

## Terrorism and “Islamic Terrorism”: The Definition Debate

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### Introduction

That the overwhelming message in the Holy Qur’an is about peace to be found through faith in Allah (SWT) and justice among fellow humans is hardly a matter of dispute. The following are examples of the tenets in the Qur’an which forbid all forms of attacks on innocent people:

“No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another” (Qur’an, 17:15).

“If anyone slays a person—unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land—it would be as if he slew all people. And if anyone saves a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all people” (Qur’an, 5:32).

“Invite all to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching. And argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious...And if you punish, let your punishment be proportional to the wrong that has been done to you. But if you show patience, that is indeed the best course. Be patient, for your patience is from God. And do not grieve over them, or distress yourself because of their plots. For God is with those who restrain themselves and those who do well” (Qur’an, 16:125-128).

“Oh you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be against rich or poor, for God can best protect both. Follow not the cravings of your hearts, lest you swerve, and if you distort justice or decline to do justice, verily God is well acquainted with all that you do” (Qur’an, 4:135).

“The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree), but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from God, for God loves not those who do wrong. But indeed, if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress men with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice. For such there will be a penalty grievous (in the Hereafter). But indeed, if any show patience and forgive, that would truly be an affair of great resolution” (Qur’an, 42:40-43).

“Goodness and evil are not equal. Repel evil with what is better. Then that person with whom there was hatred, may become your intimate friend! And no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self-restraint, none but people of the greatest good fortune” (Qur’an 41:34-35).

But then he hear: “‘In the name of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)! In the name of Allah (SWT)!’ BOOM!” And the world knows the rest of the story; it replays every night on television sets across the globe. First: bodies are counted, tears are broadcast to boost ratings, and hearts and stomachs are assaulted just after prime time. Retaliations and recriminations are to follow, and more explosions in the name of another ideal that is remarkably similar yet calculated precisely not to seem so, until suddenly—BOOM—the cycle repeats once more. And all this time, where is the analysis? Where is the attempt to understand what keeps this wheel turning, or where to find the brake pedal? It is there, in articles titled “Why They Hate Us,” but most often analysis is condemned as collusion, and academics are pilloried as Benedict Arnolds for attempting to solve what has plagued our society for decades in a manner that is not measured in kilotons. But with no clear end in sight, perhaps it is time to abandon this policy of ignorance and really look at this war with, or on, Islam. As the conflict involves two sides—us and them—it must be analyzed from both as well.

However, great attention has already been given in our society to our side, our reasons for war and our philosophies that govern it. Most of the time, we tend simply to assume that the others act in the same fashion and that violence and war are framed in the same context. This is a fatal flaw, and it must be remedied—not just in the case of that between the West and the Muslim world, but as an understanding of the religion and its philosophies of violence as a whole. Regardless of the socio-political or economic level of a country, there are three common types of war. The first type, the War of Attrition, is usually bloody and can only be measured in terms of ground forces. In this type of war, the advancing forces tend to destroy strategic channels or infrastructure facilities before any type of troop movement starts. This can be achieved by heavily bombing the target by use of missile, planes, drones, etc. The second kind, War of Maneuver, is different from the first one. While the War of Attrition is fought to destroy the enemy's means to fight, War of Maneuver is fought to destroy the enemy's ability or will to fight. The effects of War of Maneuver are far more devastating, and it is considered a huge asset for a country, as it allows a small force to destroy a large one. The third form is War of Revolution; this war is quite bloody, as there are no frontlines or completely transparent enemies. It is also referred to as Guerilla Warfare, where the enemy is elusive and is hard to fight. It is one of the most difficult types of wars to fight, both economically and in terms of human losses suffered by both sides.

“War,” as a concept, is loaded with linguistic and cultural symbolism; thus, a brief moment should be taken to define its use in this lecture. In contrast to modern realist political theory, war is much more complex than just the armed conflict between the regimented militaries of sovereign states. In this modern era of ethnic conflicts, such archaic notions are incomplete. Terrorist organizations and liberation movements are just as capable of waging war as are nation-states and, thus, a new definition must be coined. From this point forward (and retroactively as well), the term “war” shall refer to an attempt to realize a specific end by a group of individuals through the use of physically destructive force upon another. This excludes such acts as economic sanctions (although they can be used in conjunction with war), but it includes ethnic conflict, terrorism, and hostilities waged by sovereign powers without an open declaration of war.

Through this perspective, we will be able to clear the blood off the hands of Islam and place it where it should lie: on those who would hide behind a beautiful, Abrahamic *din* (meaning in Arabic “way of life,” as Islam is more than just a religion) and corrupt some of its followers in violence that directly violates their faith. This is imperative not just for the esoteric purposes of treating Islam justly, but much more practically in illustrating to the world that the “war” with Islam is not with Islam at all but with the same socio-economic-political factors behind all other wars. Consequently, it is not a struggle against an emotional and irrational force, but with tangible, logical ones. As such, it can be solved through diplomacy and interaction, and both sides can emerge victorious from the conflict—a possibility that many of us thought would be increasingly fantastic when Barack Obama was elected President of the United States. At least the judges of the Nobel Peace Prize thought so!

Some years ago, I had to train some upper-level American government officials before their trip to South East Asia to engage in dialogues with their counterparts from various Muslim societies. In their power-point presentations, the American officials had phrases such as “Muslim terrorists,” “Jihad or holy war,” “political Islam,” etc. I insisted that all of those phrases be replaced with appropriate ones, because the phrase “Muslim terrorists” is an oxymoron; “Jihad” does not mean holy war; there is no “political Islam,” as there is only Islam. The officials were a bit reluctant at first; but with the urging of their supervisor, they agreed with my suggestions. After the officials returned from their trip, they were so happy about the collaboration they received from their Muslim counterparts that they invited me on many other occasions to provide similar training to other officials throughout the various government agencies.

To call a thing by its precise name is the beginning of understanding, because it is the key to the procedure that allows the mind to grasp reality and its many relationships. It makes a great deal of difference whether an illness is conceived of as caused by the Evil Spirit or by bacteria on a binge. The concept *bacteria* is part and parcel of a system of concepts in which there is a connection to a powerful repertory of treatments—i.e. antibiotics. Naming is a process that can give the “namer” great power. Old movies about Africans and Arab Bedouins often have an episode featuring a confrontation between the local “medicine man” and the “doctor” who triumphs for modern science by saving the chief or his child.

