IDA

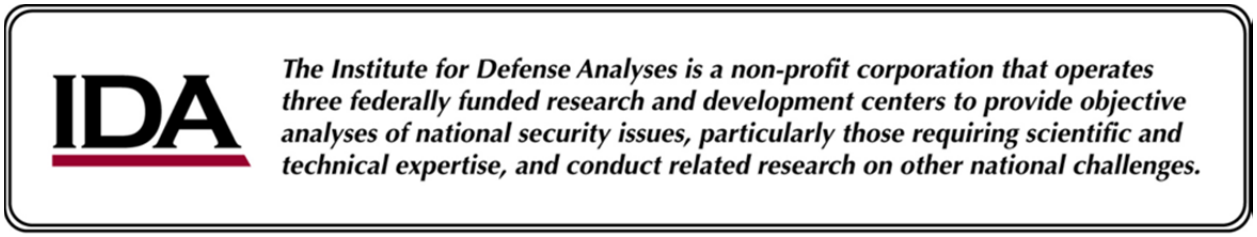
INSTITUTE FOR DEFENSE ANALYSES

Africa's New Belt of Instability: African Responses to "The Innocence of Muslims"

Caroline F. Ziemke-Dickens

October 2012
Approved for public release;
distribution is unlimited
IDA Document D-4828
H 13-000372

INSTITUTE FOR DEFENSE ANALYSES
4850 Mark Center Drive
Alexandria, Virginia 22311-1882



About this Publication

This work was conducted by the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) under contract 2012-12062700-003, Global Coverage Analyses Program. The views, opinions, and findings should not be construed as representing the official position of the U.S. Government.

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

INSTITUTE FOR DEFENSE ANALYSES

IDA Document D-4828

Africa's New Belt of Instability: African Responses to "The Innocence of Muslims"

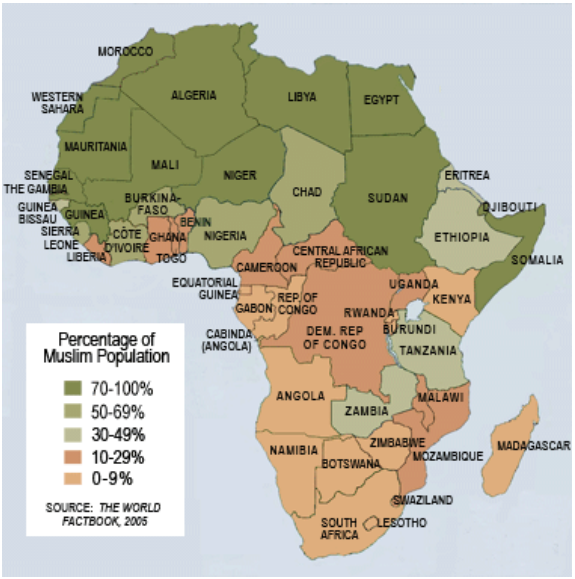
Caroline F. Ziemke-Dickens

Executive Summary

The kind of violent anti-U.S. and anti-Western demonstrations that spread across the Middle East and South Asia in the weeks following the September 11 protests at the United States Embassy in Cairo have failed to materialize in Muslim population centers in sub-Saharan Africa, even in those countries most deeply divided by religious violence. Protests in Paris, London, Dortmund, and Sydney all outnumbered even the largest ones in sub-Saharan Africa. With the exception of Sudan, no protests in sub-Saharan Africa resulted in fatalities of either protestors or police. Some property damage was reported in Nigeria and Niger, but Boko Haram and other extremist groups were notably absent from the protests.[1] A country-by-country survey of responses is presented in the Annex.

This analysis focuses on the sub-Saharan "belt of instability" that stretches across the middle of the continent from Mauritania in the west to Somalia on the Horn of Africa. It includes two categories of states:

- Mostly Muslim (70 to 100 percent): Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Sudan, Somalia, and Djibouti
- Majority Muslim or Evenly Divided (50 to 69 percent): Guinea Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Chad.



[1] Mwangi S. Kimenyi, "Why Designating Boko Haram as an FTO Could Be Counterproductive," *Brookings Research: Opinions*, 28 September 2012, http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2012/09/28-boko-haram-kimenyi.

A number of factors help account for the relatively low-key reaction of African Muslims to an event that inflamed much of the rest of the Muslim world. These same factors can serve as wedges between al Qaida and other global Salafist jihadist groups and their potential support base in sub-Saharan Africa. These wedges could be exploited by regional governments and their partners (including the United States) to contain the reach of violent extremist groups such as Boko Haram and prevent them from developing broad popular support. These factors fall into four broad categories: Historical, Socio-Cultural, Political, and Ideological.

Historical

- The global jihadist narrative that underlies much of the anti-Western rage in the Arab Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan has little resonance among Muslim communities in sub-Saharan Africa, even those with histories of religious tension and violence.
- Violent outbursts of anti-U.S. sentiment in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia are driven by the widespread belief – propagated by Global Salafist Jihadists – that the United States is at war with Islam. In sub-Saharan Africa, the power of the narrative of a U.S. "War on Islam" is diluted by the complex relationships between African Muslims and non-Muslims, or Muslims and ruling regimes in their countries.
- Sub-Saharan Africans have an anti-Western narrative, but the anti-Arab narrative is just as strong and, among even Muslims, deeply rooted.

Socio-Cultural

- Muslim and Christian communities in much of sub-Saharan Africa share continued ties to their traditional African culture and religions. At the same time, Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa are less likely to have grown up in unobservant, secular households, are more likely to have authentic grounding in their faith, and are thus less susceptible to the corrupted theological vision of the global Salafist Jihadists than are young, urban Muslims in much of the Middle East and the West.
- Religious tension and violence in Africa are more often driven by ethnic and political rivalries than by purely religious hatred. Sectarian divides (Sunni/Shia/Sufi) are not a major feature of sub-Saharan Islam.

