

London 2005: Welcome to the Terrordome Is the US turning into a security state?

NAEEM MOHAIEEM

NEW YORK City, 1999. A city that can bring immigrant dreams to life. You move here, you work hard, you carve out a space for yourself, and then one day your name is on New Yorkers' lips.

For Kadiadou and Saikou Diallo of Guinea, this was the reality. They had come to New York to pick up the bullet-riddled body of their son Amadou -- shot to death by New York City police in a case of mistaken identity.

Amadou Diallo was a 22-year-old West African immigrant who lived in the Bronx. He studied English and Computer Science before coming to America. A devout Muslim, he worked twelve hours a day selling videos to earn enough money to finish his bachelor's degree.

In Mayor Giuliani's New York, a steep drop in crime had been accompanied by a relentless increase in racial profiling and police violence. According to the Civilian Complaints Review Board, between 1993 and 1998, complaints about police brutality had risen 39 per cent to 4,975.

complaints against him, shot a homeless man at point blank range, the Mayor called it an "ambiguous situation."

New York in the 1990s was in midst of an "end justifies the means" frenzy. The argument was familiar -- the city was out of control, and only excessive force would bring it back to normal.

Urban histories display parallels and circular logic. More tragedies like this week's shooting are in our foreseeable future if we don't speak up now. Don't let the rhetoric of the "war on terror" and violence by the terrorist fringes push us to sacrifice civil liberties. Learn from the mistakes and excesses committed in post 9/11 America.



Stockwell tube station cordoned off after police shooting tragedy.

times at 16 year-old Michael Jones, mistaking his toy gun for a real firearm. The Mayor later issued a statement blaming lack of "adult supervision" for the incident.

This pattern of violent police behavior had a traumatizing impact on the psyche of black New Yorkers. 27 year-old Floyd Coleman told the New York Times, "Even when it's cold, I try not to wear my hood. Especially at night, because you're going to get stopped."

"In the process of helping reduce crime, sometimes there is a long-lasting sense of something else in a generation of young men. You're breaking their spirit. You're breaking their will."

In 2000, while marching in huge

want to be shot dead for looking a bit funny." Indigo Jo's Blog dissected another tabloid, The Daily Mail: "Twaddle in the Daily Mail today. Stop and search in the streets and on the Underground, police road blocks, snooping, increased detention powers. Oh, and don't even think of listening to the anti-racist crowd. Never mind treading on the toes of ethnic minorities or invading their 'family sanctums.' This is the war on terror."

In 2000, while marching in huge

grants tend to ethnicise their religious identity, failing to make the connection with similar struggles waged in the past by the Black and Latino underclass. There is also among Muslim populations a sense of historical injustice and particularity.

For the last few weeks, I've been in London for screenings of a documentary film I have directed. At every venue I go to, I bring my laptop in case the tapes won't work. Carrying a big bulky backpack on the London Tube is a dicey proposition these days.

This week's killing comes at a crucial juncture for London police. At a time when they had taken the offensive, demanding more guns, more policing and surveillance power, the random shooting of a frightened electrician illustrates the dangers of overwhelming force in the hands of a nervous, trigger-happy and racist police force.

New York 1999, London 2005, urban histories display parallels and circular logic. More tragedies like this week's shooting are in our foreseeable future if we don't speak up now. Don't let the rhetoric of the "war on terror" and violence by the terrorist fringes push us to sacrifice civil liberties.

Naeem Mohaiem is New York correspondent for The Daily Star.

In the first years of the War on Terrorism the US has learned a disturbing lesson. The country has been willing to give up some of its precious and hard-earned freedoms for the sake of security. After reading Fortress America, I was left wondering: how much more freedom will we lose when terrorists strike once again on our soil.

RON CHEPESIUK

It is not an overstatement to say that America has changed dramatically since the traumatic events of September 11, 2001. The sight of the World Trade Center towers crumbling to the ground and the Pentagon under attack left the American people feeling vulnerable to the threat of fanatical terrorists who have vowed to destroy their way of life.

Matthew Brzezinski, a contributing writer to the New York Times Magazine, takes us for an interesting and timely look at "Fortress America," the rise of the surveillance state and how the concern about homeland security is changing the country.

The book begins with a vivid description of the environment in the US after the 9/11 attacks. As Brzezinski writes: "Our imagination was truly running wild: security risks were now everywhere, threatening the very foundations of an open society."

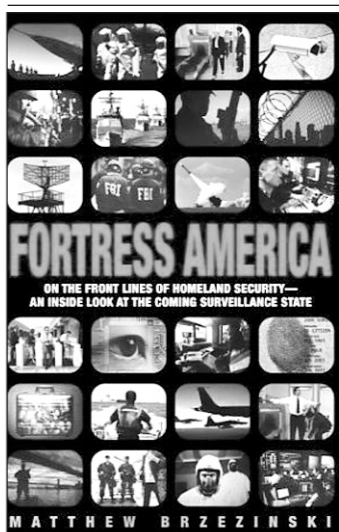
Adding to what Brzezinski describes as the "hysteria" was the realization of how woefully unprepared we were to combat terrorism on our soil. We didn't have enough counter terrorism experts. The 4,000 miles of border were porous. Bridges, highways, airports, metro systems had to be protected. And now there was the sobering realization

tion that fighting terrorism would cost us dearly. As Brzezinski explained, "Combating terror is likely going to rank among the biggest, costliest and most daunting domestic challenges in US history, up there with the New Deal and the war effort that followed the attack on Pearl Harbor."

