

KÖLNER FORUM  
FÜR  
INTERNATIONALE BEZIEHUNGEN  
UND  
SICHERHEITSPOLITIK



**KFIBS • ANALYSIS • ENGLISH VERSION**  
**Edition: 3/06**

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**Development and Security – Using Development Policy to Combat  
Terrorism: A Theoretical Approach**

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Without any doubt the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon caused a dramatic change in the international system. After that incident the relative security that Western nations have been enjoying since the collapse of the Soviet Union has been seriously called into question. The U.S. can be considered as the main target of these new attacks, although its European allies do not seem to be spared, especially when we look at the bombings in Madrid and London. To give a convincing response to this new threat, the U.S. engaged itself in military confrontations with terrorists and their supporters in Afghanistan and Iraq. But, while recognizing the importance of such actions, it seems to be clear to everyone that they are not sufficient to effectively respond to the threat posed by these new enemies. In fact, terrorists do not form an identifiable army, so they are not easy to locate, thus, conventional methods of fighting are not sufficient in this particular case.

In addition to military strikes the West should therefore concentrate more on eliminating the conditions that help terrorists to expand and spread their ideas. Eradicating the so-called *root causes of terrorism* should also be one of the solutions to these security problems. Development co-operation in this particular case seems to be the appropriate domain of relations between rich terror-threatened countries on the one hand and willingly or unwillingly terror-friendly developing nations on the other hand, which can contribute to the elimination of the conditions on which terror feeds. Since many political scientists and politicians agree on the fact that development policy can play a very important role in the fight against terrorism, the aim of this paper is to present the two main theoretical approaches which can serve this purpose:

On the one hand, we have the *development strategic approach* which can be related to the school of thought that is loyal to the "root causes discourse" and sees a direct link between terrorism and underdevelopment. This approach would like to prevent new terrorists from rising by concentrating on eliminating the conditions on which terror thrives. It would base itself on long-term projects of poverty eradication, such as the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs). On the other hand, we have the *geo-strategic approach*,<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Both the *development strategic* and the *geo-strategic approach* have been previously used by Nicolaus von der Goltz, "Entwicklungspolitik nach dem 11. September 2001: Hilfe oder Anti-Terror-Dividende?" In: *DAP (Dresdner Arbeitspapiere)*, No. 7, 2003, pp. 10-13.

which on its part could be adopted by those who do not see any direct link between terrorism and underdevelopment. This approach would concentrate on eliminating already existing and immediate forms of terrorism. Such a strategy would rather select and reward the few countries which it considers as strategically important in the "War on Terror" and, for this reason, it can only distribute short-term aid in the form of anti-terror dividends.

### **Using development policy to combat terrorism: Two main approaches**

Most of the people who do not want terrorism to be related to underdevelopment, and therefore vehemently oppose the so-called *root causes discourse*, always base their argument on empirical research which shows that it is not the manifestations of the absence of development (e.g. poverty or illiteracy) that trigger terrorism. Such research always mentions the fact that Osama bin Laden is not a poor man and that he comes from the richest non-royal Saudi family; that Dr. Ayman Al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's principal strategist, deputy leader and designated successor, is a surgeon who comes from one of the most educated families in Egypt.<sup>2</sup> Other reasons advanced are that bin Laden has never claimed to be acting on behalf of the poor and illiterates, or that his goal is to redress the disparity between rich and poor countries... In addition to that it is being said in a contradictory manner that poverty can exist without terrorism... as it does today in most of sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>3</sup> It becomes obvious here that if poverty can exist without terrorism, then it implies that in some other cases it cannot. In addition to that sub-Saharan Africa is not a good example, since many terrorist groups take advantage of the continent's socio-economic and political problems to gain the support of some of its citizens.