Political

- Sub-Saharan African Muslims demonstrate, perhaps as a result of long coexistence with traditional faiths and their Christian neighbors, a more

sophisticated understanding of interfaith relations than are common in the Arab Middle East.

- Civil society plays an important role. While civil society groups in sub-Saharan Africa struggle under official repression and resource challenges, they are becoming increasingly important players in Africa society and politics – much more so than is the case in the Arab Middle East and North Africa.
- Youth in countries such as Senegal and Nigeria are becoming more politically savvy and are developing political consciousness that focuses on civic values, good governance, and economic and social reform rather than on ethnic and religious identities. These movements can provide a valuable counter to the spread of jihadist ideologies in African youth.

Ideological

- The strong influence of local religious institutions, such as the Sufi brotherhoods, works against the spread of alien extremist ideologies.
- The emerging grassroots political and civil society movements in sub-Saharan Africa are, for the most part, driven more by pragmatic political and economic agendas than by ideological ones.
- Even Islamist movements such as Boko Haram, while they pay lip service to the idea of a global “caliphate,” have ideological agendas that focus squarely on local and national grievances.

IDA

INSTITUTE FOR DEFENSE ANALYSES

GLOBAL COVERAGE ANALYSES PROGRAM – AFRICA

TRACKING AND ISSUE PAPER

AFRICA'S NEW BELT OF INSTABILITY

AFRICAN RESPONSES TO "THE INNOCENCE OF MUSLIMS"

CAROLINE F. ZIEMKE-DICKENS

OCTOBER 9, 2012

Contents

Africa's New Belt of Instability: African Responses to "The Innocence of Muslims"

Historical Factors

The historical narrative that global Salafist Jihadists employ to justify their anti-Western attitudes and actions draws heavily from the history of the Arab world and the greater Middle East. The Muslim world was once the most advanced civilization in the world: its science, philosophy, military prowess, and cultural influence vastly outstripped that of medieval Europe. The rise of the Christian West – starting with the Crusades and culminating in the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War – ushered in a long period of expanding Western imperialism and Muslim humiliation that remains a searing historical trauma to this day.

In the global Salafist Jihadist narrative, the West supported unjust, repressive, secular regimes that kept the Muslim world divided and weak. The neo-imperialist presence of Western military forces – first in the Muslim holy lands (during the early 1990s) and later in Iraq and Afghanistan – and its continued support for Israel represents an effort to continue the humiliation of the Muslim world and destroy Islam to serve the political and economic interests of the United States and its Western allies. The Islamists believe, and say at every opportunity, that the United States is at war with Islam and that its touchstones – God, the Koran, the ummah, and the Dar al-Islam – are under systematic attack. Thus, the idea that an amateurish video mocking the Prophet is part of a concerted U.S. campaign to destroy Islam has plausibility among the jihadists and their supporters.

This "Crusaders versus Caliphate" narrative has little historical resonance among even the most conservative Muslim communities in sub-Saharan Africa for two reasons. First, the aspects of Westernization and globalization that have become the symbolic focus of jihadist rage in the Greater Middle East have not penetrated sub-Saharan Africa to nearly the same extent and, where they have, are not met with the same degree of suspicion. To be sure, African societies have suffered under repressive regimes, many of which were, like those in the Middle East, propped up by Western powers, in pursuit of their own interests with little regard for the impact on African human security. There is one very important distinction, however: the sort of aggressively secularizing, nationalist regimes that sparked neo-fundamentalism in places like Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt were not part of the African post-colonial experience.

The second is the African historical narrative of centuries of Arab imperialism – including the role of Arab traders in initiating and sustaining the slave trade – that still

lingers in places like Mauritania, Sudan, and, most recently, northern Mali. Within the African Union, the sub-Saharan African states viewed the financial largesse of Gaddafi's Libya with a somewhat suspicious eye. Egypt's relationship with its Southern neighbors has also been clouded by charges of racism, starting with the systematic discrimination against its own black Nubian population. The issue of Arab racism against black Africans is a tricky one. A Google search of "Arab racism against black Africans" yields something on the order of 12.5 million hits. A substantial percentage of those come from ideologically motivated anti-jihadist websites and bloggers, who believe that Arab racism is a valuable potential wedge issue between Africans and global Salafist Jihadist movements.

Pan-African and Pan-Islamist advocates and institutions, including the African Union (AU) and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), have either dismissed the issue as Western-imperialist propaganda or ignored it altogether. As one African commentator explained, "Arab racism towards Africans has for long been a taboo subject, considering that it is politically incorrect to voice out the obvious: That Arabs, who are mostly Muslims, are racists to boot and consider Africans, Muslim or Christian, as inferior." [1]

The fact that the existence of anti-black racism in the Arabized north is a matter of academic and ideological controversy does not mean it does not exist. The anecdotal evidence is plentiful. Sub-Saharan African guest workers, business people, and students studying in Arabized North Africa routinely report racial discrimination from locals who self-identify as Arabs.[2] Racism on a more systemic level has played a role in a number of recent crises including the ongoing crisis in Darfur and the murders of black mercenaries and refugees in Libya in the aftermath of the fall of the Gaddafi regime.[3] Slavery also remains an important potential wedge issue between sub-Saharan Africa and Arabized North Africans. According to human rights groups such as the Mauritanian anti-slavery organization *SOS Esclaves* (SOS Slaves), approximately 18 percent of that country's

---

1 Huma Tuma, "Of Gaddafi and Arab racism toward Blacks," *Afrik News*, 3 September 2010, http://www.afrik-news.com/article18180.html.

2 See, for example: Tom Begg, "Beyond Mercenaries: Racism in North Africa," *Think Africa Press*, 27 May 2011, http://thinkafricapress.com/libya/north-africa-sub-saharan-africas-racist-neighbour; Nesrine Malik, "'Nubian monkey song and Arab racism," *The Guardian (U.K.)* , 23 November 2009, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/nov/23/nubian-monkey-arab-racism.

