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AFRICA IN THE WAR ON TERRORISM

Harvey Glickman*

ABSTRACT

Locating the African political scene within the new global paradigm of the war on terrorism, we inquire into the impact of the events of 9/11 on the international relations of African states within emerging new transnational forces, centering on American foreign policy toward Africa and on possible scenarios of African responses. We explore pressures and opportunities emerging and contemplate practical reactions by a new generation of African leaders. Africans have a stake in resisting terrorism and playing a role in a winning coalition. Their interests in development, security, open societies, and decent governance are enhanced by cooperation in the war on terrorism that also include elements of the African diaspora and the North American Africanist community.

Introduction

Energized by a vigorous array of global counter-terrorism measures by the United States, a new strategy paradigm has emerged. The global war on terrorism marks an epochal shift in emphasis in the shape of international relations, from an inchoate and hesitant new world order—with an enlarged realm for international law and human rights—to a renewed emphasis on confrontation with an enemy on a worldwide scale. Despite varying degrees of opposition in the United States and around the world, the U.S.-led global war on terrorism, spearheaded by two short but effective wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, has redefined global politics.

In critical ways, the “War on Terrorism” (WOT) imitates the Cold War (CW). True, the WOT lacks a central powerful state with expansionist ambitions. (Iraq did not qualify as the fount of Islamism.) Instead WOT is characterized by a radical interpretation of a world religion/civilization that in some form and in some moments in the recent past has exercised sway over whole states, for example, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Sudan. A contributing cause of the civil war in Sudan has been several official attempts to establish an Islamic state over the whole country, despite strong cultural and political opposition in the South (Glickman 2000). If Osama Bin Laden got his way, perhaps Saudi Arabia might have been transformed into a militant Wahabist equivalent of the USSR. At present, a shadowy web of terrorist cells with ties to Islamism (i.e., fundamentalist, militant, political Islam) reminds us of the early days of the communist international before the consolidation of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. The massive American effort to counter plans and acts of ideologically and financially

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linked terror cells clearly compares to the era of powerful communist parties in Europe and communist guerrillas in Southeast Asia immediately after World War II.

This paper locates the African political scene within this new paradigm. It inquires into the impact of the events of 9/11 on the international relations of African states, on the transnational forces of global politics in Africa, on U.S. foreign policy toward Africa and on possible scenarios of Africa's responses within this new paradigm. We conclude with pragmatic, positive responses by African leadership—present and emergent—to the pressures and opportunities of this new paradigm. Our aim is not to present a comprehensive, new, preferred strategy, although we offer a few suggestions; it is rather to recognize the powerful sway now exercised over global politics by the U.S.-driven WOT, and offer a practical reaction. In our view, Africans have a stake in resisting terrorism and playing a part in a winning WOT coalition. Indeed Africa's interest in securing a better deal on development, in getting a handle on its security problems, and in continuing its hesitant and painful march toward more open governments and societies, can be assisted by invoking a sense of hard-headed, realistic cooperation in the WOT on the part of continental Africans, the African diaspora and the North American Africanist community.

Our view risks misinterpretation and indeed opprobrium within the mainstream Africanist community, where slashing critique, disdain for, and indeed distrust of U.S. policy is the norm (e.g., Adebajo 2003). We share much of the critique. Inattention, manipulation, sometimes subversion, characterize many U.S. actions with regard to Africa during the CW era. But an important law of history is that some things do change. Certainly, circumstances are never exactly the same. Africans have participated in a second wave of democratization that has swept the worst practitioners of personal rule from the scene (cf. Jackson and Rosberg 1982; Bratton and van de Walle 1997). This democratic energy is anchored at the southern end of the continent by a vibrant, reasonably open polity in South Africa. Despite oligarchic trends and much corruption, both Nigeria and Kenya have recently undergone successful successor elections. Ghana and Senegal have also peacefully transferred power to opposition parties, after two competitive elections. Undeniably, there is much to lament, as the overthrow of dictators and "wannabe" oligarchs in Africa also brought civil wars and political chaos in parts of West Africa and in the Great Lakes area. Nevertheless at the top levels—official and unofficial—in several African states, a new African sense of agency and volition is at work (Ottaway 1999). Despite meager resources and lack of continental unity—and amidst a horrendous AIDS epidemic—some African polities are slowly re-creating their economic and political institutions. In 2001, according to a UN Economic Commission for Africa report, Africa's average growth rate went to 4.3 percent, up from 3.5 percent in 2000; by contrast all other developing regions did worse in 2001 than in 2000. In addition, of Africa's 53 economies, 37 managed growth of more than 3 percent, a big increase from 2000;

