

So, what is terrorism? Framing and the 9/11 attacks in Kenyan Editorial Cartoons

Interestingly, although conceived to be largely purveyors of humour and satire, editorial cartoons are equally at their best in capturing human grief and the whole discourse surrounding the unfolding of tragic events. Indeed, its very nature facilitates the construction of events by capturing and expressing audiences' fears, hopes and values with regard to a particular issue. Also, the editorial cartoons as artefacts of political culture reveal prevalent public opinion on a particular issue with direct or indirect effects to members of society¹. The question central to this study is how the editorial cartoon framed the 9/11 event and the extent to which such framing accorded or denied terrorists, government agencies and other stakeholders leverage. Specifically, the section probes the extent to which the dominant frames careered over time, and whether changes in framing tilted away or towards legitimising or illegitimising terrorism. From these, conclusions are drawn on the extent to which particular aspects of knowledge, realities, opinion or ideologies were constructed within the Kenyan social space.

Editorial Cartoons as Breaking News: The Universalising of 9/11

In a span of less than 100 minutes, America suffered what Nacos (2007) terms the most deadly, most damaging case of terrorism in history. Almost three thousand people lost their lives and property worth billions of dollars damages, affecting business, operations and normal life in way that was unprecedented not only for Americans but for most of the world. While only a few saw these events as they happened, millions of people watched the unfolding events on cables news channels, television or internet sources as breaking news. As earlier stated, the print media equally attempted to fulfil its rightful role by a detailed reporting of these events. Similarly, editorial cartoons equally sought to capture these cataclysmic attacks shortly after they had occurred. In the first few days after the attacks, the editorial cartoons in Kenya's leading news

¹ I do not argue that editorial cartoons have a special or unique impact on public opinion; rather my argument is that editorial cartoons reflect the dominant views prevalent among members of the public at a particular time on a given issue. Also, it is possible that editorial cartoons represent issues incongruent with perceptions of sections of the public just as it is possible for them (unlike commentaries), especially when viewed longitudinally, to represent potentially contradictory positions, but which also represent the varied interests or different opinions held by members of the public. This attribute makes them to be especially prone to ideological contests meant to empower or disempower the position of particular groups, class, or interest in the construction of meaning.

papers reveal a host of different frames ranging from sympathy, shock and disbelief, a sense of widespread fear and vulnerability and a nagging irony of the world's super power being almost brought to its knees, perhaps for the first time in history, by barely armed non state actors. In the first two weeks after the attacks, while publicity and recognition was given to the event in the first few days after the attacks, it did not materialize to the desired legitimacy that terrorists crave.

On the 13th of September, a day after the terror attacks in New York, the global reality of the event began to sink in, *The Standard* published an editorial cartoon meant to express sympathy with the American citizens and at the same time vilify the perpetrators and what they represented. The framing devices used was the globe on a black background, apparently pierced by what appears to be a sharp rod like gadget, and whose impact appears to be spreading outwards from the point of impact. Atop the rod is the near universal symbol of death, a human skull with intersecting bones behind it. The sign acts as signifier of death and the (senseless or potentially avoidable) loss of human life. The graphic presentation of the earth in outer space stands as a symbolic sign of humanity while at the same time an iconic sign of the planet itself. The lexical framing device '*our deepest sympathy and condolences to the people of the United States of America following this cowardly and horrendous attack on their country*' serves to anchor the message of sympathy. However, it does much more than that, as a reasoning device, it not only reports on the attack but defines it as *cowardly* and *horrendous*, thus invoking a moral evaluation that denies the act legitimacy.

The Standard, 13th September, 2001. Reprinted by permission

Worth noting, these words themselves mirror those given by US president Bush at Barksdale Air force Base on the day of the attacks saying, 'Freedom itself was attacked this morning by a faceless coward...make no mistake, the United States will hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts'². By using the symbol of the world, an implicit we is subsumed in which all humanity is affected. The effect is a secretion of difference, in which an oppositional binary that constructs the terrorist other as existing outside of humanity occurs.