Brzezinski takes an inside look at security in Israel the poster nation for

BOOK REVIEW

Fortress America by Matthew Brzezinski Published by Bantam Books, New York (2005) pp 272, \$25.00



the "Maximum Security State." Israel has become a country where "counter terrorist considerations factor into just about every corporate, civic, military and even personal decision."

In terms of adopted security measures, Brzezinski believes the gap between America and Israel appears is narrowing, and he provides plenty of technological examples to show how Americans are being bugged and monitored.

break them down into three-dimensional plots and compare them to a vast database of student IDs.

Electronic monitors installed in major American urban areas that can pinpoint just about any vehicle, so long as it has been equipped with a microchip encoded with registration data.

"Enemy of the State," the most chilling chapter of the book, makes it personal by profiling Hady Hassan Omar, an Egyptian who was one of the 762 people detained on immigration charges during the post 9/11 investigations.

Brzezinski doesn't blame the Justice Department for its actions though, given what he said was, "the context of what was at stake in September 2001."

The author doesn't provide any real conclusions about where this move toward more and more security and surveillance is leading the US. He does, however, show that in the first years of the War on Terrorism the US has learned a disturbing lesson.

After reading Fortress America, I was left wondering: how much more freedom will we lose when terrorists strike once again on our soil, a move, the experts are predicting, will surely come.

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Recruiting for life

MONA ELTAHAWY

THERE is no more "us" and "them" it is all "we." When London, Beirut, and Sharm el-Sheikh are all attacked in less than 48 hours, there is no more Muslim or Christian or Jew. There is no more believer or infidel. There is no more East or West.

When the dead in Sharm el-Sheikh included Britons, Dutch, Egyptians, French, Kuwaitis, Spaniards, and Qataris, it is all we and we are all in this together.

For just one example of how small the world has become and how nowhere is immune from terrorism anymore, look no further than London policeman Charlie Ives who survived the bombings in Sharm el-Sheikh. He was on holiday in the Egyptian resort after dealing with the aftermath of the July 7 London bombings.

I am writing this column just a few hours after terror ripped through Sharm el-Sheikh. As the death toll rose amid news of the coordinated suicidal attacks, I remembered something that Syrian human rights lawyer Anwar al-Bounni told me in Damascus recently.

"Our problem is that we have ideology and we use people as fuel for it. Ideology is supposed to be in the service of a person, to make his life better not so that he can die for it. This is a culture of death -- that people die for an idea. I want an idea that will die for me," Anwar told me. "If it doesn't serve people it should die."

Stop for a second and reflect on what a beautiful concept that is -- that an idea or an ideology should die if it doesn't serve people or improve their lives. In the face of so much carnage, how do we kill ideas and not people?

How do we stop these "holy cowards" (I refuse to call them warriors as they label themselves) from dying for a twisted nihilism that takes too many of us along with them?

One way to start is give faces to all those whose lives these holy cowards ended. We've heard a lot about the video tapes that were

images of Muslim suffering around the world to recruit many of these terrorists.

So let's see those who have suffered from the barbaric violence of these cowards. How many children did a victim have? What was the name of their wife or husband? What was their dream?

One of the most heartbreaking images from the July 7 bombings in London was of Marie Fatay-Williams who flew to London from Nigeria to look for her son, who had been on the Number 30 bus that

Anthony, 26, was an oil executive who was born and raised in London. He loved rap music and hoped to launch his own record label, the New York Times said. His mother is a Catholic, his father is Muslim. Anthony's cousin told a British paper that his ambition was to become a politician and fix Nigeria's problems.

It was important to get this sketch of Anthony's life. As British police released closed-circuit television images of the bombers on their way to wreak mayhem on the London transport system, it was important to

Sharm el-Sheikh attacks as real as the British media made Anthony.

In addition to giving faces and names and life stories to those who were so brutally killed, let's show the livelihoods that were killed in Sharm el-Sheikh.

The Sharm el-Sheikh attacks were the worst in Egypt since the 1997 Luxor massacre that killed 58 tourists and four Egyptians. That bloody attack at the temple of Hatshepsut was brutal not just in the terrorists' use of machetes but for the damage it and other attacks on

group of cowards claims responsibility for these attacks, we must profile those Egyptians who will no longer be able to support their families because tourists have been scared away.

Is there anything more pressing for the majority of Egyptians than poverty and unemployment? Weekly demonstrations have for months now been saying Kifaya not just to authoritarian rule and lack of democracy but to unemployment.

During my recent visit to Cairo, I spoke to several people who had joined the growing opposition movement. Most of them said unemployment was the reason. In June, some of the opposition groups took their demonstrations to poor and working class Egyptian neighborhoods to show solidarity with Egyptians whose lives every day are a struggle.

