtually endemic in Africa? To answer this, one needs to move further into already contested terrain: the nature of the African social system.<sup>18</sup>

#### *The 'Root causes' debate*

According to some, the political behaviour of people in the majority of African countries is distinctly derived from the continent's material poverty. Where resources are scarce, as is the case across much of the continent, the object of political contestation is to secure economic consumption, which in turn is best guaranteed by capturing state power or replacing the state in a particular region such as in the Kivu's in eastern DRC. Thus politics easily degenerates a life-and-death struggle over private access to limited public resources; the zero-sum nature of the struggle compels would-be political leaders to obtain material benefits in order to wield influence over followers and competitors. Accordingly "what all African states share is a generalised system of patrimony and an acute degree of apparent disorder, as evidenced by a high level of governmental and administrative inefficiency, a lack of institutionalisation, a general disregard for the rules of the formal political and economic sectors, and a universal resort to personal(ised) and vertical solutions to societal problems."<sup>19</sup> It is these trends that lead a seasoned Africanist, René Lemarchand, to write in despair:

The African continent is littered with the wreckage of imploded polities. From Guinea Bissau to Burundi, from Congo-Brazzaville to Congo-Kinshasa, from Sierra Leone to Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire, failed or collapsing states confront us with an all-too-familiar litany of scourges – civil societies shot to bits by ethno-regional violence, massive flows of hapless refugees across national boundaries, widespread environmental disasters, rising rates of criminality and the utter bankruptcy of national economies.<sup>20</sup>

As a consequence of systematic clientelism, the reliance on the award of personal favour

in return for political support, and the use of state resources for this purpose, neopatrimonial regimes demonstrate very little developmental capacity and do not provide security. Accordingly,

the real institutions of politics in Africa are the formal relations of loyalty and patronage established between 'big men' and their personal followers. The unwritten rules of neopatrimonial politics shape the decisions of leaders, engender compliance from citizens, and pervade the performance of bureaucratic organizations. Formally, the domination of political patrons and the subordination of their clients is expressed in the monopolistic political organizations of military oligarchies and civilian one-party states. The constitutional and electoral rules decreed by personalistic leaders, as well as the systems of party and civic organizations that they permitted, embody and express the constrained expectations of the African political game.<sup>21</sup>

At the extreme level, state and sub-state actors may have a vested interest in continued war and disorder since it allows them additional opportunities to extract and conceal rewards and thereby serve the various patrimonial networks that provide their legitimacy. In the absence of any other viable means to sustain neo-patrimonialism, there is inevitably a tendency to link politics to realms of greater disorder, be it war or crime under conditions of resource constraints. Violence is necessary to secure or maintain a slice of the pie. In this manner disorder becomes a necessary resource and opportunity for reward while there is little incentive to work for a more institutionalised ordering of society.<sup>22</sup> The use of violence and terror is a logical consequence and necessary requirement with the built-in escalation dynamic of basic survival politics. Since resources decline and competition is increasingly fierce and violent, few have any choice but to take sides and protect their interests through force of arms.

Unrecognized by many is the extent to which the provision of development aid inadvertently supports the development of patronage politics and undermines state capacity and

sustainable development in Africa. Where a country such as Malawi<sup>23</sup> receives the vast majority of its funds from donors, not through taxation, accountability moves off shore. Since there is no incentive to build a functioning accountable state based on mutual accountability between rulers and the ruled, it comes as little surprise that it does not happen. Being dependent upon donors for funding to provide basic resources such as food, water and basic services means that there is no incentive for the state to deliver the same. As a result elite politics is dominated by the extraction of maximum benefit from donor largesse while, at the same time, the provision of humanitarian assistance such as maize and other commodities distorts local economies and destroys any prospects of viable self-sustaining farming and local production. In much of Africa, donors—not Africans—call the shots and donors, with the best of intentions, need to assume their share of responsibility for the state of governance.

### **Africa: A facilitating environment for terrorism?**

Following upon the attacks on the United Nations in Iraq, the opportunities that Africa present to international terrorists to hit at the core of the international system and its associated humanitarian industry are limitless. Peacekeepers, aid workers, donor agencies and international offices are numerous, prominent and vulnerable. In fact, Africa is already victim to a pattern of attacks that would see an increase in acts of terrorism directed against humanitarian representatives. Botha<sup>24</sup> quotes a number of such incidents, including the abduction of members of the International Rescue Committee in August 1999 by the Joint Forces for the Liberation of Liberia who demanded fuel and other assistance in return for their release. In July 2001 gunmen in Mogadishu attacked a World Food Program convoy, killing six persons and wounding several others. In March 2001, also in Somalia, extremists attacked a *Medecins Sans Frontieres* facility, killing 11 people, wounding 40 and taking 9 hostages. No wonder that the Statute of the International Criminal Court catego-

rizes direct attacks against personnel, installations, materials, units and vehicles involved in humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping missions a war crime. Africa presents a proliferation of targets that would, symbolically, hit at the heart of the first world and those international instruments that serve to maintain it. Given the extent of socio-economic decline, and based on the loose thesis that terrorists swim in a sea of social and political disaffection, why has there been relatively little international terrorism in Africa?