The cultural agreement that supported the “medicine man” is shattered by the scientist with a microscope. Sadly, for the children of modern medicine, it turns out that there were a few tricks in the “medicine man’s” bag that were ignored or lost in the euphoria of such a “victory” for science. Even less happy was the arrogance with which many of the cultural arrangements expressed in the African and Arabic languages were undermined through the supposition of superiority by conquering powers. To capture meaning in a language is a profound and subtle process, indeed. So, one must ask: Do some adherents of Islam commit acts of terrorism and justify them by citing the Qur’an or other Islamic texts and pronouncements by Muslim clergies? Do some adherents of Christianity commit acts of terrorism and justify them by citing the Bible or other Christian texts and pronouncements by Christian clergies? Do some adherents of Judaism commit acts of terrorism and justify them by citing the Torah or other Judaic texts and pronouncements by Judaic clergies? Do some adherents of Buddhism commit acts of terrorism and justify them by citing Buddhist texts and pronouncements by Buddhist clergies? Do some adherents of Shinto commit acts of terrorism and justify them by citing Shinto texts and pronouncements by Shinto clergies? Do some adherents of other faiths commit acts of terrorism and justify them by citing their texts and pronouncements by their clergies? The answer to all of these questions is obviously yes. Thus, the ultimate question is the following: Why does the dominant voice on the issue of terrorism talk about “Islamic terrorism,” but not Christian terrorism, Judaic terrorism, Buddhist terrorism, Shinto terrorism, etc.? Before addressing this question and the validity or invalidity of the presupposed connection between Islam and terrorism, I will begin by discussing why definitions—more scientifically, concepts—are essential in any communication.

### The General Import of Concepts

According to Chava Frankfort-Nachmias and David Nachmias, “Thinking involves the use of language. Language itself is a system of communication composed of symbols and a set of rules permitting various combinations of these symbols. One of the most significant symbols in a language...is the *concept*” (1996:26). With this excerpt as backdrop, they defined a *concept* as “an abstraction—a symbol—a representation of an object or one of its properties, or of a behavioral phenomenon” (1996:26). Concepts are generally defined as abstract ideas or mental symbols that are typically associated with corresponding representations in languages or symbologies which denote all of the objects in given categories or classes of entities, events, phenomena, or relationships between them. Concepts are said to be abstract because they omit the differences of the things in their extensions, treating them as if they are identical; they are said to be universal because they apply to every thing in their extensions. Concepts are also characterized as the basic elements of propositions, much the same way words are the basic semantic elements of sentences.

As opposed to being agents of meaning, concepts are bearers of meaning. Consequently, concepts are arbitrary. For example, the concept of TREE can be expressed as *tree* in English, *shajar* in Arabic, *mti* in Kiswahili, *kɔ nt* in Temne, *árbol* in Spanish, *albero* in Italian, *arbre* in French, *árvore* in Portuguese, *дерево* in Russian, and *baum* in German. The fact that concepts are arbitrary, i.e. they are independent of language, makes translation possible—words in various languages have identical meaning, because they express one and the same concept. For scientific purposes, as social scientists Kenneth Hoover and Todd Donovan have posited, concepts are “(1) tentative, (2) based on agreement, and (3) useful only to the degree that they capture or isolate some significant and definable item in reality.” Thus, for these scholars, concepts are important because (a) thought and theory develop through the linking of concepts, and (b) science is a way of checking on the formulation of concepts and testing the possible linkages between them through references of observable phenomena (2004:18-19).

The scientific functions of concepts, according to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, are fourfold. First, concepts are the foundation of communication. Without a set of agreed-upon concepts, scientists could not communicate their findings or replicate one another’s studies. Second, concepts introduce a *perspective*—i.e. a way of looking at empirical phenomena. Concepts enable scientists to relate to some aspect of reality and identify it as a quality common to different examples of the phenomena in the real world. Third, concepts allow scientists to classify and generalize. Stated differently, scientists employ concepts to structure, characterize, order, and generalize their experiences and observations.

Finally, scientists use concepts to serve as components of theories and, therefore, of explanations and predictions. Consequently, concepts are the most critical elements in any theory because they define its content and attributes (1996:26-27).

### The Essence of Concepts in Communication

The correct or objective use of concepts is essential for successful communication because the latter involves two or more participants in an interaction who must share similar meanings of the former (Crystal, 1992:256). In order to fully grasp this essence, we must turn to the works of linguists.

For linguists, the essence of concepts in communication rests on the notion of *conceptual dependency*, defined by Gillian Brown and George Yule as the relationship between attitudes and behavior; but, when applied to understanding discourse, it incorporates a particular analysis of language (1983:241). Roger Schank set out to represent the meanings of sentences in conceptual terms by providing a conceptual dependency network he terms a *C-diagram*. He defined a *C-diagram* as a network that contains concepts, which enter into relations he described as dependencies. He also provided a very elaborate, but manageable, system of semantic primitives for concepts, and labeled arrows for dependencies (1973a, 1973b), which I will not describe in this essay. Instead, I will simply consider one of Schank's sentences and his non-diagrammatic version of the conceptualization underlying that sentence in the same manner as Brown and Yule did (1983:241-242).

- (1) John ate the ice cream with a spoon.
- (2) John ingested the ice cream by transing the ice cream on a spoon to his mouth.  
(The term 'transing' is used here to mean 'physically transferring'.)

One benefit of Schank's approach is quite obvious. In his conceptual version (2) of the sentence (1), he represented a part of our comprehension of the sentence which is not explicit in the first sentence (1), that the action described in (1) was made possible by 'getting the ice cream and his mouth in contact.' In this way, Schank incorporated an aspect of our knowledge of the world in his conceptual version of our understanding of sentence (1) which would not be possible if his analysis operated with only the syntactic and lexical elements in the sentence.

In a development of the conceptual analysis of sentences, Chris Riesbeck and Roger Schank described how our comprehension of what we read or hear is very much 'expectation-based.' Stated differently, when we read example (3), we have very strong expectations about what, conceptually, will be in the x-position (1978:252).

- (3) John's car crashed into a guard-rail.  
When the ambulance came, it took John to the x.

Riesbeck and Schank pointed out that our expectations are conceptual rather than lexical and that different lexical realizations in the x-position (e.g., *hospital, doctor, medical center*, etc.) will all fit our expectations. Brown and Yule added that evidence that people are 'expectation-based parsers' of texts hinges on the fact that we can make mistakes in our predictions of what will come next (1983:242). John Lyons introduced the notion of conceptual field by relying on Jost Trier's general definition of "fields." According to Trier, "Fields are living realities that intermediate between individual words and the totality of the vocabulary; as parts of a whole they share with words the property of being integrated in a larger structure (*sich ergleiden*) and with the vocabulary the property of being structured in terms of smaller units (*sich ausgliedern*)" (Lyons, 1977:253).

Lyons illustrated the notion of conceptual field by employing the continuum of color, prior to its determination by particular languages. According to him, color terminology provides a particularly good illustration of differences in the lexical structure of different language systems. He noted that, actually, there are problems attaching to the recognition of a conceptual area, and in this case psycho-physical definable, field of color, neutral with respect to different systems of categorization. He noted that if we are to accept for the moment that it is reasonable to think of the continuum, or substance, of color in this manner, then different languages and different synchronic states of what may be regarded, diachronically, as the same language evolving through time, can be compared in respect of the way in which they give structure to, or articulate (*gliedern*), the continuum by lexicalizing certain conceptual (or psycho-physical) distinctions and thereby giving lexical recognition to greater or less areas within it.