² See, American rhetoric: rhetoric of 9/11 see-<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911barksdale.htm>

Meanwhile, hidden in these depictions is an ideological construction that seeks to galvanise, or tap on the opinion of a world united against terror. An ideological operation of *unification*, in which difference of opinion and non mainstream reactions following 9/11 are denied or simply ignored, which would be expected especially coming only two days after the attack. However, though controversial, news reports on CNN and other international media reported celebrations in parts of Palestine³ and even other parts of Kenya.⁴

Taken corporately therefore, the identified framing and reasoning devices function more in a descriptive way than evaluative or prescriptive. Still, they direct attention of terrorism as a global phenomenon that is both an illegitimate form of political conduct and also a cowardly act. In this sense, the dominant frame of WE ARE ALL AFFECTED emerges. The symbol of the globe creates an impression of a homogenous and unified 'one' world, essentially one body, gored by the 'terrorist's rod', whereby injury on one part of the body affects the whole. The suffering and attacks in the US are interpreted not merely an attack on a few but rather an attack on humankind itself. The findings in this study indicate that this deliberate universalising of the 9/11 experience was to be a crucial discourse moment in the preparation and mobilisation of opinion and resources in the subsequent war against terror. Although this particular frame denies terrorists legitimacy, it grants them initial publicity of their acts and equally plays into their hands of suffusing fear and anxiety to as many people as possible. It equally and in a subtle way grants state agencies legitimacy to respond in unspecified ways (at least at this moment) to aggressive acts such as these. This frame was equally fortified by rhetoric from government officials in America and other parts of the world that the attacks were not merely on America, but on freedom (a universal virtue), implying that all countries were at risk of losing their freedom as a result of these attacks. However, the universalising of the attacks could also be because citizens of over 78 countries died in the attacks. In addition, several world leaders called the attacks not just on America itself an affront against humanity itself. For instance, Russian

³ There were rumours that the footage of Palestinians celebrating the attacks on the streets and shooting in the air in celebration following the attacks was stock footage of Palestinian reactions to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. This argument was countered by CNN bringing an end to the rumour.

⁴ In an article on 9/11 and Muslim Politics in Kenya, Rudiger Seesemann records that in parts of Mombasa Osama bin Laden was regarded as a hero, with various religious leaders such as Sheikh Ali Shee lauding him hero only hours after the unprecedented attacks. For details see *9/11 and Muslim politics in Kenya*, unpublished paper presented at the international workshop 'Local remediation of a global event: 9/11 in popular culture and arts in Africa', University of Cologne, 19-21 November, 2009.

president Vladimir Putin called the strikes ‘a blatant challenge to humanity’ while German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder declared that the events were ‘not only attacks on the people in the United States, but also against the entire civilized world, against our own freedom, against our own values, values which we share with the American people,’ building on this universalising frame he added, ‘We will not let these values be destroyed.’⁵ In addition, a day after the attacks, 19 ambassadors of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) declared that the 9/11 attacks were an attack on all of the member nations. This statement of solidarity was mostly symbolic—NATO did not authorize any specific military action—nevertheless it was still unprecedented. For the first time the organization invoked the mutual defence section of its charter (intended to protect vulnerable European nations from Soviet invasion during the Cold War). NATO eventually sent five airplanes to help keep an eye on American airspace⁶. It was no different in the media, for instance the French newspaper *Le Monde* ran a front-page headline reading ‘*Nous sommes tous Américains*’, or ‘We are all Americans.’ This frame of globalising the 9/11 attacks was to emerge even more forcefully the next day on the 14th of September.

The Standard, 14th September, 2001. Reprinted by permission

The manifest framing devices are the gigantic hand with the lexical item ‘terrorism’ on its wrist, tightening its grip on earth, symbolising humanity, as if to crush it. The lexical phrase by the ‘Lilliputian’ ‘now, where is one safe? The piercing rod in the previous cartoon and the constricting arm are semiotically drawn from the same paradigm in which one element seems to be a mere replacement of another. An overwhelming sense of despair is created, in which the reasoning devices suggest that the problem of terrorism is a global problem where everyone is affected. The problem of terrorism is not only universalised by the frame WE ARE ALL AFFECTED, but the suffusion of fear through this cartoon is created. Scholars have argued that the terrorists’ intention of spreading fear is among their most coveted objective (Picard, 1991; Nacos; 2007). Similarly, just like the previous editorial cartoon, a binary reductionism is accentuated whereby the terrorist other is malevolently cast as singularly bent towards the total destruction of human life. In so doing, the ideological mode of unification is at play here too, whereby social, political, economic and cultural differences are blurred in an attempt at

⁵For details see <http://www.history.com/topics/international-reaction-to-9-11>

⁶ for details see <http://www.history.com/topics/international-reaction-to-9-11>

galvanising world opinion against terrorism. The possible ramifications at particular levels of discourse implied that dissenting opinion towards the mainstream construction of the globe versus the terrorist villain was muted, frowned upon, if not entirely suppressed.