We have to make a distinction here between those who lead terror groups and those who can be considered as their followers. The fact that terror leaders like Osama bin Laden are educated multimillionaires should not surprise anybody because for such groups to function they need a lot of financial means. On the other hand, they also need

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<sup>2</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, *Terrorism in the South Before and After 9/11: An overlooked Phenomenon, Contribution to: Responding to Terrorism: What Role for the United Nations?* [Conference organized by the International Peace Academy on 25-26 October 2002 in New York], p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Gary T. Dempsey, "Old Folly in a New Disguise: Nation Building to Combat Terrorism." In: *Cato Policy Analysis*, No. 429, <http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa429.pdf>, March 21, 2002, p. 4.

people who are able to accept to die for the reasons their leaders advance. This is where the poor or illiterate person comes into play. Recent observations of modern terrorist groups indicate that some terrorists come from broken homes, where the father is absent, estranged, or economically or politically impotent. Additionally, some terrorist group joiners are individuals who have had difficulties in forming consistent group identities outside home, such as at school and/or the workplace. It is certain that this partial background profile is not universal, if we look, for example, at the cases of the 9/11 hijackers who were college-educated individuals from professional two-parent middle-class homes. Nonetheless, it appears that terrorist group joiners from dysfunctional family backgrounds are particularly susceptible to the seductive message of charismatic leaders, who offer them their first positively meaningful group experience.<sup>4</sup> At this point it becomes obvious that there are some rich terrorists and that not all the poor automatically become terrorists. It is also apparent that terrorist leaders can recruit more fighters in a poor environment than in a rich one. For this reason, the former World Bank president once said that, "it is easier to train terrorists in Afghanistan than when they have a comfortable life in Frankfurt."<sup>5</sup>

There seems to be some kind of reluctance to recognize the direct link that exists between terrorism and the situation lived particularly by the majority of Africans and Asians (keyword: "underdevelopment"). While the U.S. and Britain are impatient with any definition of terrorism which seeks to address root causes... poor countries in particular stress structural causes and would like to see a more comprehensive approach to the problem of terrorism. By believing that it is the Western civilization that is the target of those "barbarians," the U.S. and Britain, in particular, seem to have no appreciation of proportion in terms of the fatalities that result from structural terrorism and occur in the majority of the world's societies. They also have lost a sense of history, because they seem to have no memory of similar occurrences elsewhere in the world, even when those occurrences might have emanated from them. What can be added to this loss of proportion and memory is a deliberate rejection of the search for causality, mainly because such a search, if combined with proportion and history, will inevitably lead to the West as the perpetrator

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<sup>4</sup> Anthony Stahelski, *Terrorist Are Made, Not Born: Creating Terrorists Using Social Psychological Conditioning*, <http://www.homelandsecurity.org/journal/Articles/stahelski.html>, March 2004, pp. 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> James Wolfensohn, "Wir brauchen einen Exekutivausschuss, der die Welt regiert." In: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 9, 2004, p. 6.

of structural terrorism.<sup>6</sup> Such a tactic is self-defeating because eliminating the root causes of a problem is more efficient than fighting against its forms of manifestation.

The various ways of considering the link that exists between terrorism and underdevelopment can lead – in the domain of development policy – to two main strategies which can be used in the fight against terrorism. On the one hand, the attention will be focused on the root causes. On the other hand, this attention shall be more directed towards the external manifestations of terrorism. If we borrow medical terms, the first strategy would concentrate on preventing the illness from happening; this corresponds to the school of thought that puts its main emphasis on the structural essence of terrorism. This approach, which is no less concerned with manifest violence and with putting an end to it, seeks to transcend the so-called *fire-fighting approach* in search for the causes of the fires. Meanwhile, the second one would concentrate on curing the already existing illness. It corresponds to the school of thought that puts its main emphasis on direct forms of terrorism. It is an approach that stresses behavioral factors and is more preoccupied with the occurrence of violence and how to put an end to it, rather than explaining why violence occurs in the first place. It automatically gives birth to a *fire-fighting strategy* and anything that seems to detract from it is regarded as being obstructive.<sup>7</sup> The terms that we are going to use here to qualify both strategies are: the *development strategic approach* for the first one, and the *geo-strategic approach* for the second one. While the first one would be holistic and development-oriented, the second one would be selective and power-oriented.<sup>8</sup>

### **The *development strategic approach***

The *development strategic approach* would agree with a DAC Reference Document which believes that development co-operation does have an important role to play when it comes to depriving terrorists of popular support and addressing the conditions that terrorist leaders feed on and exploit. The same document goes further by mentioning that many conditions that allow terrorists to be politically successful, build and expand

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<sup>6</sup> Mwesiga Baregu, *Beyond September 11: Structural Causes and Behavioral Consequences of International Terrorism, Contribution to: Responding to Terrorism: What Role for the United Nations?* [Conference organized by the International Peace Academy on 25-26 October 2002 in New York], p. 42.