3 Richard Seymour, "Libya's spectacular revolution has been disgraced by racism," *The Guardian*, 30 August 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/aug/30/libya-spectacular-revolution-disgraced-racism;

population lives in descent-based slavery. Slavery also persists among the Tuaregs in Niger (approximately 43,000 as recently as 2003) and Mali.[4]

Charges of racism can cut both ways. The current conflict in Northern Mali began as an uprising by Tuareg separatists frustrated by what they regarded as their marginalization and mistreatment at the hands of a predominantly black, southern-ruled Malian government. Those internal tensions date back to the colonial era, when the Tuaregs enjoyed preferential status over black Malians under the French colonial administration. Within northern Mali, moreover, skin color has long determined social status:

> *One NGO I came across in Burkina whose mandate was to help Tuareg refugees in camps like Mentao found that its black, Burkinabe staff were refusing to work with the Tuareg. These Burkinabes felt aggrieved by the reputation of the Tuaregs for enslaving black Africans – a history that still plays itself out in the Tuareg caste system – where "Bella," dark-skinned members of the tribe who were once slaves, still occupy the lowest positions in Tuareg society.*[5]

Socio-Cultural Factors

"Culturation" and "Deculturation" of Islam

When global Salafist Jihadists talk about defending Islamic values and culture, they are talking about *Arab* values and culture. The fundamentalist values propagated by the Salafists aim to recreate a righteous Islamic society that "re-establishes" an ideal (and imagined) past when Shari'a law and the ways of the Prophet reigned throughout the Arab world and the greater Middle East (including Turkey, Persia, and Mogul India). As the destruction of centuries old religious monuments in Northern Mali by the Islamist insurgents attests, part of the of global Salafist Jihadist agenda is to "deculturate" local Muslim communities by erasing local cultural markers (local ethnic identities) and imposing cultural as well as ideological conformity.[6]

Outside the Arab core, the Salafist movements have increasingly "delinked" Islam from local cultural contexts, resulting in what French social scientist Olivier Roy calls

---

4 "SOS Esclaves" *Anti-Slavery*, [accessed 1 October 2012], http://www.antislavery.org/english/what_we_do/antislavery_international_today/award/2009_award_winner/default.aspx.

5 Afua Hirsch, "Mali's conflict and a 'war over skin color': Many Tuaregs have fled after a split along colour lines. But will the factions unite against an Islamic state?," *The Guardian*, 6 July 2012, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/jul/06/mali-war-over-skin-colour.

6 Olivier Roy, *Holy Ignorance: When Religion and Culture Part Ways* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 67-73.

"deculturated neo-fundamentalism." In the view of the neo-fundamentalists, Islam is not a form of culture but a pure religion that "loses its purity and holistic dimension if embedded in a specific culture." As Roy explains it,

> *Islam, as preached by the Taliban, Wahhabis, and Bin Laden's radicals, is hostile even to cultures that are Muslim in origin. Whatever such fundamentalism has destroyed – Muhammad's tomb, the Bamiyan statues of the Buddha, or the World Trade Center – it expresses the same rejection of material civilization and culture …. By stressing the gap between culture and religion, by striving to establish a pure religion, separated from secular and lay elements, neo-fundamentalists contribute to the paradoxical secularization of modern society, because they isolate religion from the other dimensions of social life that they would like to, but cannot, ignore or destroy.*[7]

Islam has not, however, been "delinked" from local cultures in sub-Saharan Africa – not even in Boko Haram strongholds in Northern Nigeria. Nor, for that matter, has Christianity. Nearly 100 percent of sub-Saharan African Muslims say "religion is very important in their lives," compared, for example, to 75 percent of Egyptians.[8] Moreover, the vast majority of Muslim clerics and teachers in sub-Saharan Africa are indigenous, many maintain ties to Sufi brotherhoods (which are anathema to the Salafists), and, although they may have received religious education in the Middle East, remain rooted in African Islamic learning. It is important to note that early Muslim kingdoms and city-states in sub-Saharan Africa had built Islamic centers of learning in places like Timbuktu and Kano by the 14th century. As a result, sub-Saharan Africa has a long tradition of African Islamic learning that is deeply rooted in local history and culture.[9]

In a recent survey of religion and public life in sub-Saharan Africa, the Pew Research Center identified what it characterized as "an important cultural paradox": while most Africans are deeply religious – sub-Saharan Africa is one of the most religious regions in the world – and identify strongly with either Islam or Christianity, sizable minorities in both monotheistic faiths (25 percent of Christians and 30 percent of Muslims) continue to identify with and practice elements of traditional African religions.[10] In Mali, which has seen the widespread destruction of ancient religious

---

7 Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 259, 265.

8 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, *The World's Muslims: Unity and Diversity* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 9 August 2012), http://www.pewforum.org/uploadedFiles/Topics/Religious_Affiliation/Muslim/the-worlds-muslims-full-report.pdf, p. 40.

9 Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 493.

10 Traditional African religions differ from the monotheistic faiths in the degree to which they focus on human well-being in the present rather than on salvation in the afterlife.

monuments as a result of the Islamist insurgency in the north, 60 percent of the population say they believe in the protective power of charms or sacrifices to spirits or ancestors, consult traditional religious healers, keep sacred objects (e.g., charms) in their homes, and participate in ceremonies honoring their ancestors.[11] In Senegal, another overwhelmingly Muslim country, 55 percent exhibit "high levels of belief and practice" in traditional African religions. The rates of adherence to traditional faiths were significantly lower, but not entirely absent, in Guinea-Bissau (39 percent), Chad (38 percent), Djibouti (16 percent), Nigeria (8 percent). [12]

Taken in historical context, however, this finding should not be a surprise. Islam initially spread to sub-Saharan Africa through the migration of Arab and North African merchants, teachers, and settlers along the Saharan routes that dominated international trade until the rise of Atlantic trade routes in the 16th and 17th centuries. The process of Islamization was gradual. The first converts were local governing elites and merchants. Commoners and rural populations maintained their traditional faiths. Muslim kings and chiefs continued to base their legitimacy on both Islam and local, non-Muslim cultural heritage. This dual cultural orientation survived well into the modern era. It was only with the arrival of the Western imperialist administrations, with their strategies of "divide and rule," that cleavages began to emerge between Islam, traditional faiths, and the growing Christian community.[13]