The universalising of 9/11 was fortified metaphorically by the appropriation of attributes common to all and in the deployment of equalising factors, themselves part of ideological modes that suggest that we are one and which quietly ignore or marginalise heterogeneity. For instance in the editorial cartoon the reality of death is foregrounded, symbolised by a cold lone grave, metonymical representing the destiny of all humanity. Cast in wintry weather and darkened skies, with only meagre framing devices of the grave stone, and the lexical items 'September 11th 2001' engraved on it, the poignancy of the moment is almost palpable. The resulting syntagm crystallises into the frame WE ARE ALL AFFECTED, uniting humanity in a moment of silence, a funeral on the editorial pages in which we are all invited to share in the grief. An implicit other is also assumed as the cause of the funeral, and also marking a notable step in a nascent yet subtle construction of the enemy. Legitimacy of the act is neither denied nor conferred, there is only silence befitting graveyard discourse.

This editorial cartoon marks a significant point of the frame WE ARE ALL AFFECTED, because from this point onward this frame mutated and appropriated more aggressive and bold framing elements and reasoning devices aimed at identifying the enemy and sounding the drums of war.

The Daily Nation, 13th September, 2001. Reprinted by permission

Constructing the Enemy: The 9/11 Attacks as Acts of War

Unlike other terror attacks in which a particular group claims responsibility immediately, 9/11 was unique in its execution and mind boggling in the fatalities reported that that no one publicly claimed responsibility for the attacks. However, it was not long before fingers and circumstantial evidence began pointing at Saudi dissident and billionaire Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaida network. In a speech shortly after the blast, US president George Bush termed the attacks as acts of war worthy of a strong response. According to him, the proposed war was to be launched not merely on terrorists but also those who harbour them. Predictably, a very strong and unequivocal frame of revenge was rife in both American and the world media. The first editorial cartoon in

The Nation soon after the attacks displayed shyness in attributing outright responsibility for the attacks to known groups or persons. Still the cartoon marked the beginning of the framing of 9/11 as an act of war.

The Daily Nation, 14th September, 2001. Reprinted by permission

Appearing on the 12th of September a day after the attacks, the editorial cartoon above shows that while an attack had hit America the identity of the enemy was still unknown. Among the key manifest framing devices is a man in military fatigues holding a gigantic spiked club and apparently stunned by a bee sting at probably his most vital part, the head. The framing device 'US' on the breast pockets indicates that this is an almost iconic sign of the US and a similar stars and stripes patterned helmet confirms this identity. The spiked club is not only representative of warfare, but is also symbolical of the United State's military role as the world's only super power. The bee represents a subtle construction of the enemy through 'verminization', whereby in fully developed frames of conflictual nature the enemy is constructed as a vermin worthy of extermination. Apart from a silence on the identity of those behind the attacks, the reasoning devices indicate that an attack has taken place but does not proffer the reasons or a moralisation of the attacks. It is merely descriptive and serves the media surveillance role of informing the public of what has happened. Coming very soon after the attacks, this editorial cartoon neither legitimized nor illegitimized the attacks, but largely presented a binarism built on irony, in which a seemingly weak actor has inflicted harm on one perceived to be immensely strong. Also, the depiction of the enemy as an insect serves an ideological role that follows similar discursive patterns of expurgating the other and emphasizing how vile and different the enemy is. Such framing devices are effective in constructing otherness in the identity of the enemy. Worth noting, this editorial cartoon forms the initial attempts at the construction of enemy in a 9/11 IS WAR frame that was anchored on strong discursive sentiments that 9/11 was an act of war and also the beginning of another World War, or one of equal scale. This particular frame was to be clearly evident in the following editorial cartoon published in *The Nation* on 23rd September.

The Daily Nation, 13th September, 2001. Reprinted by permission

The editorial cartoon pictures what looks like a global clock of significant world wars in which 2001 is prophetically cast as the dawn yet another significant war, this time terrorism war. As the dominant framing device, the clock portrays what seems like intervals of peace punctuated by wars at specific times in the last a hundred years. Presented as a gun and a missile, the arms of the clock are ticking towards what seems to be an inevitable situation of war in which the US (symbolised by the stars and stripes flag) is to play a significant role. Like in the previous cartoon, the flag is a paradigmatic equivalent of the club wielding soldier in which both signs are symbolical of the stature and role of the United States in international political and relations and also indexical of what was expected by many; a fierce hit back from the US. Indeed, while the reasoning devices of the clock and a contextual understanding do more than inform the reader of the 9/11 attacks, they also suggest that an all out war militarily remains the only inevitable recourse. Accordingly, these devices coalesce to prompt in the viewer the core frame that 9/11 IS WAR. Furthermore, the frame at this point plays the ideological role of *naturalisation* or what Thomson (1990a) called reification, in which a scenario or retaliatory war is represented as the most natural consequence of 9/11 and other possible options of remedy marginalised and entirely swept aside. While this very frame served the crucial role of legitimizing the immediate reaction from the US and the subsequent war on terror, it was only natural that the enemy(s) upon whom this war was to be launched be identified and defined through strategic discursive structures and alternative evidence linking them to the attacks. It was therefore not long before the enemy was unmasked and ‘the vermin’, in virtually all media forms, finally acquired a human face: Osama bin Laden.