<sup>7</sup> Mwesiga Baregu, p. 42.

<sup>8</sup> Von der Goltz, p. 10.

constituencies, find, establish and finance terrorist organizations, and secure safe haven, fall within the realm and primary concerns of development co-operation. That implies that donor countries can reduce support for terrorism by working towards preventing conditions that give rise to violent conflicts in general and that convince disaffected groups to embrace terrorism in particular.<sup>9</sup> Such an approach does not mean that development policy should continue to be practiced, as it has been the case in the past, but that fundamental changes should be made.

It is not the short-term personal economic and political interest of donor countries that should be at the forefront here, but rather long-term amelioration of the living conditions of the world's poor in general and those living in Africa and Asia in particular. Harald Mueller recommends a "Weltsozialpolitik," a term that can be interpreted as social welfare for the world. He is here asking rich countries to prove to people in poor regions of the world and who have difficulties to cope with the consequences of globalization that the West is aware of their problems.<sup>10</sup> He is asking the international community to finally devote itself to the problems of the poor in a way that is clear and understandable. On his part, Jim Redden, policy director for the Australian Council for Overseas Aid, advocates among other things, a highly desirable concept of global taxation that aims at redistributing from the rich to the poor.<sup>11</sup> In other words, development policy should finally be considered as aid.

All of these recommendations also mean that the MDGs should be the base of all development program and nothing else; that donor countries do not only have to refine and consolidate the capacity of instruments that are at the service of development co-operation, but also have to carry out a more coherent development policy both at the national and international level. Such a policy would change the global general framework, especially the one relative to the world economic system. As an example, the world trade system should be adapted to the needs of developing countries.

In more concrete terms, adopting a *development strategic approach* would mean that donor countries have to open their markets to products from developing countries,

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<sup>9</sup> DAC Reference Document, *A Development Co-operation Lens on Terrorism Prevention: Key Entry Points for Action*, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/17/4/16085708.pdf>, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> Harald Mueller, *Den Schock verarbeiten: Nach dem 11. September – Von der Sprache des Terrors zu politischen Handlungsoptionen*, HSFK-Standpunkt No. 4/2002, Frankfurt a.M., Hessische Stiftung für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung, [http://www.learnline.de/angebote/rechtsextremismus/medio/Hintergrund/grundor\\_mat/Mueller\\_Schock.pdf](http://www.learnline.de/angebote/rechtsextremismus/medio/Hintergrund/grundor_mat/Mueller_Schock.pdf), 2001, pp. 13-14.

<sup>11</sup> Dempsey, p. 7.

support African countries' right to import or produce generic versions of HIV/AIDS medications that are still under Western patent; giving developing countries the opportunity and time to develop their own ways and means to get out of poverty;<sup>12</sup> and stop giving subsidies to their farmers, because in so doing they only take back with one hand what they generously give with the other hand in aid. Donor governments have to explain to their farmers that agricultural protection in its present form eats away the already meager income of the poor in developing countries.<sup>13</sup> The West should stop spending six times more on their farmers than what they spend on foreign aid.<sup>14</sup> It is not quite normal that subsidized maize from the West is cheaper on the African market than the locally grown one. If "trade and not aid" is the motto, then it should be done by fair means.

Donors should also be ready to put more resources aside for development co-operation than in the past. The additional money could be used in the promotion of democracy and democratic institutions, part of it could also be used to support the civil society. Education, health and food security should not be forgotten.<sup>15</sup> According to Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs, by devoting just a few tenths of a percent of America's gross domestic product to foreign aid, the U.S. government could save millions of lives in poor countries and ensure that the basic needs of health and education are met for all impoverished children in this world.<sup>16</sup> To support that developing countries have to be given more rights to have a say in international decision-making processes and more space should be given to a mutually developed solution to common problems.<sup>17</sup> According to the already mentioned DAC Reference Document what development co-operation can do to help in the anti-terror campaign could be summarized as follows:

- *Bolster long-term structural stability;*
- *dissuade disaffected groups from embracing terrorism and other forms of violence;*
- *deny groups or individuals the means to carry out terrorism: reinforce governance, strengthen political governance and work with fragile countries and failed states;*

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<sup>12</sup> Von der Goltz, p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> Benjamin W. Mkapa, "Cancun's False Promise: A View from the South." In: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 3, 2004, p. 133.