He added that considered as a continuum, the substance of color is (in our distinction of 'area' and 'field') a conceptual area; it becomes a conceptual field by virtue of its structural organization, or articulation, by particular language-systems. He then concluded that the set of lexemes in any one language-system which cover the conceptual area and, by means of the relations of sense which hold between them, gives structure to it as a lexical field; and each lexeme will cover a certain conceptual area, which may in turn be structured as a field by another set of lexemes (as the area covered by 'red' in English is structured by 'scarlet,' 'crimson,' 'vermillion,' etc.). Thus, the sense of a lexeme is a conceptual area within a conceptual field; and any conceptual area that is associated with a lexeme, as its sense, is a concept (1977:253-254).

### **Terrorism and Islam**

In my chapter titled "Terrorism and Islam in Africa" that appears in the book, *Terrorism in Africa: The Evolving Front in the War on Terror* (2010), edited by John Davis, I mention that as someone trained in Linguistics (among many other disciplines), I am cognizant of the fact that the title of a discourse is a powerful thematization device, it indicates to the reader how the author intends his/her argument is to be chunked, and it influences the interpretation of the text that follows. Thus, when it was suggested that the title for this chapter be "Islam and Terrorism in Africa," I changed it slightly to "Terrorism and Islam in Africa." On the one hand, I did not want the word Islam to be in the head-initial position of the title since I wanted to avoid what some writers on the topic have done by proffering the view that Islam condones terrorism. On the other hand, I did not want to convey a denial of the fact that a few radical Islamist groups, like other radical religious groups, have engaged in terrorist acts. To do so would be hypocritical, an act that is *haram* (i.e. forbidden) in Islam (Bangura, 2010:103).

I further mention in the chapter that that Islam is a balanced and moderate *din* (meaning "a way of life"; as such, Islam is more than just a religion) is well documented by many well-respected scholars. Islam is balanced in everything, in its creed, in its worship, and does not condone negligence on the one hand and extremism on the other. Therefore, the concepts "Islamic terrorism" and "Muslim terrorism" are misnomers (Bangura, 2010:103). Karen Armstrong is quite correct when she poignantly points out in her article titled "The Label of Catholic Terror Was Never Used about the IRA" which appears in *The Guardian* (July 11, 2005) that using such concepts are dangerously counterproductive as they suggest that those in the West believe that such atrocities are caused by Islam and, hence, reinforces the perception that the West is an implacable enemy in the Muslim world. She is also correct when she states that the terrorists in no way represent mainstream Islam (Armstrong, 2005). Fred Halliday is equally correct by arguing in his book, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East* (2003) that most Muslims consider terrorist acts egregious violations of Islam's law. It is therefore not surprising that groups such as the Free Muslim Coalition have rallied against terror, sending a clear message to radical Muslims and their supporters that they reject them and that they will defeat them (Free Muslims Coalition, 2009).

As Billie D. Tate and I also point out in our chapter titled "Africa's Response to International Terrorism and the War against It" in the book, *New Security Threats and Crises in Africa: Regional and International Perspectives* (2010a), edited by Jack Mangala, that the history of "international terrorism" is as old as humans' willingness to employ violence to affect politics and has been traced back to the Sicarii, who were a 1st Century Jewish group that murdered enemies and collaborators in their campaign to oust their Roman rulers from Judea, is now well known to many students of International Relations. Yet to this day, the word "terrorism" itself is so politically and emotionally charged that it has generated over 100 definitions, greatly compounding the difficulty of providing a precise definition. The reason for the numerous and competing definitions hinges on the difficulty in agreeing on a basis for determining when the use of violence—directed by whom, at whom, and for what purpose—is considered legitimate. The majority of the definitions of "terrorism" have been written by state agencies directly associated with a government, and have been systematically biased to exclude governments from their definitions.

Some of the definitions such as the Terrorism Act 2000 are so broad that they include the disruption of a computer system, even though no violence results. But since the database for those activities which have occurred in Africa that have been labeled as terroristic used in this paper is the one generated by United States government agencies, the American definition undergirds this study. The United States has defined "international terrorism" under the Federal Criminal Code 18 USC §2331 as follows:

Activities that involve violent acts or acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State, or that would be a criminal violation if committed within the jurisdiction of the United States or of any State; appear to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or to affect the conduct of government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping; and occur primarily outside the territorial jurisdiction of the United States, or transcend national boundaries in terms of the means by which they are accomplished, the persons they appear intended to intimidate or coerce, or the locale in which their perpetrators operate or seek asylum (Lawson Terrorism Information Center, 2009). Since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, DC, and the subsequent actions of the George W. Bush Administration in its "War on Terror," greater attention has been paid to the topic of counterterrorism and religious extremism. A poignant question that arises right away is the following: Is the serious discourse on the role of religion in international affairs a recent phenomenon?

As Arshi Saleem Hashmi (2007:22-23) recounts, many decades ago, most social scientists saw religion as a throw back to a long-gone era. Then around 1979, surprisingly enough for many of these scholars, religion began to take on a new political importance as phrases like "liberation theology," "religious fundamentalism," and "religious revivalism" became common parlance. Hashmi notes that R. Scott Appleby argued that much of the religious violence can be blamed on religious actors who are actually ignorant of their own traditions, much like the foot soldiers of the Balkan atrocities who knew nothing about Christianity. Hashmi adds that Marc Gopin, however, postulated that as religion has become vital in the lives of hundreds of millions of people, the political power generated by this commitment would either lead to a more peaceful world or a more violent world, depending on how that power is employed. Furthermore, Hashmi states that for Gopin, the religions of the world have all contributed at one time or another to the creation and perpetuation of ethical values and behaviors that are indispensable to peace and civil society. It is equally within the capacity of the world's religions to generate, justify and even exult the most cruel and barbaric behavior that human beings are capable of perpetrating. Religions go through historical epochs in which one or the other of these two alternatives will dominate, and it is also invariably the case that there are always individual members, at any time of history, who devoutly embrace one or the other of these alternatives.

Correspondingly, the United States military has embarked on a long-term push into Africa to counter what it considers growing inroads by Al Qaeda and other terrorist networks in poor, lawless and predominantly Muslim expanses of the African continent. These organizations, as George Klay Kieh, Jr. observes, are among the non-state actors that have emerged as important players in the global arena and impacting world affairs (2008:22). In response, the Pentagon has been training thousands of African troops in battalions equipped for extended desert and boarder operations and to link the militaries of the different countries with secure satellite communications. The initiative, with the initial proposed funding of \$500 million over seven years, covers Algeria, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Nigeria, Morocco and Tunisia—with the United States military eager to add Libya if relations continued to improve (Tyson, 2005).

The Pentagon has also been assigning more military officers to United States embassies in the region, bolstering the gathering and sharing of intelligence, casing out austere landing strips for use in emergencies, and securing greater access and legal protections for United States troops through new bilateral agreements. The Pentagon has mobilized Africans to fight and preempt militant groups while only selectively using United States troops that are already taxed by operations in Iraq and Afghanistan (Tyson, 2005). Africa therefore serves as an excellent test case for any possible connection between terrorism and Islam. Since the "War on Terror" in Africa has focused on what Washington has dubbed the terrorist networks in predominantly Muslim expanses of the continent, the following major questions are probed in the next two sections of this paper: (a) Is there a correlation between majority Muslim African states and activities that have occurred on the continent labeled terroristic? (b) What are the reasons for these terrorist activities?