Pew also found that, in sub-Saharan Africa, religion tracks closely with ethnicity: in Nigeria, for example, 96 percent of those who identify as Igbo are Christian while the same percentage of those who identify as Hausa are Muslim. The Yoruba are fairly evenly divided – 45 percent Christian and 54 percent Muslim. Religious violence among the Yoruba, who are concentrated in Nigeria's southwest, is rare – although there have been incidents of ethnic violence between Yoruba and Hausa "settlers" in the southwest and Yoruba "settlers" and the Hausa majority in the north. In Chad, 99 percent of Arabs and Kanem-Bornou are Muslim, while 91 percent of Sara and 67 percent of Mayo-Kebbi are Christian. In these countries, concern about religious conflict tracks closely with concern about ethnic conflict, which suggests that the two are closely related. Most of Nigeria's worst "religious" violence, for example, is largely ethnic in origins, particularly

---

[11] Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life," Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, April 2010), p. 4.

[12] Ibid., 34.

[13] Lapidus, pp. 489-508.

between recognized original inhabitants ("indigenes") and "settlers" – many of whom have lived as minorities in their regions for decades.[14]

The Recruiting Base

Sub-Saharan Africa may constitute a challenging environment for building broad-based support for the global Salafist Jihadist agenda, starting with some fundamental differences in the social structures that give rise to extremism. Analysis of the social origins of global Jihadist Salafists has been conducted in a variety of cultural contexts, but consensus has emerged on some basic characteristics of violent jihadists. In his study, *Understanding Terrorist Networks*, Marc Sageman found that global Salafist Jihadists (as opposed to local jihadists and insurgents) came primarily from three broad groups: core Arabs, Maghreb Arabs, and Southeast Asians. They were overwhelmingly from the middle and upper-middle classes (75 percent). Most had some tertiary education (71 percent had B.S./B.A. degrees or higher), primarily from secular schools. The only group in which religious (pesantren or madrassa) education played a significant role in radicalization was in Indonesia, where a plurality of Salafist Jihadists studied in pesantrens founded by "Afghan veterans" – Indonesians who had fought with the Afghan resistance in the 1980s. Most (75 percent) were either professionals (doctors, engineers) or semi-skilled workers, although that rate is somewhat lower among Maghreb Arabs (50 percent). Almost half had been raised in secular Muslim or Christian households and acquired their religiosity in adolescence or young adulthood. For many, this occurred when they migrated to the West where they were uprooted from their cultural base.[15]

Looking across these factors, Muslim communities in sub-Saharan Africa today do not appear to constitute a rich breeding ground. While there have been anecdotal cases of sub-Saharan African participation in al Qaida related operations – notably the case of Nigerian "underwear bomber" Umar Farouk Abdul Mutallab – the vast majority (including cases of American Somali youth fighting with al Shabaab) are related to local insurgent movements. At present, even basic literacy is in decline in some of the most troubled parts of Muslim sub-Saharan Africa, and post-secondary education is increasingly beyond the reach of even the middle-class in Nigeria, for example. Ignoring the education deficit is not, however, a constructive approach to countering violent extremism. Still, it is important to develop proactive strategies for educational and economic reform if sub-Saharan Africa is to avoid the historical "revolutionary paradox": that societies are most vulnerable to violent revolution not when things are bad, but when

---

[14] Aaron Sayne, *Rethinking Nigeria's Indigne-Settler Conflicts*, Special Report (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, July 2012), http://www.usip.org/publications/rethinking-nigeria-s-indigene-settler-conflicts.

[15] Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), pp. 69-80.

they are getting better – but not rapidly enough for disaffected populations (particularly youth). People who are struggling just to survive do not, for the most part, join revolutionary movements. This is part of the dynamic currently playing out in the Middle East. As the author concluded in a recent analysis in *The Africa Watch:*

> *The best hope for meaningful educational reform in the predominantly Muslim North is to integrate religious and traditional knowledge into the public education curriculum to neutralize the perception that traditional religious and secular public education is an "either/or" proposition. An education system that is considered "halal" among Northern Muslims would enlist religious and traditional indigenous community leaders in a public/private partnership to reform education at the community level. Such efforts to enlist parents and community leaders in the development of curricula that reflect local social, economic, and religious realities can instill a sense of "ownership" among local communities and convince both parents and local political leaders of the value of investing in the future of their youth.*[16]

Another important factor may be the fact that the age of religious expansion in Africa is probably over for both Christians and Muslims. The vast majority of Africans are already deeply committed to one faith, so the pool of potential converts is dwindling. There is no real evidence that either faith is likely to expand its influence at the expense of the other. Conversion and apostasy are rare. The only countries that have seen significant shifts are Uganda (about a 4 percent shift from Muslim to Christian) and Rwanda.[17] Rwanda is a stand-out both because of the relatively high numbers – from 7 percent to 14 percent – and the motivation. Rwandans have converted to Islam in large numbers in response to the positive role Rwandan Muslims played during the 1994 genocide, refusing to take part and sheltering refugees. In contrast, some Catholic and Protestant clerics turned Tutsis seeking refuge over to death squads and encouraged their congregations to participate in the killings. Saleh Habimana, the chief mufti of Rwanda, has declared a Rwandan "jihad" – "our war against ignorance between Hutu and Tutsi …. Our jihad is to start respecting each other and living as Rwandans and as Muslims."[18] Any shift in the Muslim-Christian balance in the coming decades is likely to be the result of shifting birthrates rather than conversions.

---

[16] Caroline Ziemke-Dickens, "Nigeria's Looming Demographic Disaster," *The Africa Watch,* 18 April 2012.

[17] Ibid., p. 12.