How morbidly ironic that while the opposition movement is trying to involve more and more Egyptians in the political process and to concentrate on the issues that most concern them, this latest group of holy cowards effectively blows all that apart by sending hundreds of Egyptians if not thousands into the ranks of the unemployed.

Not only are they deliberately targeting innocent civilians from around the world, but they are deliberately targeting an industry that keeps many Egyptian homes open.

Death came in many forms in Sharm el-Sheikh -- the immediate and brutal of those who were ripped apart in the explosions and the economic death of those whose livelihoods have been ruined.

I am sick and tired of hearing that young Muslim men were recruited for death through video tapes. Where are the video tapes that should be recruiting them for life?

When are we going to stop telling them that they should die for ideas? When will we start telling them that ideas should die for them instead?

Egyptian columnist Mona Eltahawy worked as Reuters correspondent in Cairo and Jerusalem and also wrote for the Guardian from the Middle East.

Democracy only an afterthought

"We're taking the fight to the terrorists abroad, so we don't have to face them here at home," Bush declared in June -- and repeated endlessly -- finally appearing vindicated with the London attacks. London, like Iraq and Afghanistan, is "there," not "here."

SIDNEY BLUMENTHAL

ON the day of the London bombings, President Bush proclaimed: "The war on terror goes on." Through the 2004 campaign, his winning theme was terror. He achieved the logic of a unified field theory connecting Iraq to Afghanistan by threading terror through both, despite the absence of evidence. He insisted that if we didn't fight the terrorists there, we would be fighting them at home.

In January, the CIA's thinktank, the National Intelligence Council, issued a report describing Iraq as the magnet and training and recruiting ground for terrorism. The false rationale for the invasion had become a self-fulfilling prophecy. With his popularity flagging, Bush returned to the formulations that succeeded in his campaign.

In Bush's "global war on terror," Iraq and Afghanistan present one extended battlefield against a common enemy -- and the strategy is and must be the same. So far as Bush is concerned, it's always either the day after 9/11 or the day before the Iraq invasion. Time stands still at two ideal political moments. But his consequences since are barely managed chaos.

in Afghanistan was "grossly underfunded and undermined." The military doctrine was the first error. "The US focus on force protection and substitution of firepower for manpower creates significant collateral damage."

Donald Rumsfeld's Pentagon and the White House removed restraints on torture. "These were command failures, not just isolated incidents. You didn't have the checks and balances. They've had consequences in terms of public image."

According to Dobbins, there was also "a generally negative appreciation of peacekeeping and nation building as components of US policy, a disinclination to learn anything from Bosnia and Kosovo."

Lack of accountability began at the top and filtered down. On the day of President Hamid Karzai's inauguration in Afghanistan, in December 2001, Dobbins met General Tommy Franks, the Centcom commander, at the airport. As they drove to the ceremony, Dobbins informed Franks of press reports that US planes had mistakenly bombed a delegation of tribal leaders and killed perhaps several dozen.

Democracy was an afterthought for the White House, which believed it had little application to Afghans. At the Bonn conference establishing international legitimacy for the Kabul government, "the word 'democracy' was introduced at the insistence of the Iranian delegation," Dobbins points out.

However, democracy -- now the overriding rationale for the global war on terror -- does not include support for human rights. "In terms

of the human rights situation in Afghanistan, Karzai is well meaning and moderate and thoroughly honourable," said Dobbins, "but he's overwhelmed."

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Dobbins believes that the operation in Afghanistan has improved, but that the administration "hasn't readily acknowledged its mistakes, and corrected them only after losing a good deal of ground, irrecoverable ground. Most of the violence is not al-Qaida type, but Pashtun sectarian violence. It's not international terrorism."

Facts on the ground cannot alter Bush's stentorian summons to the global war on terror. "This is a campaign conducted primarily, and should be, by law enforcement, diplomatic and intelligence means," Dobbins said. "The militarisation of the concept is a theme that mobilises the American public effectively, but it's not a theme that resonates well in the Middle East or with our allies elsewhere in the world."

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Courtesy: The Guardian.

Sidney Blumenthal, a former senior adviser to President Clinton, is author of The Clinton Wars.

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Ghazala Hotel in Sharm-el-Sheikh devastated by terrorist bombs on July 23.

exploded in Tavistock Square.

He had taken the bus to work that morning because of Underground train delays.

Holding her son's photograph in her hand, Marie said it was time to stop "this vicious cycle of killing. How many mothers' hearts should be maimed?" the BBC reported.

see Anthony's face as clearly as we saw the bombers'.

In Egypt, we must know about those who were murdered as they slept in their hotel rooms or as they drank coffee and smoked shisha at an outdoor cafe. Arab media needs to start injecting human interest stories that make the victims of the

tourists wreaked on Egypt's tourism industry.

Tourism in Egypt is the country's highest foreign currency earner. And it is the country's largest private sector employer.

So let's show all those Egyptians who have lost their livelihoods. Alongside the profiles of whatever