On the 26th of September *The Nation* published in its editorial pages a cartoon that not only built on the 9/11 AS WAR frame but also gave face to the enemy. Using what Gombrich (1985) called *physiognomizing* or more precisely what El Refaie (2003) calls homospatiality, in which two distinct images are merged into a single image within which separate components can still be detected, the face of the man believed to be behind the 9/11 attacks appears. Presented in part human and part animal form, the framing device of an insect with a human face is foregrounded and cast as a focal point upon whom/which military hardware of various types and capabilities is aimed at. A contextual understanding and reading of the prevailing events suggest that the face is Osama’s, this time verminized as a bug whose buzz crystallises the epithet

‘terrorism’ in its wake. The resulting syntagm of a verminized Osama and the assembled arsenal closing in denotatively creates a binary opposition of terrorism versus the rest. However the connotations strip the terrorist (symbolised metonymically by Osama) of the much needed legitimacy by casting him as an enemy of most. Nevertheless, the terrorist is given recognition by the media that has the possibility of transmuting to a sense of victimhood and sympathy in more developed frames.

The Daily Nation, 26th September, 2001. Reprinted by permission

Furthermore, the framing device of a buzzing bug above similar to the one in image (no.1) reveal a paradigmatic relationship in which terrorism is metaphorically symbolised as a witty bug. Also, the absurdity of waging a military affront on such a nebulous and slippery enemy is questioned, just as it was in the club wielding cartoon. At this point the 9/11 IS WAR frame becomes meta-communicative and sends both a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic message whereby in the midst of a near emotional clamour for war, caution is still called for.

Meanwhile, around the time when a discursive framework of war was being weaved following the events of 9/11, another frame constructing terrorism as evil and the work of fanatical minds emerged. This frame was significant in supporting the 9/11 IS WAR frame and also in legitimising the war on terror that was to follow shortly. Naturally, in labelling terrorism as evil, an assumed good was implied, creating a binarism that tapped on the religious and shaped the framing of terrorism and its war for a long time. As argued by scholars within a constructionist framing paradigm, this frame did not begin in the media but rather grew out of a series of complex interpretations, interactions of key actors, discourse and statements from government officials, the alleged terrorists themselves and other stakeholders.

Good versus Evil: The Construction of 9/11 as a Cosmic Battle

Understandably, the scale of the 9/11 attacks conjured up some of the most impassioned statements from world leaders. As the debris of what used to be the twin towers was slowly being carted away, and plumes of smoke still wafting lazily from the heap of metal, cement and dust, President Bush did not mince words, ‘today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human

nature⁷, he mourned in a speech loaded with religious overtones. This framing of the attacks as the work of evil ushered in a torrent of similar discourse from most of the world's leaders.

In Kenya, then President Moi, serving the last year of his long reign of twenty four years issued a statement terming the attacks as heinous and evil acts⁸. Although a man keen with his Christian religion, Moi was merely following the template of what President Bush and other world leaders had used in framing the attacks. The dominant frames had already begun a systematic construction of 9/11 as the products of irrational and depraved minds, casting them both as inherently cowardly and wicked. It was not long before the media took up this religious frame in the construction of news and the analysis of news. Soon after, the framing of 9/11 as an act that is cowardly, irrational and evil found expression in the editorial pages of Kenya's print media. On October, 23rd 2001, slightly over a month after the terror attacks in New York, the editorial cartoon below was published. It taps on key culturally laden devices and visual monstrosity to build on the 9/11 as a GOOD VERSUS EVIL dichotomous frame.