[18] Emily Wax, "Islam Attracting Many Survivors of Rwanda Genocide," *The Washington Post,* 23 September 2002, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A53018-2002Sep22.html.

Political Factors

In its April 2010 report, "Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa," the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life identified what might prove the most important brake on the expansion of violent jihadist influence on the political evolution of Africa's "middle belt." The Pew report directly tested the hypothesis, common among outside observers, that this region – where the predominantly Muslim north meets the overwhelmingly Christian south – is destined to be a "volatile religious faultline," as witnessed by the ethnic and sectarian bloodshed in Nigeria and ongoing violence in the Horn of Africa. "Africans have long been seen as devout and morally conservative, and the survey largely confirms this. But insofar as the conventional wisdom has been that Africans are lacking in tolerance for people of other faiths, it may need rethinking."[19]

One of the findings from the Pew survey that stands out as having particular import for understanding the nature and scope of the violent jihadist threat in the middle belt involves the degree to which trust and respect are tied specifically to religious beliefs. The surprise is that, for the most part, while Muslims and Christians agree that they do not know much about each other's religions, majorities of both faiths in Nigeria, Senegal, Mali,[20] and Guinea Bissau and pluralities in Chad said they had "overall positive views" of members of the other faith.[21] Sizable majorities in most countries – including Senegal, Nigeria, and Mali – said that they want political leaders with strong religious beliefs and that they would be comfortable with political leaders whose faith is different from their own.[22] It is important to remember that the adoption of Shari'a law in the twelve northern Nigerian states in the 1990s was rooted less in Islamic radicalization than in the widespread loss of faith in the ability of national and state governments to establish some semblance of good governance, law-and-order, or even basic human security. The change was initially supported by Christians in many areas, provided it was implemented in a manner that did not impinge on their personal practices (consuming alcohol and wearing non-Islamic clothing, for example), family law (marriage and divorce), and religious freedom. In the Pew survey, Nigerians of both faiths identified crime, political corruption, and unemployment as bigger problems than either religious or ethnic conflict.[23]

---

[19] Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life," *Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, April 2010), p. iii.

[20] Pew conducted its survey during 2010, well before the onset of the crisis in Northern Mali, so the anxieties produced by continuing instability are not reflected in these percentages.

[21] Pew Tolerance and Tension., p. 39.

[22] Ibid., p. 52.

[23] Ibid., p. 44.

Perhaps the most telling finding from the Pew survey, in terms of the appeal of radical Islamist (or Christian) movements in sub-Saharan Africa is the degree of optimism expressed by respondents. While most respondents expressed only moderate life satisfaction, overwhelming majorities (76 percent over all countries, 84 percent in Nigeria, 83 percent in Mali and Senegal, and 95 percent in Chad) said their lives would be better in five years. This compares extremely favorably to the median expressing optimism in the Middle East (48 percent).[24] Optimism, as the revolutionary paradox proves, can be a double-edged sword. How this optimism plays out will be determined in large part by the extent to which regimes in the region are able to couple optimism with political and economic empowerment.

The past few years have seen the blossoming of grassroots social and political movements across Africa. Some of these pursue religious agendas, but an increasing percentage, especially among African youth, is focused on more practical concerns: anti-corruption, good governance, human rights, environmental issues, and political and economic empowerment, to name a few. Thanks to social networking and increasing numbers of regional and global forums, local movements are building connections and sharing know-how with others from around the continent. The emergence of such movements as *Y'en a marre* in Senegal and Enough-is-Enough in Nigeria can only strengthen the natural resistance of Muslim communities in sub-Saharan Africa to violent ideologies, especially among the all-important youth demographic.

It still seems to be the case that, in sub-Saharan Africa, all politics is local. The dynamic driving religious conflict in Nigeria is the tension between local communities that do not see themselves as stakeholders in the Nigerian nation, the Northern elite that is increasingly viewed as corrupt and unresponsive to the needs of the people, and the federal government that is seen as inept, corrupt, and illegitimate. A similar sense of marginalization fueled the initial Tuareg separatist insurgency in Mali that has, subsequently, been hijacked by opportunistic al Qaida affiliated insurgents from the Maghreb.

Ideological Factors

The transnational jihadists see themselves as the avengers of Muslim honor. For them, violence in reaction to perceived insults to Islam from the West is not just acceptable but required. While the majority of Muslims in the greater Middle East might not agree with the efficacy of violence, the sensitivities that motivate it resonate broadly. As a result, it is relatively easy to mobilize thousands of angry demonstrators in response to even a non-event like the release of the "Innocence of Muslims" video trailer. The motivator is the anger; the event (a You Tube video, a blasphemous cartoon in a Western

[24] Ibid., p. 56.

newspaper, or the publication of a religiously offensive novel) is just the proximate cause – the spark that sets off the pent-up sense of frustration that is, as often as not, rooted in local rather than global realities.

When it comes to Islamist reform and revivalist movements, sub-Saharan Africa is far from a *tabula rasa* ripe for radicalization by global jihadist movements. Roy identifies three processes that have been decisive in the spread of radical Islamist ideologies in the Middle East, South Asia, and the West: deculturation, deterritorialization, and conversion. Groups like al Qaida have developed ideologies that are disconnected from particular cultures and places and that depend, for their continued propagation, on large numbers of conversions. Sub-Saharan Africa, with its continued close association of place, ethnicity, and religion, is not a particularly fertile ground for these ideologies.