### **Africa as a Test Case**

To answer the question of whether there is a correlation between majority Muslim African states and terrorism, it makes sense to begin by categorizing African states in terms of the majority religions. This information is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Africa's Religion Statistics**

African Countries	Population	% Muslims	% Christian	% Others
Algeria	34,178,188	99.0	1 (including Jewish)	0
Angola	12,799,293	2.5	53.0	44.5
Benin	8,791,832	24.4	42.8	32.8
Botswana	1,990,876	3.0	71.6	25.4
Burkina Faso	15,746,232	50.0	10.0	40.0
Burundi	8,988,091	10.0	67.0	23.0
Cameroon	18,879,301	22.0	40.0	38.0
Cape Verde	429,474	5.0	85.0	10.0
Central African Rep	4,511,488	22.0	50.0	28.0
Chad	10,329,208	53.1	34.3	12.6
Comoros	752,438	98.0	2.0	0
Congo	4,012,809	2.0	50.0	48.0
Dem. Rep. Congo (Zaire)	68,692,542	10.0	70.0	20.0
Djibouti	516,055	96.0	6.0	0
Egypt	83,082,869	94.0	1.0	5.0
Equatorial Guinea	633,441	2.0	93.0	5.0
Eritrea	5,647,168	50.0	50.0	0
Ethiopia	85,237,338	50.0	43.6	6.4
Gabon	1,514,993	12.0	75.0	13.0
Gambia	1,782,893	90.0	8.0	2.0
Ghana	23,832,495	30.0	68.8	1.2
Guinea Bissau	1,533,964	50.0	10.0	40.0
Guinea	10,057,975	85.0	8.0	7.0
Ivory Coast	20,617,068	38.6	32.8	28.6
Kenya	39,002,772	33.0	55.0	12.0
Lesotho	2,130,819	5.0	80.0	15.0
Liberia	3,441,790	20.0	40.0	40.0
Libya	6,310,434	99.0	0	1.0
Madagascar	20,653,556	7.0	41.0	52.0
Malawi	14,268,711	36.0	56.7	7.3
Mali	12,666,987	90.0	1.0	9.0
Mauritania	3,129,486	100.0	0	0
Mauritius	1,284,264	16.6	32.2	51.2
Mayotte	216,306	97.9	2.1	0
Morocco	34,859,364	98.7	1.1	0.2
Mozambique	21,669,278	20.0	41.3	38.7
Namibia	2,108,665	3.0	80.0	17.0
Niger	15,306,252	95.0	5.0	0
Nigeria	149,229,090	50.0	40.0	10.0
Reunion	787,584	2.0	98.0	0
Rwanda	10,473,282	15.0	83.2	1.8
Sao Tome and Principe	212,679	3.0	77.5	19.5
Senegal	13,711,597	94.0	5.0	1.0
Seychelles	87,476	1.1	93.2	5.7
Sierra Leone	6,440,053	60.0	10.0	30.0
Somalia	9,832,017	100.0	0	0
South Africa	49,052,489	2.0	43.7	54.3
Sudan	41,087,825	70.0	5.0	25.0
Swaziland	1,123,913	10.0	20.0	70.0
Tanzania	41,048,532	50.0	30.0	20.0
Togo	6,019,877	25.0	29.0	46.0
Tunisia	10,486,339	98.0	1.0	1.0
Uganda	32,369,558	20.0	76.0	4.0
Zambia	11,862,740	15.0	84.0	1.0
Zimbabwe	11,392,629	10.0	25.0	65.0

**Sources:** US CIA, 2009; MuslimPopulation.com, 2009; NationMaster.com, 2009; Bangura and Said, 2004

Table 2 entails information on the acts which have taken place on the African continent that have been labeled as terroristic. As can be seen in Table 2, 24 out of the 55 African countries were designated as places where terrorist acts occurred between 1998 and 2007—the years for which consistent data are available. These activities include armed attacks, assassinations, bombings, kidnappings, and unknown.

**Table 2: Terrorist Activities in Africa**

Country	Total Number of Attacks	Types of Terrorist Attacks	Total Fatalities
Algeria	220	Armed Attack, Assassination, Bombing	987
Angola	21	Armed Attack, Assassination, Bombing, Kidnapping	307
Burundi	5	Armed Attack, Bombing	10
Chad	1	Assassination	1
Dem. Rep Congo	2	Unknown	6
Djibouti	1	Bombing	0
Egypt	38	Armed Attack, Assassination, Bombing	143
Eritrea	3	Assassination, Bombing	8
Ethiopia	27	Armed Attack, Assassination, Bombing, Kidnapping	33
Kenya	4	Bombing	226
Libya	1	Assassination	4
Madagascar	7	Armed Attack, Bombing, Kidnapping	0
Mauritania	2	Armed Attack, Assassination	2
Morocco	10	Armed Attack, Bombing	37
Nigeria	35	Armed Attack, Assassination, Bombing, Kidnapping	12
Sierra Leone	8	Kidnapping	0
Somalia	66	Armed Attack, Assassination, Bombing, Hijacking	117
South Africa	37	Assassination, Bombing	4
Sudan	6	Armed Attack, Assassination, Bombing, Kidnapping	76
Swaziland	2	Bombing	1
Tanzania	5	Bombing	11
Tunisia	1	Bombing	15
Uganda	48	Armed Attack, Arson, Assassination, Bombing, Kidnapping,	524
Zambia	1	Bombing	1

**Source:** Lawson Terrorism Information Center, 2009

Matching Tables 1 and 2, one can see that terrorist activities were reported to have taken place in 14 Muslim majority and ten Christian and other religions majority African states. Given the proposition of some observers that there is a connection between Islam and terrorism, at least three plausible questions emerge here. The first question is whether there is a statistically significant difference in the number of terrorist activities that took place in majority Muslim African states compared to those that occurred in majority Christian African states. The second question is whether there is a statistically significant correlation between African countries where Islam is the majority religion and terrorist activities. The third question, which is a corollary to the second, is whether there is a statistically significant correlation between African countries where Islam is the minority religion and terrorist activities. Answers to these questions will suggest either (a) Muslims terrorize non-Muslims in African countries where they are the majority and feel powerful, or (b) Muslims terrorize non-Muslims in African countries where they are the minority and feel powerless. In order to explore these questions and propositions, paired samples T-test statistics were computed for the data in Tables 1 and 2 using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

As shown in Table 3, the paired mean for attacks-Muslim population is -30.26, the standard deviation is 51.29, the t-Statistic is -2.89, and it is statistically significant at the .05 percent. The paired mean for attacks-Christian population is -7.48, the standard deviation is 58.22, the t-Statistic is -.630, and it is not statistically significant at the .05 level. This means that overall, the larger the percentage of Muslim or Christian population, the lesser the number of terrorist attacks. There is also a significant variation in the number of attacks and the population sizes.