One factor could be the absence of a single, unifying motivational context—a context that today is seen to have developed within that massive and rich diversity of religion known as the ‘Muslim World’—representing one in every seven humans. Admittedly, the major distinction between most of Southern and Central Africa and North Africa/the Greater Horn is the absence of majority or at least substantial Muslim communities. It is obvious that Islamic radicals enjoy much sympathy in the Middle East and wider Muslim world. Alan Richards<sup>25</sup> argues that “such radicalism is a political response to the deepening economic, social, political, and cultural crisis in the Muslim World.” And the ‘Muslim World’ includes at least Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan and Tunisia—apart from the fact that every African country has a Muslim community of some shape, size and influence. The reality is that international terrorism in Africa is awakening and that it has links in a number of African countries from South Africa through to Algeria in the north. It is, given the present volatile international context and the absence of effective security counter-action, only a matter of time before it is fully awake.

Like organized crime, terrorism requires the opportunity and the practical means to translate radical intent into effect. At the extreme end, that of international terrorism, these include: a suitable recruitment pool; considerable finances; command, control, communications and intelligence. International terrorism requires training; access to weapons and equipment; and logistic support including a safe haven for training and preparatory purposes. Other requirements include individuals,

groups and friendly regimes to provide passports, documents and propaganda support (the recognition of their cause and sympathy). The vast majority of African sub-state terrorism requires little of these. Even databases on international terrorism reflect the reality that shootings, not explosives, assassinations, kidnappings or hijackings are the dominant modus operandi for terror in Africa. It is a statement of the obvious that small arms and light weapons are not in short supply in Africa with an estimated 100 million in present circulation.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the opportunity targets presented by peacekeepers, aid and humanitarian workers, donors and Western NGOs active in the continent are all lucrative targets of sub-national terrorism and international terrorism. Africa is also replete with much potentially much higher value targets ranging from the massive oil investments (often by US companies) in the Gulf of Guinea to the burgeoning tourist industry in South Africa.

The same networks that have supported arms trafficking, mercenaries, drug trafficking, illegal human trafficking and money laundering provide the means for terrorism—as they did for the various proxy wars fought in Africa and elsewhere during the Cold War. In the aftermath of those wars large sections of the state-run networks engaged in transport, training, provision of arms and equipment, money laundering and the like were privatized—not only in the hope of a more peaceful globe, but as part of the downsizing of the defence and security sectors that followed the collapse of the Berlin wall.

The legal and illegal, the formal and informal, are blurred in conditions of neo-patrimonialism. The more informal the nature of local political and economic transactions, the easier they can be used for ‘other’ activities with the result that the distinction between licit, illicit, between legal and criminal, between corruption, business and politics is opaque.<sup>27</sup> Deeply embedded in these informal and hidden networks are the network that supplied Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), UNITA in Angola, the RUF in Sierra Leone, the Mai Mai, Interahamwe, and others in the DR Congo, the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/

Army (SPLM/A), the Sudan People’s Defence Force (SPDF), and others fighting in Southern and Central Sudan.

In western Uganda government the armed rebellion by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) would not have been possible without sympathetic government support and the ability to access arms and supplies. Nor would the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) been able to prosecute its campaign in Northern Uganda and Southern Sudan without the commodities for war, including food, fuel, arms, ammunition, training, proviant, tyres, clothing, medical supplies and the like, operating with impunity across borders that are in any case unregulated and uncontrolled. The same mechanisms provide the means to exacerbate and intensify communal violence such as that between local farming communities and nomadic Fulani herders in Mambilla plateau, north-eastern Nigeria as well as the clashes between Kenyan Turkana herdsman and Toposa cattle rustlers near the border with Sudan in north-west Kenya.

Not dissimilar to Afghanistan, failed or collapsed states such as the DR Congo, Liberia and Somalia have become free-trade zones for the underworld, where the black market in arms and in diamonds, but also trafficking in humans, passports, gold and narcotics, connects the local players to the global underworld economy. An important feature at the end of the Cold War era has been the growth in the grey world of arms supplies, facilitated by private arms brokers and shippers. Mercenaries and terrorists obtain their arms through the same illegal or grey channels, launder their payments for these arms as well as their proceedings through networks that may be intimately connected with the drug market and need the same counterfeit experts to obtain passports, travel documents and access to controlled areas.