Sectarian divisions, which constitute a major source of religious violence in the Middle East and South Asia, are largely absent among sub-Saharan African Muslims. Another Pew survey, released in August 2012, found that where Muslims in the Arab Core, the Maghreb, and South Asia overwhelmingly identify themselves as Sunni or Shia, a sizable plurality in sub-Saharan Africa identify themselves as "just a Muslim" without reference to sect: 55 percent in Mali, 42 percent in Nigeria, 27 percent in Senegal, and 20 percent in Niger (compared to 12 percent in Egypt). Sub-Saharan Africans are also much more likely than their co-religionists in the Middle East to belong to a Sufi brotherhood: 55 percent in Chad, 51 percent in Senegal, 34 percent in Niger, and 19 percent in Nigeria (compared to less than 10 percent in Egypt).[25]

Islamic revivalist movements have a long history across Africa's middle belt. Most were related to power struggles between military chieftains and Muslim clerics for political leadership (a dynamic that is playing out today between political and military elites and reformist clerical movements in Northern Nigeria). The earliest of these reformist "jihads" took place in late 17th and early 18th centuries in a belt reaching from Mauritania to Mahdist Sudan. Boko Haram is the most recent in a long line of Islamic reformist, rejectionist movements in Northern Nigeria that have roots in the political and cultural history going back to the pre-colonial era. In Nigeria, the "great century of jihad" – which ended with the British defeat of the Caliphate in 1903 – resulted in the establishment of the Hausa Sokoto Caliphate that established hegemony over Northern Nigeria and Cameroon. Although the goal of these jihads was, in part, to unify diverse racial, ethnic, and linguistic groups under the banner of Islam, they were primarily an attempt at consolidating political power. As had been the case during the early Islamic era in sub-Saharan Africa, attempts at creating a uniform Islamic identity in the region

[25] Pew, The World's Muslims: Unity and Diversity, pp. 30-31.

largely failed. The plethora of local varieties of local culture and Islamic practice continued. [26]

Senegal's Sufi brotherhoods – the Mouride, Tijaniyya, and Qadir brotherhoods – are among the most powerful, and oldest, institutions in the country. Virtually all Senegalese Muslims (90 percent of the population) belong to one of the three. The oldest, the Tijaniyya, dates back to the late 18th century. The newest and most popular of the three, the Mouride Brotherhood, was founded in Senegal by Sheikh Amadou Bamba during the early decades of the 20th century in response to French colonialism. Mouridism is founded upon a strict patron/client relationship in the form of the marabout (teacher) and taalibe (disciple). The taalibe pledge their allegiance and labor to a marabout in return for financial support and protection. Mouridism is grounded in Senegal and its culture, and Mourides in the diaspora retain a very strong feeling of connectedness to their homeland, and their remittances fund anywhere between 7 and 17 percent of Senegal's GDP and ensure them considerable political and social influence. Many of the most powerful and influential individuals in Senegal are Mourides, including musician Youssou N'Dour, who describes Mouridism as "two paths – one is the way to God; the other path is the doctrine of work and dignity. Because if you don't work, you hold out your hand and lose your dignity."[27] The decision of the current Mouride leader, Sheikh May Lèye Mbacké, not to endorse a candidate in the presidential election in early 2012 is widely regarded as having been a possibly fatal blow to the re-election bid of former president Abdoulaye Wade.[28]

Even in war-torn Mali, the appeal of the global Salafist Jihadist ideological agenda is limited. Ethnic divisions were a major factor in enabling the Islamist extremists to highjack the Tuareg rebellion and impose their agenda: the establishment of an Islamic state under Shari'a law. However, as British journalist Afua Hirsch reported from a refugee camp in Burkina Faso, while it is it is difficult to unpack …

> Tuareg views about their fair skin and whether this still translates into a sense of superiority over black Africans, one thing is clear: no matter how entrenched Mali's divisions are along colour lines, the Tuaregs have a bigger enemy to fight – Islamists. As one Tuareg woman, Fadimata Walet

---

[26] Lapidus, pp. 508-528.

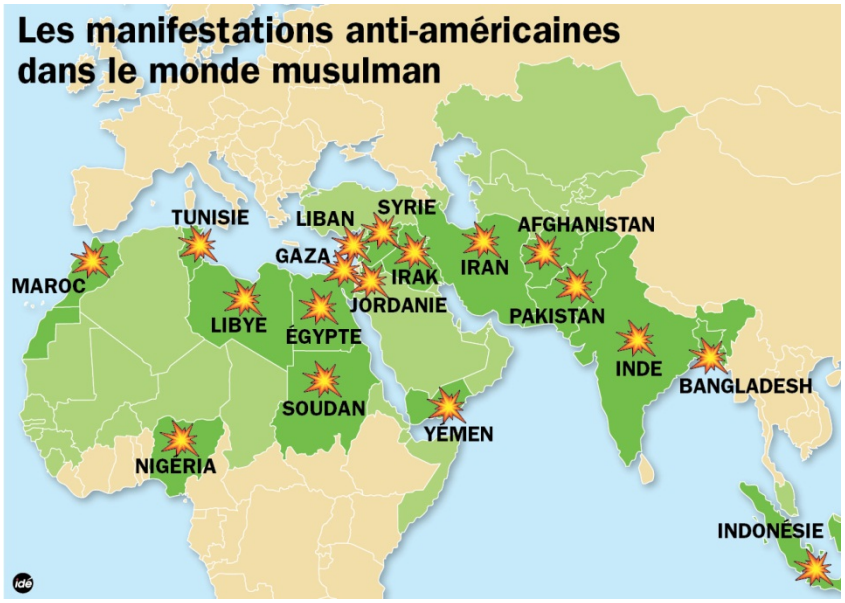
[27] Tim Judah, "Senegal's Mourides: Islam's mytical entrepreneurs," *BBC News Africa*, 3 August 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14344082.

[28] Tamba Jean-Matthew, "Senegalese Brotherhood leader declines to endorse Wade," *Africa Review*, 15 January 2012, http://www.africareview.com/News/Senegalese+Brotherhoods+leader+decline+to+endorse+Wade/-/979180/1305994/-/q4byfq/-/index.html.

Hadane, put it: "If it's a choice between one Mali, and being part of an Islamic state under Shari'a law, we choose one Mali." [29]

[29] Hirsch, *op cit*.

