

ing and human habitation often take precedence over forest preservation. African countries put institutional structures in place in order to deal with factors such as human demography and socio-economic and cultural activities. These factors are often responsible for the depletion of forests and environmental degradation.

Non-governmental organisations also have a role to play in policy making in Africa. In fact, the proliferation of NGOs on the continent has not only paved way for increased governmental responsiveness and accountability but has also enhanced civil society's institutional capacity to intervene between governments and their citizens. Most local NGOs, however, depend on foreign funding to run their operations. Foreign funding institutions sometimes prescribe the particular programmes that they will fund. This restricts the local organisations' programme choices. Local African NGOs need to overcome their dependency on external donor funding; they need to find innovative ways of generating revenue to pay for their operations. This will help them develop their own original approaches to influencing public policy.

Another contemporary policy concern for Africa, especially after the end of the Cold War, has been the issue of constitutionalism. Participatory approaches to constitution-making and the continuous observance of the constitution can be a good strategy in reconstructing the state and public policy institutions. Participatory constitutionalism helps build strong institutions with new values and establishes relationships that promote democracy, social justice and the rule of law. Constitutionalism can be a very viable way to construct effective public policy. Constitutionalism is, however, a process and not an event. It calls for a lot of political goodwill, especially in Africa where most African leaders are afflicted with the absolute power syndrome.

In a nutshell, *Agenda Setting and Public Policy in Africa* categorizes Africa's problems as follows: the absence of people-driven participatory institutions that should prioritize public policy within an African context. Most authors of the various chapters agree that viable alternatives will involve sound discussions of ideas and an appreciation of issues and goals based on a vision that is informed by, and relevant to the

specific African environment. The text provides an up to date account of public policy issues through provoking chapters that are carefully edited. The book's discussion on contemporary topics of public policy presents good material on theory and current research. The case studies highlight the problems and show possible remedies. The underlying principles are well thought out and demonstrate the need for caution when formulating government development strategies and agendas in dynamic and complex settings. This reviewer would have liked the case studies to be more widely distributed in order to capture the breadth and width of the continent's diversity. Several authors tended to focus on one country, thereby failing to show the broader picture of Africa as suggested in the title. But, on the whole, the authors bring together quite interesting and insightful accounts with concise and accurate summaries. The chapters need not be read in sequence in order to be understood. This is a very important book not only for what it tells readers but because it can also be used as a relevant model for guiding the actual agenda setting and policy making by African governments. It is a careful and knowledgeable exploration of the field of public policy that can be recommended to policy-makers and scholars of public policy.

*Kisiangani Emmanuel N*

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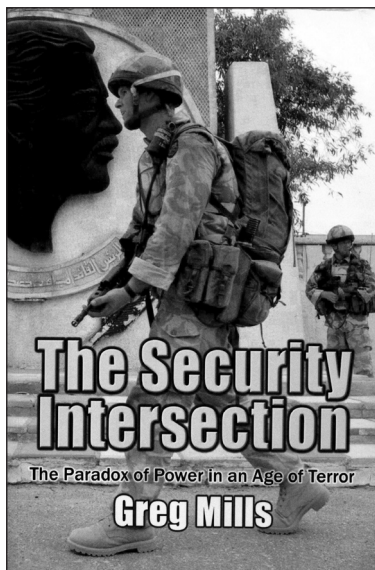
## THE SECURITY INTERSECTION

*The paradox of power in the age of terror*

GREG MILLS

Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2005, pp 321

While it is patently clear that the September 11 terrorist attacks on targets in America – and the US-led toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq two years later – have emphatically changed the face of global security, the emerging security trends generated by these events are less clear. The spread of terrorist attacks – in Madrid, Bali, and on targets in East Africa – as well as insurgency and counter-insurgency in Iraq call for a fundamental rethinking of approaches to security



and terrorism in a largely globalised world. Greg Mills' *Security intersection* is a lucid analysis of the security challenges of our turbulent age, based on the author's manifestly extensive and first-hand research in war zones from Iraq to Pakistan.

The book – organised around three sections and nine chapters with a usefully nuanced introduction, a conclusion and valuable end-note – explores three broad issues: the socio-political, economic and cultural backdrop to understanding modern insecurities; usefulness of military means in addressing these challenges with special focus on Afghanistan and Iraq; and suggestions on how best to address some of the key security challenges.