and average income per capita rose 2 percent (*The Economist* 2002). It is now two generations since decolonization—Africans are no longer *all* victims; they have some leverage. Despite formidable obstacles, post-9/11 can pose opportunities, as well as restrictions.

Paradigm Lost, Paradigm Regained

The shift from the CW to the WOT lacks a central progenitor of aggression and subversion, but terrorist networks need safe haven or co-operative states. Al Qaida needed Sudan, then Afghanistan. It appears to have relocated in a portion of Pakistan. Hamas and Islamic Jihad are hosted by Syria; Hezbollah is based in Lebanon, supported by Syria and gestated in Iran (Benjamin and Simon 2002:223-224; Dinmore 2003; Meyer 2003; Meek 2003). An intriguing resemblance is reflected in the struggle to undermine a network of ideologically and financially linked groupings—similar to communist parties and front organizations—of a previous era. Operationally, the response from the United States is strikingly similar to the early days of the CW. The United States is strengthening military bases in Europe and extending its military bases to central Asia, and to Qatar and Djibouti. Built up in preparation for the war in Iraq, Qatar will now grow into a substitute for Saudi Arabia; the United States will gradually depart from most of its Saudi military facilities, as announced in April 2003 (Gordon and Schmitt 2003). More intensive and extensive cooperation now exists among the intelligence agencies of the major European countries and America. The U.S. has also entered into advisory roles in other countries' battles against terrorists, for example, in the Philippines (Hendren 2003). The United States has sponsored CIA "special operations" in the war zones of Afghanistan and northern Iraq (Schmitt 2003). Inside the United States, the government has expanded domestic surveillance and is engaged in a fierce debate over restrictions on civil liberties. And, finally, the war in Iraq expanded exponentially the U.S. attempt to draw allies into the shooting war as part of the overall effort in the WOT. One, not unpredicted, consequence of the Iraq war is a rise in suicide bombings in Arab countries whose governments have been co-operative with the United States, such as in Saudi Arabia and in Morocco on May 12 and 16, 2003.

The lines are not yet fully drawn among responses within the Africanist academic and activist community to the WOT. The CW produced divisions between the "globalists," who prioritized foreign policy to Africa in terms of the struggle against world communism, and the "regionalists," who wanted to treat Africa in terms of self-determination and development, in order to meet Africa's indigenous civic and economic problems (Schraeder 1994). Reactions since 9/11 to U.S. policy and the WOT have grown increasingly critical in the Africanist community, since the U.S. has neglected African economic and trade interests and increasingly focused on preparing for war in Iraq. President Bush's dramatic proposal of a \$10 billion initiative on AIDS in Africa in January 2003 came shortly

after he cancelled his proposed trip to the continent (*Africa Action* 2003). Global AIDS assistance is now part of the annual policy struggle in the U.S. Congress. The actual amount of funding for assistance requested by the Administration continues to be a major issue.

A recent poll shows that Americans support a stronger engagement with Africa; that they favor expansion of cooperation on terrorism, on trade with Africa, and on increasing the portion extended to Africa of total U.S. foreign aid. The poll indicates that Americans reject the idea that Africa is not important to U.S. interests around the world (PIPA/Knowledge Networks 2002-03). This is an important resource for the Africa policy community.