Annex: Country-by-Country Reactions in Sub-Saharan Africa



Incidents of Anti-American Violence in Response to "Innocence of Muslims"

Source: "Film anti-Islam: le monde arabe a vécu un vendredi sanglant," *Le Parisien*, 14 September 2012,http://www.leparisien.fr/international/direct-film-anti-islam-une-journee-a-hauts-risques-au-moyen-orient-14-09-2012-2164602.php.

Burkina Faso

15 September: President Blaise Compaore, a Christian, called upon Muslims not to use violence to respond to a provocation by the maker of the anti-Islam video, whom he called "a brainless man who thinks he has the right to despise the religious feelings of others."[1]

Côte d'Ivoire

21 September: Ivorian Muslim religious leaders called on Muslims to avoid potentially destabilizing protests against the "Innocence of Muslims." While condemning the video, the statement went on: "Islam being a religion upholding the values of peace, patience, wisdom, tolerance, and peaceful cohabitation, the Imams and

[1] Associated Press, "President Deplores Muslim Violence," *Sacramento Bee*, 15 September 2012, http://www.sacbee.com/2012/09/15/4822701/burkina-faso-president-deplores.html.

Muslim religious leaders of Côte d'Ivoire would like to call on the Muslim community as a whole to act with restraint and show a sense of responsibility by refraining from any action that may compromise public order … [or] could jeopardize social peace in our country. Côte d'Ivoire does not need this."[2]

Guinea

17 September: The Spokesman of the Islamic Council of Guinea, Dr. Diallo, called upon Guinean Muslims not to take part in "demonstration[s] aimed at protesting against the film that is regarded as an affront to Islam." Religious leaders in Guinea would, he said, issue a reaction to what he called an "Islamophobic" film made by a "gloomy personality."[3]

Kenya

14 September: Two Kenyan police officers were injured when their vehicle ran over an explosive device enroute to the scene of an explosion at a bus terminal in Mandera. While anti-U.S. protests were underway nearby, Kenyan authorities do not believe the bombing and the protests were linked. Passenger buses have been a frequent target of terrorist attacks by al Shabaab supporters.[4]

Malawi

15 September: Leading Malawian Muslim cleric Shaykh Aman Matiya denounced the film and warned that he would organize protests outside the U.S. embassy in Lilongwe unless the U.S. government banned the film. He later backtracked a bit, after the Muslim Association of Malawi rejected the notion of protests, blaming the film on conservative political forces out to discredit Barack Obama in the lead-up to the November elections. "I personally believe that the release of the video," Matiya said, "was well planned to coincide with the commemoration of 11 September attacks. The U.S., as we all know, there are elections so the video has been released by some right-wing Christians to influence public opinion on Obama's foreign policy."[5]

---

2 "Ivoirian Muslim Leaders Oppose Protest in Abidjan Against Anti-Islam Movie," *Nord-Sud Quotidien*, 20 September 2012, p. 12.

3 "Une marche de protestation contre le film 'Islamophobe' interdite," *Afrinews.info*, 17 September 2012, http://www.afrinews.info.

4 Stephen Astariko, "Two Administrative Police Officers Injured in Blast," *The Star* (Nairobi), 17 September 2012, http://allafrica.com/stories/201209141024.html.

5 Taonga Botolo, "Malawi Muslim fury with anti-Islam film, *Nyasa Times*, 16 September 2012, http://www.nyasatimes.com/malawi/2012/09/16/malawi-muslims-fury-with-anti-islam-film/.

Niger

16 September: Christian leaders went into hiding after hundreds of protestors stormed the largest Catholic church in Niger's second largest city, Zinder, following Friday prayers. The mob set fire to British and American flags, broke down the door of the church, burned papers, and destroyed a statue of the Virgin Mary. One policeman was wounded in clashes with protestors. The Islamic Council of Niger, which had condemned the anti-Islamic video, appealed for an end to violence against churches, and security forces were deployed to protect Christian properties.[6] Other peaceful protests took place elsewhere in the country over the weekend, and a "precarious calm" was restored.[7]

Nigeria

13 September: The Chief Imam of the Jos Central Mosque, Sheikh Balarabe Daud, urged Muslims not to rise to the provocation of the anti-Islam film "orchestrated by the enemies of peace to bring about chaos which must be condemned by religious leaders around the world."[8]

14 September: Soldiers fired shots in the air to disperse groups of Muslim youth who took the streets following Friday prayers in Jos. No one was injured. Two days earlier, a group of protesters, numbering about 60, gathered in an avowedly peaceful protest. The protestors gathered at the Yan taya Junction in Jos, and carried placards that read "To hell with America and Israel for insulting the Prophet."[9] In Sokoto, several hundred people participated in various peaceful protests around the city. Despite the burning of American flags, all protests ended peacefully.[10]

15 September: The Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI), led by the Sultan of Sokoto, called on Muslims to exercise restraint and emulate the prophet in their response to the anti-Islam film. "Muslims are enjoined to pertinently persevere for the sake of Almighty Allah the same way our revered Prophet used to do whenever his personality was attacked by his foes." The statement went on to warn that "some elements want to create tension by

---

6 "Niger's Christian leaders in hiding as protestors storm church," *The Guardian* (Nigeria), 17 September 2012, http://www.ngrguardiannews.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=98945:nigers-christian-leaders-in-hiding-as-protesters-storm-church-&catid=98:africa&Itemid=557.

7 "Film anti-Islam: église saccagée au Niger," *Le Figaro*, 16 September 2012, http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2012/09/16/97001-20120916FILWWW00136-film-anti-islam-eglise-saccagee-au-niger.php.

8 "U.S. Blasphemy Movie – Muslim Clerics Advise Against Street Protest," *Daily Trust* (Abuja), 14 September 2012,http://allafrica.com/stories/201209141024.html.

9 Yemi Adebowale, John Shiklam, Seriki Adinoyi, and Ibrahim Shuaibu, "Anti-America Fury Stoke Protest in Jos," *This Day*, 15 September 2012, http://allafrica.com/stories/201209150561.html.