In their controversial study *The Criminalization of the state in Africa*, Bayart, Ellis and Hibou<sup>28</sup> argued that “politics in Africa is becoming markedly interconnected with crime”. Their prognosis for Africa is not happy: the multiplication of conflicts, the main political logic of which is simply predation and which tend to be accompanied by a

growing insertion in the international economy of illegality, as in the case of Chad, Liberia and Sierra Leone, the spread of a culture of institutional neglect, systematic plunder of the national economy and the uncontrolled privatisation of the state (for example in former Zaire, Kenya, Cameroon, Congo, Guinea, Togo, Central African Republic, São Tomé, Madagascar and Zambia) all suggest that a slide towards criminalization throughout the sub-continent is a strong probability.<sup>29</sup>

These linkages represent a global security problem. In a country where flight plans, customs, and immigration and passport control can easily be avoided, crime is difficult to combat, and subversive activity hard to detect. Thus the terrorists that bungled an effort to down a commercial airliner with a SAM 7 surface to air missile in Mombassa earlier in 2003 could smuggle their arms into Kenya with impunity.

In fact, the relationship between international terrorism and transnational crime is so close as to be reflected in UN Security Council resolution 1373 (article 4) that emphasised the need for increased regional and international co-operation against both terrorism and against transnational organised crime. UNSC Resolution 1373 therefore provides states with an incentive to sign the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime of 2000 (the Palermo Convention) and an obligation to prevent transnational organized crime to the extent that such crimes assist international terrorism.

These are trends that have long been noted but largely ignored by the leaders of the rich nations until the events of 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 brought into stark focus the threat that the global backyard could have on the affluent suburbs of London, New York and Paris.

## Conclusion

Terrorism is neither necessarily international nor sub-national. The fact that the present global pre-occupation is with terrorist groups that have what US President Bush has termed 'global reach' simply reflects the dominant interests of the United States. In Africa, partic-

ularly in Algeria, Sudan, Somalia, Uganda, the DRC and previously in Sierra Leone and Liberia terrorism has become a recurring feature of essentially local conflicts. On the one hand the extent of the use of terror across the African conflict as a deliberate strategy renders the normal use of the term virtually meaningless. On the other hand the danger, from the perspective of many, is the tendency to conflate all into a global war on terrorism, often with the real intention by governments and others to use that opportunity to suppress political demands for self-determination, political engagement or recognition of certain rights. Caught in between are millions of Africans, terrorized by gangs, rebels and governments alike. Perhaps the trend towards conflating terrorism with international terrorism is the only practical way forward, although with little comfort to many affected victims.

This paper argues that sub-state terrorism is already endemic to Africa and that the future threat potential in the continent lies in a complex mixture and intermingling of sub-national and international terrorism. It also argues that Africa may come to play a central role in international terrorism. The motivation, means and targets all exist. The opportunities will not go by unheeded for much longer. Africa presents both a facilitating environment and a target rich environment for terrorist that seek to attack the United States and indeed the global system.

African governments have always faced the dilemmas in balancing donor agenda's, legitimate national security interests and domestic support for democracy and human rights. The events of September 11th, 2001 have shifted these balances, not always with predictable results. US and international support for tough action by African governments may result in the escalation of conflicts and further polarisation where democracy is fragile and governance weak. In Africa with its disaffected millions more so than anywhere else, security measures alone will not end the violence. If much of the focus on international terrorism in Africa is at the behest of the dominant division of international power it has limited relevance to ordinary people. Anti-terrorism legislation forced down the throats of countries with weak

or non-functioning criminal justice systems is of little more than symbolic value while African economic failure continues to erode regime legitimacy and foster an ideological vacuum and disaffection at every level amongst an increasingly youthful population.

What is self-evident is that without a functioning, nationally recognised central government, failed and weak African states provide a safe haven and facilitating environment for domestic and international terrorism alike. No military operation can make these countries safe if not linked with a process aimed ultimately at the construction of a working state with a government in control of its territory, both urban and rural, and its land, sea and aerial borders.

It is, of course, not only an issue of the 'strength' of the state, but also the nature of the African state that should concern us in any discussion on stability and security. It is a statement of the obvious that Africa requires governments that are not only accountable to their citizens but also subject to restraint and oversight by other public agencies including civil society. Without credible systems that can effectively restrain the overwhelming power of the executive, African regimes will remain shallow, corrupt, vulnerable to personal rule and abuse and incapable of guaranteeing basic civil liberties or providing the basis for development and stability. The systemic evidence of the dismal record of imposed macroeconomic policy restraints on African governments in the absence of 'domestic' agencies of restraint and accountability is beyond contestation.<sup>30</sup> Imposed reform from beyond the continent, even with countries as weak as many in Africa, has proven a failure without strong domestic ownership and local agents of change within and outside of government.