Terrorism as Tactic and Threat in Africa

Long before 9/11, terror as a para-military tactic figured in the long anti-colonial struggle and nationalist uprisings in Africa. Sympathizers with nationalism saw terror as an occasional extension of anti-colonialism and as a desperation tactic against an unyielding foe. Cases in point: Mau Mau in Kenya in the 1950s and the Algerian uprising in the 1950s and early 1960s. A combined political and para-military strategy against foreign rule clearly reflects the decades-old struggle of the Irish and the IRA. As a Third World phenomenon, the violent struggle of liberation movements in Cuba and Vietnam and the cultural revolution in China muddied the threshold between politics and internal war. In Africa the revolts in the Portuguese territories in the 1960s and 1970s, the rebellion in Rhodesia in the 1970s, and the extended anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa all contributed to the toleration of political violence in the cause of "liberation."

Nevertheless, post-colonial African regimes, once established, starting with North Africa, reacted predictably against the threat of terrorism in the cause of political change. Notably in Egypt, the opposition of the Muslim Brotherhood to the Nasser revolution and the government reaction in the 1950s exemplified authority's defense of the realm, continuously threatened by acts of terror, for example, the assassination of Sadat in 1981. With Egypt as the cockpit, and with terror in the wings, the Middle East and North Africa plunged into a major struggle over the nature of the internal political order—secular nationalism, traditional monarchies, and Islamist reformers. This internal conflict was overshadowed by the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and the Cold War for more than a generation (Nyang 2001).

Africa South of the Sahara (except for Sudan) remained peripheral to this struggle, a struggle in part for the soul of Islam. The Iranian revolution in the 1970s and the Saudi counter-offensive against secular nationalism, bankrolled by soaring oil revenues in the 1970s, propelled ideological and some financial penetration of Muslim institutions, especially in East Africa and the Horn.

The unique and erratic involvement of Libya's Muammar Qaddafi via money, training and sometimes troops for more than 30 years in *coups*, guerrilla

uprisings and terrorism has contributed to destabilization in Chad, Sudan, Uganda, Niger, Angola, Burkina Faso, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. In the name of promoting African unity and occasional Islamic unity, but always interested in Libya's influence in Africa, critics charged Qaddafi with fostering a Saharan Islamic state (Metz 1989). In 1973, Libyan troops occupied the Aouzou Strip in northern Chad, providing a base to help northern dissidents instigate a civil war in Chad a few years later. Northern rebels seized the capital, but were driven out in 1981. The subsequent government of Hissein Habre was overthrown a few years after that. Libya also seized a strip of land on Niger's northern border and aided an attempted *coup* against the president of Niger in 1976. During the 1970s, Qaddafi helped Sudan's President Numeiri defeat leftist opponents. Later, Numeiri accused Libya of sponsoring several coup attempts in Sudan, culminating in the bombing of the Chadian embassy in Khartoum in 1981. After Numeiri himself was deposed in 1986, Qaddafi ceased assistance to Ethiopian based, southern Sudanese rebels. Rapprochement with Sadiq al Mahdi, the new Sudan prime minister, proved short-lived, as Sadiqi called for Libyan troops to leave Chad in 1986.

Commencing in 1972, Libya provided assistance to the sanguinary government of Idi Amin in Uganda, ultimately flying troops and supplies in aid of the Amin army, falling back in the face of invading Tanzanian and exiled Uganda forces in 1978/79. Amin received temporary asylum in Tripoli, Libya, on his way to sanctuary in Saudi Arabia. Qaddafi supported, in series, two of the three groups fighting the Portuguese in Angola.

Eleven Libyan dissidents were assassinated in 1980 and 1981; plots were uncovered in the late 1980s to kill African and Arab leaders in North African and Middle Eastern states in Libya's geographic neighborhood. Qaddafi provided money to insurgent Somalis inside Ethiopia, and funds and bases to the Algerian exiled leader Ben Bella, Algerian Tuareg rebels and Tunisian dissidents, all in the 1980s (Metz 1989:223-226). Funds and training went to leaders of rebels in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s, and to Blaise Campoare, who briefly ran Burkina Faso (*Libya Review, Africa Review World Information* 2002; International Crisis Group 2003).