**Table 3: Paired Samples Test, Paired Differences**

Pair	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-Statistic	Significance (2-tailed)
1: Attacks-PMuslim	-30.263	51.2906	10.4697	-2.890	.008
2: Attacks- PChristian	-7.488	58.2248	11.8851	-630	.525

From Table 4, one can observe that there is no significant statistical correlation between attacks and Muslim population or Christian population. In fact the correlation between attacks and Christian population is negative, albeit not statistically significant.

**Table 4: Paired Samples Correlations**

Pair	Correlation	Significance
1: Attacks & PMuslim	.252	.235
2: Attacks & PChristian	-.204	.339

Since neither Islam nor Christianity or any other religion seems to be a significant explanation for the terrorist activities that have taken place in Africa, what then are the reasons for these activities? This question is explored in the section that follows.

### **Reasons for the Terrorist Activities in Africa Characterized as “Islamic”**

This section probes the reasons for the terrorist activities in Africa that have been characterized as “Islamic”? For the sake of brevity, a sample of major cases is discussed here.

#### *Algeria*

A senior French counterterrorism official, speaking off the record, told Alfred de Montesquiou, an Associated Press reporter, that French officials work daily and constantly with Algerian security officials to contain the terrorist threat in Algeria, and six cells of the Algerian militants' group called Al Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) have been dismantled across Europe. Montesquiou adds that in May of 2009, the Spanish judiciary announced that it had caught 12 Algerians from a suspected support cell; Italian authorities issued arrest warrants for two Tunisians, two Moroccans and an Algerian suspected of plotting attacks on a church and a subway line; and the Pentagon's new Africa Command was also striving to prevent the Algerian group's expansion south into the Sahara desert (Montesquiou, 2009).

But the bulk of the militants' activities takes place in densely populated northern Algeria where nearly every day they traffic goods, plunder drivers at fake road blocks, kidnap, and extort money from small businessmen in exchange for safety. The Algerian government has responded by ordering 267 local bank branches to close because they were vulnerable to holdups that could fund militants. The Algerian Defense Ministry has armed local militias to fight the militants. Algerian authorities say that the militants are on the run. They have dismantled several large cells; important local “emirs,” or militant leaders, have turned themselves in; and several former high-profile leaders, known as “repentants,” are calling on militants to stop fighting. Algerian authorities estimate that between 500 and 800 active fighters are left, a mere fraction of how many there used to be, as security officers have indeed killed and arrested militants in droves (Montesquiou, 2009). According to Montesquiou, the Algerian government has ramped up its security. The capital is surrounded by rings of police and army checkpoints. The Defense and Interior ministries are by far the biggest employers in the country, with 100,000 military police, 80,000 government-funded militia members, and 150,000 police officers.

These figures do not include those of the regular military branches, whose numbers are kept secret. Together, the Defense and Interior ministries spent 656 billion dinars (\$9.1 billion), according to Algeria's 2008 budget. The amount represented more than a quarter of the country's functioning budget, more than those of the Education, Justice and Industry ministries put together. For now, Algeria is able to handle these costs because of its enormous oil and gas wealth; but as the global economic downturn continues, the burden is getting heavier. Meanwhile, poverty is rampant, unemployment is widespread, development falls short, and 70 percent of the population is under 30.

These conditions stoke militancy that spreads far beyond Algeria's borders, especially with the assistance of Al Qaeda (Montesquieu, 2009).

As Montesquieu also points out, in 2005, the AQIM, then known as the Salafist Group for Call and Combat, was running out of steam. Born during the 1992 insurgency, the group participated in the near-civil war the next decade that left about 200,000 people dead. But the group's fighters had lost popular support after killing Muslim civilians. Many of its leaders had turned themselves in during government amnesties, and the group was weak from internal feuds. So its new "emir," or leader, Abdelmalek Droukdel, called upon Al Qaeda for support. His emissaries met with Osama bin Laden's deputy, Ayman-al-Zawahri, or close associates of his, according to Western intelligence sources. Al Qaeda refused to give its brand away to an unreliable group. Even by Al Qaeda's militant standards, the Algerian militants had a reputation of excess violence. But after a year of talks and tests, al-Zawahri issued a statement recognizing AQIM on September 11, 2006 (Montesquieu, 2009).

One must ponder why a group such as AQIM would emerge and function in a country like Algeria in the first place. The answer may be found in how Islamic radicalism was birthed in the country. As Wayne Edge poignantly points out, despite the spread of Islamic radicalism in many Arab nations, Algeria appeared an unlikely venue for the rise of a strong radical Islamic movement. Algeria's long association with France, its lack of historic Islamic identity as a nation, and several decades of single-party socialism made such a development unlikely. The failure of successive Algerian governments to resolve several economic problems, in addition to the lack of representative political institutions nurtured within the ruling National Liberation Front (FLN), however, led to the emergence of radical Islam as a response. Radicals took an active part in the 1988 riots; and with the establishment of a multiparty system, they organized a political party—the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). The party soon attracted three million members among the approximately 25 million Algerians at the time (Edge, 2006:111).

FIS candidates won 55 percent of the urban mayoral and council seats in the 1989 local and municipal elections. The FLN barely held on to power largely in the rural areas. Fearing an FIS victory, the government postponed for six months the scheduled June 1991 elections for the enlarged 430-member National People's Assembly. An interim government was formed to oversee the transition process headed by the technocrat prime minister Sid Ahmed Ghazali (Edge, 2006:111).

In accordance with President (former Colonel) Chadli Bendjedid's commitment to multiparty democracy, the first stage of Assembly elections occurred on December 26, 1991, with the FIS candidates winning 188 out of the 231 contested seats. But just before the second stage could be conducted, the army intervened. The leaders of the FIS were arrested, and the elections were postponed indefinitely. On January 17, 1992, well ahead of the expiration (in 1993) of his third five-year term, President Bendjedid resigned as a sacrifice in the interest of restoring stability to the nation and preserving democracy. Mohammed Boudiaf, one of the nine historic chiefs of the Revolution who had been in exile in Morocco for many years, was brought back by the military to head the Higher Council. The FIS headquarters was shut down and the party was declared illegal in a court in Algiers. The local councils and provincial assemblies formed by the FIS after its electoral victory were dissolved and replaced by "executive delegations" appointed by the Higher Council (Edge, 2006:111).

After that, Boudiaf named a 60-member Consultative Council to work with the various political groups to reach a consensus on reforms. The refusal of such leaders as former President Ahmed Ben Bella and Socialist Forces Front (FFS) leader Hocine Ait Ahmed to participate in the council, however, doomed the effort. Boudiaf was also suspected of using the council to build a personal power base. He was assassinated, reportedly by a member of his own presidential guard, on June 29, 1992 (Edge, 2006:111-112). With Boudiaf out of the way, the Algerian generals turned to their own ranks for a new leader. In 1994, the Higher Council named General Liamine Zeroual, the real strongman of the regime, the head of state. Zeroual promised to hold presidential elections in November of 1995 as a first step toward restoring parliamentary government. He had the top leaders of the FIS, Abbas Madani and Ali Belhaj, who had been sentenced for 12 years on charges of "endangering state security," released from jail but placed under house arrest, on the assumption that in return for dialogue, they would call for a halt to the spiraling violence (Edge, 2006:112).