<sup>14</sup> "How to Give Africa Hope." In: *New Statesman*, Vol. 15, February 11, 2002, pp. 4-5.

<sup>15</sup> Von der Goltz, pp. 10-11.

<sup>16</sup> Dempsey, p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Von der Goltz, pp. 10-11.

- strive for coherent, complementary and consistent policies: sustain broad-based international co-operation and reinforce inclusive globalization.<sup>18</sup>

Though all these recommendations are of extreme importance, they are not sufficient. Governments of poor countries also have to change their way of doing things. And the *development strategic approach* is very important here, because since it is not tied to any self-interest of donors, it can impose conditions to be respected by recipient countries and is able to sanction governments which are not open to reforms. In so doing, donors should make sure that the conditions they impose remain realistic – in other words, based on the realities in the recipient countries concerned. Donors should know that because of social and cultural differences, policies that have been successfully applied in region or country A must not automatically be applicable in region or country B. If the governments of poor countries still happened to refuse to respect this realistic conditionality, then donors could target aid more on the political forces in recipient countries, which not only support liberalization but also are highly critical of its success. Political parties, the legislature, the judiciary, the press, and civil associations could be supported,<sup>19</sup> depending on how serious they are. Government officials in poor countries are rich people and ignore most of the time or do not care about the real needs of their people. So directly reaching the people should be the main goal of aid officers.

The *development strategic approach* includes automatically all developing countries who want to be included. And it implies a long-term effort towards eradicating poverty, illiteracy, lack of participation – in short, it aims at developing those countries in a sustainable manner. This approach primarily follows long-term security interests. In the case of Africa, for example, a fundamental change of the conditions of lawlessness and alienation that empower leaders to terrorize their own citizens and enables movements such as al-Qaeda to have a substantial following, has to be made.<sup>20</sup> It implies being proactive in preventing violent conflicts in the future. And thus makes it possible to guarantee development for the poor and global security at the same time. Choosing this approach does not only mean that the West has to be patient, but also that it has to stay calm when faced by provocation from terrorists in order not to fall into the temptation of

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<sup>18</sup> DAC Reference Document, *A Development Co-operation Lens on Terrorism Prevention: Key Entry Points for Action*. For more details see pp. 12-19.

<sup>19</sup> Carol Lancaster, *Aid to Africa: So much to Do*, Chicago UP, Chicago 1999, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> Greg Mills, "Africa's New Strategic Significance." In: *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 27 (49), 2004, pp. 66-67.

using a strategy that could produce result on a short-term basis without being able to prevent future attacks.

### **The *geo-strategic approach***

The *geo-strategic approach* is geared exactly towards such results. Development policy here will return to Cold War practices and can only take the form of anti-terror dividends in the global war against terrorism. In that case the financial aspect of development cooperation is going to play a very important role. Since development aid money is going to be used flexibly and selectively to compensate developing countries for their support of the anti-terror campaign. In so doing, favors such as over-flight rights, the construction of military bases, or diplomatic support could be bought.<sup>21</sup> This return to Cold War practices would mean here that conditionality will be absent in aid and that aid shall be given even to authoritarian regimes, as long as they give the West the support it needs in its war against transnational terrorism. Even a leader like Mugabe, who is presently vehemently criticized by donors, would all of a sudden become an ally and a friend, if his country could in any way serve Western security interests. The sudden economic support received by Pakistan after 9/11 serves as a good example for such practices.

With the *geo-strategic approach* it is going to be impossible to impose political or economical reforms on aid, because the West would be on the begging side and its impatient need for immediate and visible result would not allow it to resist the temptation of helping even the most authoritarian regimes, just to gain their support. Just as during the Cold War, African leaders, for example, are going to take advantage of the present situation to eliminate the opposition in their countries. In Uganda, for instance, experts believe that there can only be a political solution to the problems posed by the *Lord's Resistance Army* (LRA), but Museveni, pumped by his new role as an ally in the "War on Terror," has placed the LRA on the Terrorists Exclusion List, stepped up – with America's support – an ineffective military campaign against the rebels. With the *geo-strategic approach* much more of such reactions are to be expected, as leaders of developing countries are already learning to play the "War on Terrorism Game" with the