We are, therefore, back to basics. As with so many things in Africa, the fundamentals, the basic broken things, such as states, need to be fixed. Africa should be made safe for its own people. This will also possibly make it safe for the Americans.

Note: this is an edited version of a paper first presented at the Third International Resource Group Annual Conference, Leopard Beach Hotel, Mombassa, 26-27<sup>th</sup> September 2003

## Notes

1. The term was first popularized by US Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, in 1981 when he accused the Soviet Union of 'training, funding and equipping international terrorists.' A Hübschle, *Conceptualising Terrorism*, paper delivered at a seminar on terrorism in Southern Africa, 18-19<sup>th</sup> September 2003, Colosseum Hotel, Pretoria, South Africa, p 11.
2. The term political is used here in the wider sense as representing the allocation of resources.
3. In retrospect, much of the terrorism during the 1970s and 1980s in Europe was actually state-sponsored terrorism, during which groups of admitted anarchists were sponsored by Warsaw Pact countries to create mayhem and attack the Western body politic.
4. For a good example of a recent text see 2001/931/CSFP, 'Common Position' adopted by the European Union on December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2001.
5. The Prevention of Terrorism Act, no 21 of 2002, under Section 4-10 enumerates various acts, which if done with a terrorism intention may constitute the offence of terrorism. As to what may amount to a terrorist intention has been left for the court to decide depending on the evidence and circumstances of every case. V Mlowola, *Terrorism in Tanzania*, paper delivered at a seminar on terrorism in Southern Africa, 18-19<sup>th</sup> September 2003, Colosseum Hotel, Pretoria, South Africa, p 6.
6. As quoted by Hübschle, *op cit*, p 18.
7. Article 3(2) of the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (the Palermo Convention).
8. A. Botha, *Background: Terrorism in Africa*, paper presented at the ISS Terrorism Seminar, 18-19<sup>th</sup> September 2003, Colosseum Hotel, Pretoria, South Africa, pp 5-6.
9. *Ibid*.
10. At its modern origin, the '*regime de la terreur*' by the Jacobins during the French Revolution, terrorism was perpetrated by the state. More recent European examples of state terrorism include those of Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin. Hübschle, *op cit*, pp 2-3.
11. Botha, *op cit*, p 10.
12. Much of this section on Algeria is based on G Swart, H Solomon and A Botha, *Algeria: The Politics of Fundamentalism and Extremism*, unpublished paper, Pretoria, 2003.
13. *Ibid*, p 8.
14. *Ibid*, p 15.
15. As quoted in *ibid*.
16. *Beyond the Headlines: an agenda to protect civilians in neglected conflicts*, September 2003.
17. As reported by IRIN from Abidjan on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2003 'Annan asks for 15,000 UN peacekeepers for Liberia'.
18. In doing so the subsequent analysis avoids, for reasons of space, the causes of the characteristics

- that are described such as the impact of slavery, colonialism, global inequality, etc.
19. P Chabal & J Daloz, *Africa works: Disorder as political instrument*, African issues, Villiers Publications, London, for the International African Institute in association with James Currey and Indiana University Press, 1999, p xix.
  20. R Lemarchand, *The Democratic Republic of Congo: From Collapse to Potential Reconstruction*, Occasional Paper, Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen, September 2001, p 2.
  21. Chabal & Daloz, op cit, pp 44–5.
  22. Ibid, pp 5–6.
  23. Malawi was also indirectly involved in international terrorism earlier this year when five suspects accused of being involved with Al-Qaeda were arrested in the early hours of 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2003 and, in violation of domestic law, spirited out of the country in a joint effort between the Malawi security agencies and the CIA. *Combating Terrorism in Malawi: the case of the Malawi arrests*, paper delivered at a seminar on terrorism in Southern Africa, 18–19<sup>th</sup> September 2003, Colosseum Hotel, Pretoria, South Africa.
  24. Botha, op cit, p 8.
  25. A Richards, *Socio-Economic roots of Radicalism? Towards explaining the appeal of Islamic Radicals*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, July 2003, p v.
  26. Small Arms Survey, *The Small Arms Survey 2003: Development Denied*, the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Oxford University Press, 2003.
  27. Chabal & Daloz, op cit, p 79.
  28. Jean-François Bayart, Stephen Ellis & Béatrice Hibou, *The Criminalization of the State in Africa*, The International African Institute in association with James Currey and Indiana University Press, London, 1999, p 25.
  29. Ibid, pp 30–1.
  30. See, for example, Paul Collier, *Learning from Failure: The International Financial Institutions as Agencies of Restraint in Africa*, in Andreas Schedler, Larry Diamond and Marc Plattner (eds), *The Self-Restraining State: Power and Accountability in New Democracies*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 1999, pp 313–330.