Even though the dialogue proved inconclusive, Zeroual still declared that the presidential election would be conducted as scheduled. Before that, leaders of the FIS, FFS, FLN, and several smaller political parties had met in Rome, Italy, under the auspices of Sant-Egidio, a Catholic service agency, and announced a "National Contract." The Contract had called for the restoration of the political rights of the FIS in return for an end to violence, multiparty democracy, and exclusion of the military from government. The leaders also defined the Algerian "personality" in the Contract as Islamic, Arab, and Berber. The military leaders, however, rejected the Contract outright because of FIS' participation. Nonetheless, the November 1995 presidential election was held as scheduled under massive military presence—soldiers were stationed within 65 feet of every polling station. As expected, Zeroual won handily, garnering 61 percent of the vote (Edge, 2006:112).

### *Chad*

Grooming effective military leaders is as central to the United States mission in Chad as teaching infantry tactics, United States officials say. But the job is complicated because Chad's army, like the rest of the government, is run top-down by the feared Zagawa ethnic group. Indeed, many of the United States' goals in Chad appear to conflict with the Zagawa leaders' imperative to stay in power. Like the other governments across the region with which the United States military is working, the Chadian government has embraced counterterrorism as a way to stifle legitimate dissent and Muslim groups, according to reports issued by the International Crisis Group (Tyson, 2005).

In March of 2004, Sgt. Mohamed Nour Abakar, 28, described how he served as one of America's African fighters in a battle against terrorist: "I was between the border of Chad and Libya...It was about 3 p.m." he said, when his regiment received intelligence from a United States Navy surveillance plane on the location of 80 fighters from an Algerian group affiliated with Al Qaeda. The fighters, from the Salafist Group for Call and Combat, were wanted for the kidnapping of 32 European tourists in southern Algeria in 2003. At 6:00 PM, about 150 Chadian soldiers first spotted the guerrillas, who were traveling in eight Toyota trucks mounted with heavy machine guns. "We found the Salafists hunting gazelle. When they saw us, they left the gazelle and began to shoot at us with machine guns," Abakar said. Just then, Abakar recalled, the guerilla commander hurled an insulting appeal: "You monkeys! We are not your enemy, we are America's enemy," he yelled. "It was our mistake to fire at you, so why are you chasing us? We are all African!" But the Chadians fought on. They pursued the guerrillas into the hills for two days, killing 28 of them, and capturing seven, Abakar said. The Chadians lost 20 men, and Abakar was shot in the chest. "I was about to give up and be a civilian," he said, "but I found out the Americans were coming with new training, so I joined again" (Tyson, 2005).

### *Kenya*

Security cooperation has long been an important aspect of Kenya-United States relations, underscored by an airbase, port access, and over-flight agreements since the Cold-War. Despite political disagreements between the United States and the Daniel arap Moi government, the security components of the relationship endured. Since 1998, the United States has spent nearly \$3.1 million on anti-terrorism assistance, including the training of more than 500 Kenyan security personnel in the United States and a donation of \$1 million in airport security equipment under the "Safe Skies for Africa" program to improve aviation safety (Khadiagala, 2004). Kenya is also a partner in the United States Combined Joint Task-Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) in Djibouti that seeks to check terrorism. This program envisages the United States training of regional militaries in counter-terrorism procedures. Furthermore, as part of the multinational campaign, a special anti-terrorism squad, composed of the German Naval Air Wing, is based in Mombasa to monitor ships plying the Gulf of Aden and the Somali coast (Khadiagala, 2004).

In July of 2001, Nairobi police arrested eight Yemeni and 13 Somali nationals. Similarly, police arrested more than 20 people suspected of having links with Al Qaeda in Lamu in November of 2001. Al Qaeda struck again in November of 2002 with an attack on the Paradise Hotel in Mombasa and an attempt to shoot down an Israeli airliner in Mombasa. In May of 2003, the Kenyan government admitted that a key member of the Al Qaeda terror network was plotting an attack on Western targets, confirming Al Qaeda's firm local presence (Khadiagala, 2004). The slow government response to terrorist threats since the 1998 bombing grew from a denial based on the perception of Kenya as a victim, rather than a source, of international terrorism. The Kenyan government has always been afraid to alienate Kenya's minority Muslims who often complain of marginalization.

There was, however, a marked shift in policy after Muslim protestors embarrassed the Moi regime by marching for Al Qaeda in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks (Khadiagala, 2004). The new government President Mwai Kibaki moved to establish mechanisms to meet the growing threat. In February of 2003, the government formed an Anti-Terrorist Police Unit composed of officers trained in anti-terrorism. At the same time, the cabinet authorized negotiations between the executive and legislative branches on legislation to detect and punish suspected terrorists. In June of 2003, then Foreign Minister and later Vice President Kalonzo Musyoka called on parliament to expeditiously pass an Anti-Terrorism Bill. In other measures, the Ministry of Finance established a Task Force on Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism, consisting of representatives from the Finance, Trade, and Foreign Affairs ministries; the Central Bank; the police; the Criminal Investigation Department (CID); and the National Security Intelligence Services (Khadiagala, 2004).

### *Mali*

United States counter-terrorism initiatives are two-folded in Mali: (1) military assistance and (2) nonmilitary programs which provide instruction for teachers and job training for young Muslim men who are susceptible and singled out by militant recruiting campaigns. With regards to military assistance, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has spent about \$9 million on counterterrorism programs in Mali. The goal of the USAID program is to act quickly in that country before terrorism becomes as entrenched as it is in Somalia. Mali has been willing and able to permit dozens of American and European military trainers to conduct exercises there, and its leaders are plainly worried about militants who have taken refuge in its vast Saharan north (Schmitt, 2008). In nonmilitary action, the USAID built 12 FM radio stations in the north to link far-flung villages to an early-warning network that sends bulletins on bandits and other threats. In addition, the Pentagon produced radio soap operas in four national languages to promote peace and tolerance. The USAID has noted that the biggest potential threat comes from as many as 200 fighters from an offshoot of Al Qaeda called Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, which uses the northern Malian desert as a staging area and support base (Schmitt, 2008). Mali has not experienced any terrorist attacks. Members of the Al Qaeda affiliate have not attacked Malian forces, and American and Malian officials privately acknowledge that military officials here have adopted a live-and-let-live approach to the Al Qaeda threat, focusing instead on rebellious Tuareg tribesmen, who also live in the sparsely populated north. With only 10,000 military and other security forces, and just two working helicopters and a few airplanes, Mali acknowledges how daunting a task it is to try to drive out militants from its territory (Schmitt, 2008).