The Daily Nation, 23rd October, 2001. Reprinted by permission

The cartoon itself is simple and contains very few framing devices. The message is instantly understood within Kenya's cultural interpretative community. The most prominent framing device is a real close up iconic image of Bin Laden that allows one a close look at his hairy and cold face, with furrowed lines running from the sides of the nose to the sides of his tightened lips, secreting an arrogant deathly look upon the reader. The message is unmistakable, this is the enemy. However, it does much more than that, atop his head, revealing a near empty head hidden beneath Bin Laden's turban, a gowned skeletal apparition indexical of human destruction waves a long blade with the words terrorism on it. The lexical elements 'Wanted: Dead or alive' complete the image. This implicit oppositional pairing situates an evil 'Bin Laden' (and all that this sign connotes) on one side and the forces of good on the other side. This frame seems to be a continuation of a similar August 7th frame which constructed the embassy attacks as works of evil but it adds much more to it. The reasoning devices activated suggest more than the simple fact that Bin Laden is behind the 9/11 attacks. The gowned skeleton 'possessing' Bin Laden's

⁷ <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911addresstothenation.htm>

⁸ See Daily Nation 12th September, 2001 'Moi condemns terror attacks.'

mind taps on a cultural framework of spirit possession. In this case, Bin Laden is captive of an evil spirit that can be the only reason for driving his actions. This is a pivotal interpretation considering the fact that terrorists need and seek legitimacy for their actions and look up to the media to do this for them. By dismissing them as irrational and of depraved and unsound mind, this kind of framing in the media not only denies terrorists legitimacy but also takes away the possibility for an option outside of a fight to finish. In this sense, the framing of terrorism as senseless evil served the dual purpose of denying legitimacy to terrorists and also prepared the ground for the war on terror.

Ideologically, a vicious form of otherness is initiated, in which the other is represented as harmful and a danger to humanity. And because he, those he represents and those who follow him are considered either insane or not in full mental control, it logically follows that a process that allows domination (militarily) or close control of these group is legitimate. In other words, while this editorial cartoon denies terrorists legitimacy, it nevertheless grants state agencies (and more so the US government) legitimate grounds on its war on terror. Indeed, this kind of framing that permits the domination of one over another is largely successful to the extent that one group succeeds in labelling and constructing in the mind of the public the illegitimacy of the other. More often than not, official interpretations seem to succeed than do the 'terrorists' in this contest. For instance, in the cartoon below the frame 9/11 as a battle between Good and evil is fortified by linking it to a veritable cultural phenomenon; religion. The corporate meaning secreted by the fusion of the framing and reasoning devices in the cartoon suggest a conflict in which the supernatural is invoked. Worth noting, in a country with approximately 80% Christians⁹, the metaphors probably resonated well with an interpretative community conversant with the connotative meanings evoked.

⁹ This is according to the latest census results released in the year 2010. For details see <http://www.knbs.or.ke/>, the Kenya Bureau of statistics website.

The Daily Nation, 23rd October, 2001. Reprinted by permission

Symmetrically balanced on the top right corner of the pictorial frame, the two dominant framing devices in the cartoon are the feuding birds and the planets cast in outer space. Planet earth is foregrounded perhaps signifying its interlocked fate with the outcome of this cosmic war. The reasoning devices suggest a transcendental interpretation as the stretched heavens witness the fight of good versus evil. While the 9/11 terrorists claimed to be fighting on god's behalf, likewise the fight against terror appears to tap on the inspiration of a transcendental force. The casting of this war in outer space also adds an apocalyptic dimension to it. The cartoon draws on a Judeo Christian interpretation, where the dove symbolizes the essence of godliness and God's presence-the very gentleness of the Holy Spirit. The olive branch on its beak is a conventional symbol of peace and comeliness. The vulture, one of the birds forbidden under Biblical Old Testament Law as human food, is a common cultural symbol of evil in most of Africa. To a vast majority of Kenyans, the symbolism resonates well as the vulture is feared as an indexical sign of death and bad omen while the dove was appreciated and domesticated as a 'friend of man'. The horned head of the vulture is an obvious exaggeration meant to accentuate the visual monstrosity. The thorny twig, deliberately hurled at the dove's neck, apportions the blame on the vulture, which is seen as the unprovoked aggressor. It is not lost to the keen observer that black, often a sign symbolising evil is contrasted to white, a sign embodied by the 'good' dove. The resulting syntagm reveals a binarism paired along oppositional structural categories of both evil and good (a mostly religious interpretation), the villain and the protagonist and the aggressor and peacemaker (a political-military interpretation). The paradigmatic interpretation suggests that variously the terrorists were seen to be the aggressors, acting with malevolent intent and hence the villains in most of the discursive environment.

In addition, an ideological meaning is suggested that sustains power relations of domination through legitimizing the option of an all out war against the identified enemy. Moreover, by invoking the divine a moral legitimacy to execute action against the enemy is attained since the villain is cast as equally fighting 'good', hence fighting God too. However, while the pairing of good versus evil in the media is common in virtually all political, social and

human interest stories, such binarism at the onset served to legitimize the war against terror as it cast the war against terrorism as a God sanctioned operation.