Reactions in Africa to 9/11

In concert with many governmental leaders around the world, African leaders expressed sorrow and sympathy with the United States in the immediate aftermath of the attacks of 9/11. Compared to the leaders of other countries, the reaction of African leaders was supportive but muted, especially after the United States announced its determination to act against Al Qaida in conducting a war against the Taliban. (A year later an inter-governmental conference was more supportive; see *BBC Worldwide Monitoring* 2002.) African leaders were concerned about further attacks on U.S. interests in their own countries and their meager resources

with which to deal them. This was confirmed in the varying degrees of unrest after fiery clerics denounced the United States in towns on the Kenya coast and in Khartoum; there were also riots in Nigeria's northern city of Kano. The October 2001 summit in Dakar resulted in modest support for anti-terror measures; only ten heads of African states turned up. Much concern was expressed over the danger of overlooking the New African Initiative on development and democracy of July 2001 (Morrison 2001).

Vulnerable Africa

Libya's relatively easy infiltration of the politics of near and distant neighbors in Africa underlines the vulnerability of African states and political movements to destabilizing forces. Porous borders, weak authority in governance and public finance, seemingly irrepressible internal conflicts, and the easy availability of weapons, have characterized African politics for some years now. More violent Islamist elements, and Al Qaida in particular, began to penetrate Africa in earnest in 1991, following the efforts to consolidate an Islamic state in Sudan in 1989 (Diagne 2002; National Public Radio 2002; Morrison 2001). Al Qaida's local partner, Al Itihaad in Somalia in 1992/93, joined with irredentist Somalis to clash with Ethiopian troops in the Somali majority province of Ogaden and supported the warlord Mohammed Farah Aideed in attacks on American troops in Somalia. Sudanese Islamists attempted the assassination of Egyptian President Mubarak in Addis Ababa in 1995 (*Deutsche Press Agency* 2002). Al Qaida sponsored the bombings of the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 1998, utilizing a "sleeper cell" in Mombasa, Kenya, and in part activated by Harun Fazil, a Comoran islander in charge of the Nairobi cell, with fighters trained in Afghanistan and Somalia (Benjamin and Simon 2002:26-27; Weiser 2001). And in 1998/99, Al Qaida (with links to Hezbollah) extended its activities into diamond smuggling and sales in Sierra Leone and Liberia through co-operative Lebanese traders (Farah 2003).

Mobilization of anti-terror actions since 9/11 has revealed more information about Al Qaida and militant Islamism in Africa. Al Itihaad, now operating in southern Somalia, was named by U.S. authorities as one of 27 entities linked to Al Qaida. It is especially active on the island of Ras Kamboni, and among Somalis resident in Kenya, in Nairobi, and Mombasa. The ties of Al Itihaad to the bombing of the Israeli hotel and missile attack on an Israeli airliner in 2002 remain suspicious but unclear. Ethiopian troops now operate along the Somali border to suppress incursions. The United States has frozen the assets of Al Barakat, the network of financial links, suspected of money laundering and funneling funds to Al Qaida (Morrison 2001).

In Sudan, President Bashir, once an ally of the Islamists, has co-operated with the United States in the WOT since 9/11. Al Qaida is supposedly gone from Sudan; the Islamist *eminence grise*, politician Hassan Turabi, is confined to quar-

ters. The U.S. and the U.N. have lifted sanctions against Sudan, in place since 1996, and the U.S. Congress has postponed a debate on the proposed Sudan Peace Act, which would have revealed considerable support in Congress for the goal of some sort of constitutional autonomy for the southern Sudanese, who have been fighting a sporadic but continuing guerrilla war for more than 40 years.

The president of Eritrea has offered the United States two sites for bases, so far not accepted (Carter 2002; Burns 2002). As part of preparations for war in Iraq, the United States has established two small military bases in Djibouti, and in the build-up to the war they had at one time 3,200 troops on land and in ships in the Djibouti harbor. An additional 200 French, 1,000 German, and a few hundred British troops were also there. In May 2003, with the war in Iraq over, the United States maintains a Combined Joint Task Force for the Horn of Africa aboard the command ship Mount Whitney. Nine hundred American military personnel are stationed at Camp Lemounier in Djibouti (Cowell 2003). The C.I.A. has operated drone aircrafts from Djibouti; a missile from one such plane eliminated a car full of Al Qaida operatives in Yemen in November 2002. The supplemental U.S. Defense Department budget for 2002 included \$373 million for counter-terrorism in Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya (Wax 2002; ydafrica.com 2002; see also *Africa Action* 2003).