Although *Security intersection* draws examples from a wide range of issues from across the world, it is primarily concerned with the recent war in Iraq, the on-going insurgency and operations. Greg Mills fuses the anecdotal and the theoretical with incredible ease, and provides a sharp bird's-eye-view of the global security situation. *Security intersection* identifies seven 'paradoxes of power' generated by the US-led intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq that have become the indelible marks of our turbulent age.

The first paradox is the conflict between military might ('hard power') and the 'soft power' through which lives, thoughts and actions are shaped and organised. Nothing elucidates this better than the contrast between the quick

initial victory by the US-led coalition over Iraq and the complex post-war reconstruction of the country, which vividly delineates the limit of 'hard-power.' The second is that the post-9/11 has been characterised by states acting unilaterally or through 'coalitions of the willing' in contrast to the idealistic desire to make the world a better place. The post-9/11 years have seen the rapid rise of American unilateralism in global politics. The third paradox is the existence of international norms, standards and laws governing state behavior which contrast sharply with the apparently *inalienable* right by states to assert their power internationally, and the ubiquity of social movements and civic groups acting nationally and trans-nationally to assert the rights of citizens.

The fourth paradox is the contrast between the existence of global norms and values and limited and selective interventions to uphold them. The author is concerned because 'Saddam Hussein was toppled because of his human rights record and the threat his regime offered principally to its own citizens' but he wonders why 'Robert Mugabe's regime [should] remain largely untouched, given the clear and present danger it poses to Zimbabweans and the Southern African region'. It would appear that violation of human rights per se is not sufficient to get states with military might to intervene in other states. As one Zimbabwean aptly remarked, 'If we had oil deposits and the country was within the orbit of terrorism, Mugabe's regime would by now be history.'

The fifth paradox is that while the kind of challenges faced in situations after intervention such as post-Taliban Afghanistan and post-Saddam Iraq are better handled by the UN as an inter-state organisation with best practice and best equipped to deal with them, the UN has remained politically powerless and without the requisite resource capacity. Without the UN lead, the peace support operations for post-war reconstruction in Afghanistan and Iraq have metamorphosed into dangerous counter-insurgency or counter-terrorist campaigns.

The sixth paradox is that while transnational threats, especially the threat of terrorism, have appeared to militate against geographic interventions, this contradicts conventional notions of sovereign control as well as the UN's

upholding of these principles. Finally, although threats are asymmetrical and marked by irrational behavior, states are expected to respond rationally. Speaking of rationality and rational choices, while toppling Saddam Hussein had its merits, one cannot agree more with Greg Mills that 'the Bush administration has had an extraordinarily polarizing and costly effect on both (US) nationals and global politics' (p 8). Despite its overwhelming military might, the US finds it difficult to deal with terrorism by relying on conventional power.

While the scope of the book is larger than Africa, it sheds light on the security scenario in African security, likening it to what is going on in hotspots in the Middle East in the global context. The author makes the poignant point that African security often comes as an appendage to what is taking place in such high-profile areas as the Middle East or areas connected to it. It is a sad indication of Africa's marginality in the global security debate that events such as the 1994 genocide in Rwanda are yet to become watershed. Although Africa has been faced with many devastating 'internal' 'small' wars, these have not had any significant impact outside Africa. The developed world spent the better part of 2004 pondering on how to deal with the world's largest humanitarian crisis in Darfur, but Africa has few results to show for it. Perhaps the book should have contextualised the lead role of the AU in Darfur and what it signifies. Is it abandonment or partnership? Or

is it the best expression of 'African problem to African solutions'. Whatever Darfur may eventually become, support from the wealthy nations has been too little, too late. Nothing proves the point of selective humanitarian intervention than the overwhelming response by these nations to the victims of the Tsunami Indian Ocean seaboard on 26 December 2004.

The book shares the widespread scepticism about African peace initiatives on the continent. Commenting on the Somali peace process the author laments that 'the objective of appointing 275 new members of Parliament, inaugurating a new Somali government and selecting a new Somali president appeared illusionary in the face of an oft-violated cease-fire' (p 222). Contrary to this view, Somalia is evolving into one of Africa's success stories following the signing of a peace agreement in Nairobi last year, which seems to have put the war-torn country firmly on the road to stability and recovery with the support of regional actors such as IGAD and the AU as well as the international community.

*Security intersection* presents a clear and realistic analysis of the policy-making environment and requirements and options and offers thought-provoking suggestions for future policy. It is a valuable resource and refreshingly rewarding reading.

*Dr Peter Kagwanja*