Counter Hegemonic Frames: 9/11 as Cold War's Unfinished Business

There were also frames that sought to challenge these commonly held assumptions that terrorism, (symbolised here by Osama and those thought to be behind 9/11) is simply the work of unprovoked aggressors, or the outcome of irrational minds meting out violence just for kicks. As a critical examination of 9/11 continued, the framing of the attacks as the unfinished business of the cold war found space in the editorial cartoons at the time. The first such cartoon was published on 29th September, slightly over two weeks after the attacks. The editorial cartoon contains two key framing devices, the well known symbol and metonymy of the US political and State machinery, Uncle Sam. According to the online encyclopaedia, Wikipedia, Uncle Sam is a common national personification of the American government originally used during the War of 1812. He is normally depicted as a stern elderly man with white hair and a goatee beard. Typically he is dressed in clothing that recalls the design elements of the flag of the United States—for example, a top hat with red and white stripes and white stars on a blue band, and red and white striped trousers¹⁰. His image is used to symbolize US patriotism, values such as liberty and strength. In the cartoon below, there are a few modifications to his dress because of the role he is playing. Cast as an undertaker, Uncle Sam, symbol of the US, is dressed in an apron and had apparently been raking the grave of what is described as 'Cold War,' the other dominant framing device. The third significant framing device is a fearsome black arm ripping through the previously cemented grave inscribed with the lexical item 'terrorism' on its only visible part, the arm. This sudden vice grip on Uncle Sam's left foot has stunned him to shock, sending his rake and his top hat midair.

Reprinted by permission, 29th September, 2001

¹⁰ The first use of Uncle Sam in literature was in the 1816 allegorical book *The Adventures of Uncle Sam in Search After His Lost Honor* by Frederick Augustus. The Popular image of Uncle Sam (As seen in the image on the top of this page) was defined in large part by Thomas Nast, who was one of the most popular cartoonists in the US in the 1800's. Nast's first illustration of Uncle Sam appeared in the November 20, 1869 edition of *Harper's Weekly*.

Although the binarism in the cartoon is unmistakable, the casting of terrorism as a variant of cold war paired opposite the US is clearly counter to the more hegemonic frames discussed in the previous pages. At the denotative level there is deceptive neutrality to this binarism but on closer scrutiny, with another eye on other discursive environments, the reasoning devices frame the problem of terrorism stems from the lack of a proper closure to the cold war. In this sense, 9/11 is seen as the consequence of a poorly handled cold war past whose mutating vestiges has come to haunt the present in form of international terrorism. Specifically, the reasoning devices subtly attempt to situate the blame of 9/11 partly on the US by implying that a relationship exists between the attacks and the Cold war. Simply put, the reasoning devices suggest that since the US played a steering role in the cold war, they played a hand in creating the monster of terrorism.

This frame of 9/11 AS THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS OF THE COLD WAR is equally the product of an ideological contest in which different social, political and economic groups seek to impress their worldview on the public. As a counter hegemonic frame, the meaning secreted equally appropriates the very same modes that hegemonic frames deploy. Moreover, while it is possible that an underlying relationship exists between the Cold war and the 9/11 attacks, the masterminds of the attacks did not consider it as one of their motivations for the attacks. Shortly before and after the attacks, Bin Laden cited the presence of US troops in Saudi Arabia, the unwavering support of the US for Israel, and sanctions against Iraq as motivations for the attacks. Furthermore, the roots of terrorism are complex and include such factors as increased poverty, a feeling of being rootless and alienated among hordes immigrant communities, increased radicalisation, corruption and oppression, inequality among others. In this sense, one sees the ideological appropriation of a selected historical fact to justify a complex entity such as terrorism. The ideological mode of generalisation is at work here where a singular fact is taken in isolation and generalised to understand a complex whole with an intention of undermining the other and empowering a particular interpretation¹¹. In this sense, based on the elaborated account, the 9/11 attacks are provide a rational platform in which responsibility is blurredly shared out between the terrorists and the US government with the result being that legitimacy for the attacks is granted, albeit in subtlety.

However, on October 15th 2001, the frame 9/11 AS THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS OF THE COLD WAR emerged, but this time even more explicitly. Worth noting, Bin Laden, the alleged master mind of the attacks, is for the first time presented without any visual monstrosity, verminization or negative exaggerations. The editorial cartoon contains a series of successive boxes in comic format designed to convey narrative. In the first box the framing devices include a huge hand inscribed US on it, playing the role of a puppet master whose finger movements control Osama, cast as a marionette. The excessively diminutive Osama, cast holding a tiny gun, fires an equally puny shot at a target. The next box shows the fallen target. The sole of his shoe reveals his identity through a communist symbol of hammer and sickle, and the lexical device ‘Soviet’¹². The third box shows Osama, now the puppet of yet unseen actors firing another puny shot at the opposite direction, where his erstwhile puppet master stood. The US is fallen as Osama grins still clutching on the smoking gun. This also marks the first time Osama is shown smiling.