### *Nigeria*

In the early 1980s a fundamentalist Islamic sect, the Maitatsine, was active in northeastern Nigeria, influencing neighboring Chad, Niger and Cameroon. Today, Islamist customs are applied in Northern Nigeria, with 12 of its 36 states officially adopting Sharia Law as their legal practice. What is different about the rise of Islam in Nigeria than in other countries in Africa or the Middle East is that it all happened in a rather unusual period of "democracy" perhaps better described as chaotic, free-for all politics. Since the collapse of the last military junta in 1999, Nigeria has had a weak, albeit elected, government (Radu, 2004). Religion in Nigeria plays a big factor in its demographics. Nigeria has 50 percent Muslims, 40 percent Christians, and 10 percent indigenous religious adherents (see Table 1). Nigeria's Christianity-Islam division largely parallels its major ethnic cleavages: Muslims, who until recently dominated the Nigerian military, make up a far more significant percentage of the population in the northern parts of the country, as opposed to a mostly Christian population in the south (Radu, 2004). To make things worse, Nigeria's major source of revenue comprises oil and gas which provide 20% of its GDP, 95% of its foreign exchange earning, and about 65% of its budgetary revenues, and is all concentrated in the south-east, the mostly Igbo and Ijaw non-Muslim areas of the country. Due to the way the newest Nigerian Constitution (1999) is written, local governors have had a free hand to manipulate religion (Radu).

In 2004, when a unit of GSPC (Jamiyy'a Salafiyya li'l-Daw'a wa'l Jihad, a Salafist Group), the main radical Algerian Islamist group, led by Amari Saifi, a.k.a. Abderezzak el Para, was decimated or captured in Chad, it turned out that a larger part of its members were Nigerians. This is no surprise, for in addition to the irresponsible political ambitions of northern state governors, Islamic fundamentalism is encouraged there by Wahabbi-trained imams.

As a result, the old and respected Islamic-tradition cities of Kano and Sokoto increasingly serve as secondary recruiting and indoctrination centers for unemployed and unemployable youths from throughout the Sahel. The Sahel area is a huge breeding ground for terrorism, since it is on the margins of the Sahara and extends from Mauritania on the Atlantic to Darfur in Western Sudan, and includes Mali, Niger and Chad.

Compounding this Islamist expansion is the further problem that in Darfur these Nigerian influences meet those of Khartoum, Sub-Saharan Africa's main Islamist center (Radu, 2004). The most immediate threat posed by the rise of Islam in Northern Nigeria is to the unity and very existence of Nigeria itself. Clashes between the dominant Muslims and the minority Christians in the North have occurred for a long time, and the introduction of Sharia has not helped matters. Christians began to answer in kind, especially in the central state of Plateau. There, some 1,000 people, mostly Muslims, were killed in September of 2001, and hundreds more in April and May of 2004. In response, Christians were slaughtered in Kano, while the central government declared a state of emergency in Plateau and appointed a retired general as governor (Radu, 2004). While these clashes are routinely described by the Western media as "sectarian," they are far more than that: they are religiously tinged clashes of ethnic identities over increasingly scarce resources: land and oil money. The Hausa and Fulani think they have the numbers, but little else, not even food; the mostly Christian Yorubas and Christian Igbos have the skills and the oil (Radu, 2004).

### *Somalia*

In their March 14, 2007 article, "US Allies in Africa May Have Engaged in Secret Prisoner Renditions," that appears in the *McClatchy Newspapers*, Shashank Bengali and Jonathan Landay recount how a network of United States allies in east Africa secretly transferred to prisons in Somalia and Ethiopia as many as 150 people who were captured in Kenya while fleeing the war in Somalia. Kenyan authorities made the arrests as part of a United States-backed, four-nation military campaign in December of 2006 and January of 2007 against Somalia's Islamist militias, which the George W. Bush Administration officials had linked to Al Qaeda (Bengali and Landay, 2007). This claim was problematic because, according to *The Economist*, "America can be more heavily criticized for subordinating Somali interests to its own desire to catch a handful of al-Qaeda men who may (or may not) have been hiding in Mogadishu....None has been caught, many innocents have died in air strikes, and anti-American feeling has deepened. Western, especially European, diplomats watching Somalia from Nairobi, the capital of Kenya to the south, have sounded the alarm. The governments have done little" (Bloice, 2007).

The people arrested in Kenya, who included men and women of 17 nationalities and children as young as seven months, were held in that country for several weeks before most of them were transferred covertly to Somalia and Ethiopia, where they have been held incommunicado. The transfers, which were carried out in the middle of the night and made public only after a court order in Kenya, violated international law. The program was driven by the United States, which has built a close relationship with Kenya and Ethiopia in the "War on Terrorism." At least one of the transferees is an American citizen identified on a flight manifest as Amir Mohamed Meshar. He was flown from Nairobi, Kenya's capital, to Baidoa, the seat of Somalia's transitional government, on February 10, 2007. His whereabouts and those of 12 other detainees aboard the chartered flight are unknown. American officials in Kenya declined to comment on the allegations that they were involved in the detentions and renditions. State Department officials in Washington had no immediate comment. Representatives of Islamic groups who had visited detainees in late January in their jail cells in Nairobi said they had spotted United States diplomatic vehicles outside the holding facilities.

They also said that some detainees had reported being questioned by United States law enforcement agents. The Bush Administration came under fire for the practice of extraordinary renditions: the transfer of detainees without court proceedings to foreign countries where they can be interrogated, often in secret, and sometimes subjected to torture. The allegations marked the first time that such renditions have been suspected in East Africa, where American-friendly regimes often treated prisoners in a very brutal manner (Bengali and Landay, 2007).

The December 2006 military intervention in Somalia was a well-orchestrated campaign involving four countries: Somalia's transitional government; Ethiopia (a country that was headed by one of Africa's worst dictators, Meles Zenawi, but was even permitted by the Bush Administration to buy weapons from North Korea), whose ground forces drove the Islamists from power; Kenya, which sent troops to seal the border with Somalia and prevent fighters from escaping; and the United States, which gave the green light to the invasion, provided intelligence and training support to the Ethiopians and conducted surveillance of Somalia that apparently was used to track the Islamists' escape. The United States also launched two air strikes on suspected terrorist targets (that turned out to be innocent herdsman) in January.

The campaign netted no Al Qaeda figures. Consequently, the allies conspired to illegally hold prisoners, many of whom were described by family members as teachers or small-business owners who went to Somalia in search of jobs. Details of the detention program, which received very little coverage in the Kenyan and international media, emerged only after a Nairobi-based consortium of community groups, the Muslim Human Rights Forum, challenged Kenyan authorities in court (Bloice, 2007).