Other countries in Africa increasingly vulnerable to terrorism include South Africa and Nigeria. Islamist cells have been identified in Cape Town and Durban. Northern Nigeria is honeycombed with ideologically extreme groups, providing raw material for Al Qaida-like associations. There are now 12 "Islamic states" (provinces) in Nigeria (Back 2002).

Africa and the United States in the War on Terrorism

While Africa at present is not on the front line in the WOT, East Africa and the Horn lie in a strategic location in relation to the Middle East. A growing percentage of U.S. oil imports (now 17 percent) originate in West and Central Africa and offshore. Major new investments stream to Nigeria, Angola, Sao Tome, and Equatorial Guinea (Servant 2003). Still they hardly add up to a robust set of interests to create leverage for Africans in their relations to the United States; they are eerily reminiscent of the expressed configuration of American interests in Africa during the CW.

Africans have a choice. They can learn from the disastrous consequences of the CW, when the siren sounds of revolutionary rhetoric tempted erstwhile popular figures (like Nasser and Lumumba and Nkrumah) to challenge the United States as soft on nationalism and anti-colonialism. The American colossus would take no chances of a drift to communism on the African continent. The globalists overwhelmed the regionalist Africanists in Washington's corridors of power (Clough 1992:76-100). In any case, Africa's first wave nationalists were weak democrats. With few exceptions, patrimonialism infiltrated the ex-colonial

administrative state and military rule replaced civilian control. The anti-corruption rhetoric of the military politicians proved as superficial and evanescent as the radical rhetoric of the first wave civilian nationalists, but the military as governors in Africa appealed to the militarists and muscular globalists in America. The policy distortion perpetrated by the American involvement in Vietnam, coupled with socialist-appearing governments in Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Angola, combined to view Cuba as a direct proxy for the USSR, and place the United States on the wrong side of the issue of white supremacy in Zimbabwe and South Africa—although the U.S. Congress battled the Administration on these matters in the mid-1980s (Clapham 1996:139-142). In the meantime, since the early 1980s a program of economic and financial structural adjustment, brought on by Africa's economic crisis, initiated a hesitant and painful process of dismantling bloated, state directed economies, under the prodding of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Glickman 1988:24-43; 86-116). The collapse of the Soviet Union and the release of Nelson Mandela in South Africa rippled across the whole continent. Although multi-form in practice and with mixed success, the equivalents of national and constituent assemblies undermined old political structures and essentially dismantled one-party systems in the early 1990s (Bratton and van de Walle 1997:101-157). By the early years of the twenty-first century, a number of African economies and polities, in relative terms, showed signs of stability and growth (e.g., Senegal, Ghana, Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, Mozambique, Morocco, Uganda, and Mali). With over fifty independent states on the continent it would be foolish to label this a trend, especially in the light of recrudescing authoritarianism in places like Gambia, Rwanda, Equatorial Guinea, Swaziland, Congo-Brazzaville, and the well-nigh disintegration of states like Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, and Congo (Economist Intelligence Unit 2003). But there is a new generation of African leadership emerging, and not necessarily coincident with the entourage surrounding heads of state. More open economies and societies in many countries have produced civic leaders, more pragmatic in orientation to problem-solving. Terrorism and any form of political extremism (including Islamic) threatens to make economic and political development irrelevant in what is still a fragile and vulnerable set of economies. An African leadership that simply lines up with a "Third World" view of the WOT as some kind of American neo-imperialist plot to seize oilfields and promote the interests of Israel, opts out of any chance of serious influence in today's world.

Africans can strike more advantageous bargains with the United States in conducting the WOT. Co-operating with America, accepting U.S.-defined security assistance and making minimal demands beyond construction contracts and employment will reproduce the distortions of the past—corruption and reinforcement of the old elites.