Reprinted by permission, 15th October, 2001

Corporately, the reasoning devices attempt to explain the motivations behind the attacks. The cartoon displays a friend and foe binarism that straddles the narrative from its beginning to its end. The role of the US in playing proxy wars during the cold war is paradigmatically structured as a puppet master in much the same way as an undertaker in the previous cartoon. The resulting syntagm of the US reaping the seeds of a botched foreign policy are similar in the two cartoons, though clearer in the second syntagm. The dominant message is summarized in the words of a columnist writing for the same paper in which the two cartoons were published who argued that the Afghan jihad had devoured its creator.¹³ In a moment of forthright journalism, blame of the 9/11 attacks is placed on the US itself. However, in taking such a perspective, this narrative seems to follow and entrench the same counter hegemonic ideological path discussed previously. Indeed, an isolated foreign policy decision, undertaken under a particular context and temporal

¹² The hammer and the sickle is a symbol of the communist movement. The hammer stands for the industrial working class while the sickle represents the agricultural workers; together the hammer and sickle represents the unity of these two groups. Others have speculated that the hammer represents power, while the sickle represents efficiency.

¹³ See Sunday Nation, September 16th, 2001

framework, is generalized to be at the root of 9/11 and other forms of terror. However, this instance of provincial scrutiny and selective amnesia gave legitimacy to the attacks the events of 9/11. It was therefore not surprising when further non hegemonic frames emerged probing the extent to which Osama (now and those acting on his behalf) are freedom fighters (Hero) or villains.

Counter Hegemonic Frames: 9/11 AS HEROISM

The construction of 9/11 as heroic began in the previous counter hegemonic frames that began to locate the cold war as the progenitor of current terrorism. Newspaper stories in Kenya began a biographical dig on Bin Laden. According to these reports, Osama's support and eventual participation in the frontlines against the Russian forces in the late 70s and early 80s made him an instant hero upon his return to his native Saudi Arabia. This newly acquired status prompted him to become a leading opposition voice in the vastly conservative and closed Saudi Kingdom. He was soon expelled following repeated calls for radical reform; expulsion of foreign troops in the Arabian Peninsula begins writing treatises against the Saudi regime. Shortly after, he declared a Holy War that spawned a series of deadly terror attacks that have claimed thousands from Kenya, to Yemen, Madrid, New York, London and several more other places.

In the cartoon below published on November 26th 2001 in *The Nation*, a series of framing devices parade statesmen whose political trajectories have at different points subsumed the two seemingly incompatible labels of terrorist and hero. The bold lexical '*Terrorist yesterday, Hero today*' in the context of 9/11 seems to invite us to critically examine previously held conceptions of the attackers. In spite of the dismissive comment of Osama being '*Hero yesterday and Terrorist Today*' he still manages to acquire unprecedented recognition by being mentioned alongside these former 'terrorists' who are now considered heroes among their people. Nelson Mandela, one of the most celebrated political leaders, was in the US list of terror until July 2008. Sam Nujoma led a bloody campaign against the occupying South African forces in the then South West Africa to lead Namibia to independence. Similarly, Yasser Arafat, who later became Palestine president formed the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization), left an equally controversial legacy. Most Arabs thought of him as hero who symbolized their national aspirations. However he was reviled by many Israelis who viewed him as a terrorist. Xanana

Gusmao, the incumbent Prime minister of East Timor led a successful resistance against Indonesian occupation.

Most importantly, for Bin Laden to be named alongside such statesmen is a subtle attempt at extolling him, and by extension the 9/11 terror attacks. Whatever the final conclusion, he (Osama, and the metonymic connotations) scores three fundamental points in as far as legitimacy is concerned. First, he is linked with heroism allowing the possible interpretations of 9/11 as a heroic act, and secondly he is mentioned alongside legitimate and democratically elected state presidents thus giving him almost if not equal stature. Finally, the actions of 9/11 are given a wider context of interpretation that allow the possibility of interpreting it as a worthy cause similar to the those carried out by the likes of Mandela and Nujoma. Looked at corporately, the framing and reasoning devices coalesce and attempt to crystallize, albeit in a subtle and tentative manner, to an interpretation of 9/11 AS HEROISM. This marks the beginning of bold attempts at contesting the previous hegemonic frames on 9/11.