After the Ethiopian invasion in late December of 2006, Kenyan security forces arrested at least 150 people on both sides of the Kenya-Somalia border, including 17 women and 12 children. The detainees included citizens of Somalia, Yemen, Syria, Tunisia and Ethiopia. Kenyan police refused to permit Muslim leaders to visit the prisoners, among them a woman who had a bullet lodged in her back but was denied medical treatment and another who was nine months pregnant. The police shuffled the prisoners among several facilities in the Nairobi area to keep them out of sight. Under a judge's order, authorities produced flight manifests that showed that at least 80 detainees had been transferred to Somalia on three chartered flights: January 20 and 27 and February 10. The manifest appeared to have been filled out hastily, with spaces for such details as the departure and arrival airports left blank. What has happened to the detainees since then remains unclear. One detainee telephoned the Muslim rights group in March of 2007 from Ethiopia to report that he and several other detainees had been transferred to a prison on the outskirts of Addis Ababa. The telephone line went dead before he could say more. Dozens of detainees were thought to be in a holding facility near the bullet-pocked airport in Mogadishu where a mounting insurgency threatened the fragile government's grip on power. Another 45 to 60 detainees, members of Ethiopia's Ogaden and Oromo rebel groups who allegedly fought alongside Somalia's Islamists, were flown directly to Ethiopia. At least 19 people were set free in Kenya, and some British and United States detainees were deported to their home countries (Bengali and Landay, 2007).

Meanwhile, the United States worked very hard to raise troops from nearby allied states to take over the job in Somalia. Promises were made but, with one exception, remain unfulfilled. In a telephone conversation, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni promised President George W. Bush to provide between 1,000 and 2,000 troops to protect Somalia's transitional government and train its troops. The Ugandan troops arrived but were largely confined to their quarters and refrained from taking part in the effort to crush the opposition while the forces of the transitional government and Ethiopia shelled civilian areas in Mogadishu from the government compound they were supposedly guarding (Bloice, 2007).

Many observers around the world asserted that the Bush Administration's grand strategy in its "War on Terrorism" in Africa was more about the continent's strategic natural resources and China's growing presence in Africa than it was about fighting terrorists. For example, as Pajibo and Woods, among many others, asserted, the military driven United States engagement with Africa was a reflection of the desperation of the Bush Administration in its efforts to control the increasingly strategic resources in Africa, especially oil, gas and uranium. In what has become a multi-polar world with increased competition from China, among other countries, for those resources, the United States wants above all else to strengthen its foothold in resource-rich regions of Africa. Pajibo and Woods point out that Nigeria is the largest exporter of oil to the United States, and the West African region provides nearly 20 percent of the United States supply of hydrocarbons, up from 15 percent in 2009 and well on the way to a 25-percent share forecast for 2015. The new African Command (comprising three drone bases established by President Barack Obama) near oil-rich West Africa has consolidated existing American military operations (US European Command, US Central Command, Pacific Command, and Indian Ocean Command) and bring core avenues of international engagement development (United States Agency for International Development—USAID) and diplomacy (State Department) even more in line with United States military objectives (Pajibo and Woods, 2007).

Even the United States bombing of Somalia was explained as a hidden war for Somali oil. According to Bloice, on file were plans (which have been put on hold due to the continuing conflict) that allocate two-thirds of Somalia's oil fields to American oil companies: Conoco, Amoco, Chevron and Phillips. He adds that the then United States-backed prime minister of Somalia, Ali Mohamed Gedi, proposed the enactment of a new oil law to encourage the return of foreign oil companies to the country (Bloice, 2007). In a July 14, 2007 article titled "China Wins Permit to Look for Oil in Somalia" in *The Financial Times*, Barney Jopson reports that the Chinese state oil giant, CNOOC, won permission to search for oil in Somalia, a sign of China's willingness to brave Africa's most volatile regions in its search for natural resources. CNOOC and Somalia's transitional government officials hammered out the deal in a Nairobi hotel in September of 2006.

The agreement would have given the Chinese company exploration rights in the north Mudug region, some 500 kilometers north-east of Mogadishu. CNOOC and a smaller group, China International Oil and Gas (CIOG), had also signed a production-sharing contract with the transitional government in May of 2006 that would give the government 51 percent oil revenues and was endorsed at a November China-Africa summit in Beijing. At a meeting in Nairobi on June 24, parts of the agreement were clarified by Abdullahi Yusuf Mohamad, the then Somali energy minister, Chen Zhuobiao, managing director of CNOOC Africa, and Judah Jay, managing director of CIOG. Meanwhile, the United States Energy Information Administration insisted that Somalia had no proven oil reserves and only 200bn cubic feet of proven natural gas reserves, which have not been tapped (Jopson, 2007). But after Gedi returned to Somalia from a quick trip to the United States in August of 2007, he denied that Somali officials had sold oil rights to the Chinese. He promised that the transitional government would not begin searching for oil until after parliament had adopted a new petroleum law and the shattered country achieves peace (Jopson, 2007). Nonetheless, as Nick Wadhams reported on Voice of America News on August 8, 2007, Somali officials were looking to carve up oil rights. He added that oil experts said that the previous estimates about Somalia's small oil reserves were based on outdated technology and that Somali officials have quietly been laying the groundwork for a potential oil boom. The priority that officials are putting on oil, despite Somalia's turbulence, according to Wadhams, is another sign that many African leaders are looking to oil to jumpstart their economies (Wadhams, 2007).

## Conclusion

One way to facilitate peacebuilding and interfaith dialogue is through the correct or objective use of Islamic concepts. 'Subjective' is often taken to be a pejorative term when opposed to 'objective.' Indeed, both subjectivity and objectivity are indispensable for learning anything, particularly about peace and conflict resolution. Recall the oddity that every person's speech could be aptly called 'subjective' in one of its several senses. But the fact that people from different countries routinely communicate in certain languages so well presupposes something 'objective,' something speakers of those languages share as a common, public, external factor. That you are you, an individual, is not diminished by the fact that you are also a functioning member of a group when you speak and are understood. Could individuals insist that society form around them by acquiring their private or subjective language, for example? Obviously infants could not, and speakers at any age would already have to have acquired the public language of a society to make this demand intelligible. Sorting out in what sense Islamic concepts can be viewed objectively, and not just as an ingenious fancy invented by Islamic scholars, has its own interest. In the process, one hopes to gain insight into questions like why *this* aspect is an instance of 'Islam,' how individual Islamic issues compare, how an Islamic issue changes, or whether information like that can help decide whether the change all Islamic issues undergo is a good or bad thing.

With these considerations in mind, associating subjectivity with evaluations like 'correctness' or 'good' and 'bad' is meant to stress rather than to deny the importance of this imminently human duty. An opposition like 'subjective' versus 'objective' is considered inevitably relative rather than an absolute matter in private affairs, and the idea of turning an opposition into an either-or versus a more-or-less by agreeing on some public norm does not attract everyone. What is heavy for a child is, of course, light for an adult, while 'heavy' for an adult might be 'light' for a weight-lifter: the evaluation is relative to 'who does the lifting,' a subjective affair. By shifting from the private and subjective 'heavy' to the public and objective '200 pounds,' one can deal with the either-or instead of the more-or-less for each unit of measure, with steps more precise than 'more or less' for ranges.

**Poignant Reminder:** I end this essay with a poignant reminder: Exactly 228 years ago, as the United States Constitution was signed on September 17, 1787, an Afrikan in America was defined as three-fifths of a citizen of the United States compared to a white person; and, to this day, the vestiges of that definition remains.

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