There is a civic and realist alternative that Africans need consider. It asserts that the United States practice what it preaches at present in post-war Iraq, about promoting and aiding movements toward open and pluralist societies; that

U.S. military assistance attach to civic action, which translates into help for NGOs and selected components of civil society. African leaders—and this includes non-officials as well—must put forward “maximalist-realist” (MR) aims in return for oil, for strategic location and for intelligence and information cooperation. This MR effort also needs to include the Africanist researchers around the world and the public policy commentariat; and especially it needs the African diaspora in Europe and the United States.

What would MR demands consist of? First, the United States should at least be held to its promises regarding commitments to the African Crisis Response Initiative (training African troops to respond to African conflicts). Renamed the Africa Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA), such training should be expanded to include police and law enforcement, including the judiciary, and be linked to military cooperation with the new African Union. To quote a knowledgeable observer, “[ACOTA]—must be massively increased, and this military cooperation must be extended beyond training to include supply of logistical equipment to regional security organizations” (Adebajo 2003:11), building on the support for Nigerian, Ghanaian, and Senegalese troops in ECOWAS, which later contributed to U.N. peacekeeping in Sierra Leone. Economic Support Funds, which routinely accompany military aid, should be directed in good part to trade skills and technical training. While the sale of U.S. military equipment always accompanies military aid, the unregulated flow of small arms into Africa only strengthens the forces of disorder. The African arms bazaar undermines the WOT. Free flowing small arms enable diamond smuggling to flourish. Enhanced cooperation in the “Kimberly process” to identify legitimate diamond exports can staunch the leakage of funds into criminal hands.

Second, the United States needs to implement its promises with regard to the New African Initiative, the African Growth and Opportunity Act (partially gutted by continuing subsidies to U.S. agriculture and restrictions on textile imports), to more robust debt relief and to President Bush’s offer of enhanced assistance in addressing the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa.

In what context can Africans raise these matters effectively? In our view, the March 2003 debate over Iraq in the U.N. Security Council represents a missed opportunity for Africa. Two African states, Guinea and Angola, hung back and refused to commit to support America and Britain in the second resolution (subsequently withdrawn) to authorize force. Clearly Guinea and Angola were concerned for their large Muslim populations, and had strong economic ties to the European Community and particularly to France. But both countries have an interest in strengthening their own security and containing divisive forces within their own borders. A vote with the United States would still not have created a majority in the Security Council in favor of the U.S. position, but it would have demonstrated independence, and—depending on the terms of the bargain sought—might have contributed to favorably raising the policy issues discussed above.

Third, in strengthening a truly global WOT, the United States, prodded by Africans, can be led to devote aid and information resources to building ties with moderate Muslim groups—of which there are many in Africa—as well as with African civic associations, in which there are large Muslim memberships.

Fourth, the United States must expand its capacity to dialogue and analyze, with an enhanced relationship with the Africanist research and public policy community. Since many of the experts in this community are now members of the African diaspora, such an effort will expand information and comprehension capacity, especially of Muslims in Africa and of the Muslim relationship to African pluralism. African scholars now in America (many of them Muslims) can play a special role here.

Finally, a central tenet of U.S. foreign policy is support for human rights, lamentably honored only sporadically. Human rights is at the heart of a revitalized African politics. Two very specific proposals: the United States offer rewards to capture Hutu genocide perpetrators and the U.S. compensate the African victims of terrorism against America by tapping the funds seized from the Al Qaida network.

However one deals with priorities in the WOT—war with Iraq or skirmishes in the caves of Tora Bora—countering the manifestations and sources of terrorism involves Africa ever more deeply. Africans and Africanists need to recognize that the WOT need not mean automatic adoption of a neo-con, military hegemonial world-view (Bacevich and Prodromou 2003:20-21). Broadly conceived, the WOT, applied in the African context, is more compellingly seen as “a war on terrorists,” which requires more than armed invasions (although they may be necessary, e.g., Afghanistan), but leads to enhanced police capacities in many parts of the world, to cooperation in sharing financial and intelligence information, and cooperation in attacking the despair and indignities that spawn extremists (such as the HIV/AIDS crisis; see *Africa Action* 2003b). As such, the WOT can strengthen the burgeoning forces of open and constitutional societies and ultimately strengthen governmental institutions in Africa. Indeed Africa can help America be true to its declared goals by holding America to its professed ideals.

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