Reprinted by permission, 26th, November, 2001

Indeed, the question broached by the 'Lilliputian' *'hey, what of Osama'* and the response *'oh, him is...hero yesterday, terrorist today,'* is an initial ideological attempt at challenging a hegemonic and largely more dominant frame of Osama as villain. The reasoning devices prompt a moral evaluation that allows the reader to reevaluate the earlier frames of Bin Laden and the 9/11 events. Also, the structural connotational pairing of the hero and villain opposites shortly after 9/11 reveals that not all were in agreement of the previous hegemonic frames purveyed by the media about the event. Although Bin Laden was initially framed as evil and the unprovoked aggressor, and the 9/11 event framed as a senseless provocative act of war, the viewer is invited to flirt with alternative frames of Bin Laden as a hero, and the 9/11 as an event motivated by rational choices and well founded reasons. That said, the totality of the 4 signifiers (the terrorists turned heroes) inform us that there are two sides to the interpretation of 9/11, and that terrorism, just like beauty, may just be in the eyes of the beholder. Indeed, this frame of 9/11 AS HEROISM was to gain full currency with the publication of the following editorial cartoon on the 8th of November. Bin Laden had now become a cult figure. The editorial cartoon was published following media reports that youth in sections of the country were donning shirts and clothing

emblazoned with Bin Laden's portrait, meanwhile pictures of him were also being sold as posters and bumper stickers. In reflecting these developments, the cartoon below utilizes the caricaturists' armoury to exaggerate the extent to which bin Laden's name was commodified and incorporated into the popular culture; for instance Osama books, in hotel menus, portraits, T-shirts, Business names and even on *matatus*.¹⁴

Reprinted by permission, 8th November, 2001

These framing devices direct signification towards a radical reorganizing of perception of Osama and 9/11. Worth noting, these signifiers were the products of a rapidly changing discourse that began from a wider probe of the social and political context surrounding the 9/11 events a few weeks after the attacks in New York. As already explained, much had to do with the legacy of the cold war history and an increased scrutiny on US-Mujahedeen partnerships in the past, coupled with a fervent debate on celebrated personalities who had made a successful transition from most wanted terrorists to latter day exemplars of heroism and chivalry. In addition, there was a nascent but fast growing a sense of victimhood felt by Muslims globally shortly after the events. In Kenya, these sentiments had begun much earlier following the embassy bombings and the subsequent widespread feeling among the Muslim communities in the country that they were unfairly targeted for harassment, detentions and deportations. These factors may have prompted some pockets of admiration and sympathy to the perpetrators of 9/11. The connotational reading of the signified message circulated by the signifiers (tactfully shown as being a cross sectional sentiment) extolling Osama through cultural artifacts is revealing, especially ideologically. Borrowing from Thomson (1990a) an ideological mode of legitimation is at work here through a process that began from a seemingly logical discourse, and which has now slowly anchored the 9/11 IS HEROISM frame as a pervasively established and almost natural fact.

While sympathy towards Bin Laden and the 9/11 attacks may have been present and even traceable, Seesemann (2009), who has done extensive work on 9/11 and its social implications in Kenya, points out that one should not be too quick to think of Bin Laden as one whom Kenyan (especially Kenyan Muslims) would want to follow. According to him, Bin Laden simply won

¹⁴ *Matatu* is the name given to Kenya's notorious urban public transport. The *matatu* are more than simply means of transport but are also a source of entertainment (sometimes called disco on wheels). Further, they act as a near accurate picture of the prevailing trends in popular culture such music, fashion, sports and even politics. As such, there is competition among the *matatu* to have the most recognizable yet popular epithets or label and a corresponding portrait of a popular actor, musician or any other cult figure.

the admiration of East African Muslims but not their sympathy. He simply symbolizes for East African Muslims resistance against the global political and economic hegemony of the United States. He argues that some may 'admire his courage but do not condone his actions...they admire him as a pop icon but not as a holy Warrior' (p. 3). While this is probably true, and equally a matter of extended debate outside the scope of this study, the media framing of the issue is significant. In elevating Bin Laden to a pop icon, one to be admired in portraits and to be identified with, the distinctions between admiration and sympathy becomes exceedingly tenuous, and the media through the editorial cartoon above end up granting publicity, recognition and legitimacy to Bin Laden, and by extension the 9/11 attacks.

So what is terrorism? Towards a Conclusion

From the data above therefore, three months following the terror attacks on 9/11, the attacks were framed as a universal event, a form of warfare yet one that is inherently evil. Counter frames suggested that terrorism, especially 9/11 was the aftermath of an unfinished cold war business. In addition, some counter frames suggested that terror was heroic and that terrorists can be seen as freedom fighters.