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<sup>21</sup> Von der Goltz, p. 11.

consummate skill they once applied to the Cold War one, feeding off Western anxiety to secure weapons and no-question asked funding.<sup>22</sup>

The fact that the *geo-strategic approach* would not be able to impose political and socio-economic reforms as conditions for aid, because the short term security interests it follows can only be provided by national governments and not by the people, makes the approach very vulnerable in the long run. The short-term anti-terror dividends might end up becoming "terror dividends" if the people in poor countries started identifying the West as the supporter of their authoritarian and pseudo-democratic regimes. Only the opposite of security is going to be obtained, if the West engages itself in a policy that gives, to use the words of Nuscheler, "anti terror discounts for human rights."<sup>23</sup>

If we take Africa as an example, the *geo-strategic approach* with its selective tactics will more concretely concentrate on regions and countries where terrorism is already a reality or is threatening to become a reality in the near future. The Horn of Africa, because of its links to the Islamic world and its past experience with terrorism, would be a great case of concern; Nigeria and South Africa because of the fast growing Islamic fundamentalism among their Muslim populations and the presence of huge Western investments on their soil; Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the DRC because of their diamond, which is more and more considered by terrorists as a source of income. Other regions and countries on the continent would be of very little importance. But this could change, since the *geo-strategic approach* is flexible, and would not hesitate to divert supports from one country to another, or to add some other countries to its list as soon as they become strategically more important, just as it was the case during the Cold War.

We have to make it clear here that the type of development aid emanating from the *geo-strategic approach* must not be considered automatically as being negative, because, if used well, it can also bring development to the countries that receive it. But the condition that is needed for such a positive outcome is "good governance." A development-oriented government can use such an aid efficiently by investing it in the basic needs of its people. In addition to that it should be clear that both the *geo-strategic* and the *development strategic approach* can play an important role in the global anti-terror campaign.

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<sup>22</sup> Michael Wrong, "World view." In: *New Statesman*, Vol. 17, 2004, p. 10.

<sup>23</sup> Franz Nuscheler, "Ueberforderte Entwicklungspolitik: Veraenderungen nach dem 11. September." In: *Internationale Politik*, Vol. 57 (11), 2002, p. 4.

## The need to combine both approaches

Both approaches are part of a variety of measures that aim at combating terrorism. The *geo-strategic approach* can be very useful in regions where the terrorism threat is present or imminent, meanwhile, the *development strategic approach* could bring good results in regions where the threat could become reality later in future. To come back to our use of medical terms, we can say here that in medicine both curative and preventive methods can be used against an illness depending on whether the illness has already manifested itself or not. For this reason, both strategies do not exclude each other, and it is quite possible that the more short-term oriented *geo-strategic approach* and the long-term oriented *development strategic approach* could complement each other. It is true that the short-term approach will support undemocratic and bad governing regimes, but maybe that is the price that has to be paid in order to enjoy the bit of security that is needed to put a long-term strategy in place.

There is certainly no security without development, but the reverse is also true. Moreover, it would also be very difficult for the West to apply the *development political approach* without collaborating with the so-called *bad performers* and governments that have a questionable human right record.<sup>24</sup> At this point it then becomes obvious that any development policy that is aiming at fighting terrorism is obliged to use both the *development strategic* and the *geo-strategic approach*.

## Conclusion

Taking into consideration the fact that military action alone is not sufficient in the fight against terrorism, unless it is associated with other non-military strategies, we tried to prove here that an instrument like development policy could even be more effective than military intervention, when it comes to combating terrorism. It has two strategies at its disposal: the *geo-strategic approach* and the *development strategic approach*. The *geo-strategic approach*, just like military intervention, does produce immediate results but cannot prevent terrorism from growing. Meanwhile, the *development strategic approach*, which is rather a long-term strategy, aims at attacking the root causes of terrorism. For this reason, it needs

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<sup>24</sup> Von der Goltz, p. 12.

some time before its results can be felt. Therefore we came here to the conclusion that one strategy cannot be used without the other; they are only effective when used in combination. The combined use of both strategies consolidates the position of development policy as one of the main pillars in the global fight against terrorism. An anti-terror campaign that does not include the non-military means offered by development policy will certainly be ineffective and is condemned to end up in failure.