10 "Anti-Islam film protests – every verified incident," op cit.

insinuating that non-Muslim interests will be attacked … we cannot afford any upheaval in the trying moment of insecurity our country is passing through. Therefore, all Muslims are called for restraint as perseverance."[11]

18 September: Shiite Muslims, under the leadership of Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky, held a peaceful protest against "The Innocence of Muslims" in the town of Zaria in the Kaduna State. Protestors condemned the film and burned an American flag and a caricature of U.S. President Barak Obama. Police did not interfere with the protests despite a ban on rallies by the Commissioner of Police in Kaduna State. Christians also attended the protest to show solidarity with their Muslim neighbors. As one Christian participant explained, "We are here in solidarity with our Muslim brothers. Those who engage in such acts are enemies of peace. I am not happy that up till now the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has not come out to condemn that film. However, our presence in this rally is to tell you that Christians in Nigeria are not in support of that film and we condemn it in its totality."[12]

U.S. officials, led by Consul General Jeffrey Hawkins, met with the local leadership of the Conference of Islamic Organizations (CIO) at a mosque in Lagos State to condemn the film and acknowledge the non-violent and constructive dialogue approach adopted by most Muslims in Nigeria.[13]

24 September: Hundreds of peaceful protestors marched in Kaduna leaving behind some anti-U.S. and anti-Western graffiti.

Senegal

14 September: Senegalese President Macky Sall, currently chairman of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), issued a statement expressing "great indignation" at the release of the film, which he characterized as a "irresponsible and disgusting act" and a "gross provocation." Senegal believes, he went on, that "no pretext, even freedom of expression, could justify the defamation of a religion and its message." Sall was forthright, however, in condemning the violence against the American diplomats and extended his condolences to the United States government. He concluded with a call

---

[11] Adebayo Waheed, "Sultan condemns film on Prophet Muhammed," *Nigerian Tribune*, 21 September 2012, http://tribune.com.ng/index.php/islamic-news/47931-sultan-condemns-film-on-prophet-muhammed.

[12] Isa Sa'idu, "Anti Islam Film – Day Shiites Protested in Zaria," *Daily Trust* (Abuja), 22 September 2012, http://allafrica.com/stories/201209220363.html.

[13] Zakariyya Adaramola, "U.S. Diplomats Meet Muslim Clerics in Lagos State Over Anti-Islam Video, *Daily Trust* (Abuja), 21 September 2012, http://allafrica.com/stories/201209210845.html.

for "restraint and rejection of violence as a response to an act whose authors seek obviously to sow discord and confrontation between peoples and civilizations."[14]

15 September: Members of Senegal's Mouride Brotherhood held a rally in their spiritual capital, Touba, to protest "The Innocents of Muslims," which would, if not banned, undermine the "religious harmony" that should exist between religions. Threats to follow up with additional protests at the U.S. embassy in Dakar did not materialize. According to Dr. Ousmane Sene, director of the West Africa Research Center in Dakar, Senegalese television covered the issue in some detail, including explanations from Senegalese scholars of U.S. freedom of speech and separation of church and state issues. A local Muslim group in Dakar visited the U.S. embassy to express their condolences for the loss of American embassy personnel and Ambassador Christopher Stevens in Libya.[15]

Somalia

14 September: The magistrate of the Islamic administration of Hiiran, Shaykh Abdulwahid Abdirahman Ali, spoke to crowds gathered in Shariah Square in Buulo-Burde Town to pray for rain in the drought ravaged region. He urged all Somali youth to desecrate the U.S. flag and harm U.S. citizens, military or civilians, wherever they are. He also warned Somalis that "when droughts come, people usually seek assistance from 'infidel' organizations, which earns them God's wrath." Instead, he warned, they should pray to God for rain.[16]

15 September: Abdullahi Sheikh Osman, a respected religious leader in Mogadishu, spoke to a small group of protestors there and enjoined them not to "kill innocent people for something they have not done." The "nasty man" who made the film is "the al-Qaida of Christians. If Muslims make havoc, then they are rewarding the crazy man." He "is not a religious person, but a reckless individual who dislikes harmony among people of different religious beliefs."[17]

Sudan

14 September: Thousands of protesters gathered after Friday prayers outside the U.S. and German embassies, spurred on by hardline Islamist preachers. Two protestors

---

[14] "Film anti-Islam: le monde arabe a vécu un vendredi sanglant," *Le Parisien*, 14 September 2012,http://www.leparisien.fr/international/direct-film-anti-islam-une-journee-a-hauts-risques-au-moyen-orient-14-09-2012-2164602.php.

[15] E-mail exchange between Dr. Ousmane Sene and the author, 20 September 2012.

[16] "Al-Shabaab Followers Protest anti-Islam Film, Burn US Flag in Central Somalia," Kismaayo, *Radio Andalus* in Somali, 1030 GMT, 14 September 2012.

[17] "Somalia's Shabaab urge attacks on West," *News 24*, 15 September 2012, http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/Somalias-Shabaab-urge-attacks-on-West-20120915.

were killed outside the U.S. embassy in Khartoum when they were run over by police vehicles attempting to disperse the protests. Rumors that a third protester was killed by a sniper shot from the roof of the U.S. embassy were unsubstantiated. Islamist opposition leader Hassan al-Turabi condemned the violence against U.S. embassies, dismissing its perpetrators as "ignorant people who know nothing about [Prophet] Mohammed." Turabi expressed concern that the enemies of Islamist regimes, such as those in Sudan and Egypt, could use the violence to discredit them. He concluded that the events would have no long-term impact on relations between the West and Islam: "Most Westerners realize that Islamists are not behind these acts of aggression."[18]

Zambia

13 September: The State Department included Zambia on a list of countries in which U.S. embassies were under high alert following a diatribe by President Michael Sata. The alert raised eyebrows as Zambia is not a Muslim majority country, but the timing was coincidental. While receiving the credentials of several new envoys, Sata warned them not to seek too many audiences with him: "Go through foreign affairs. I am not going to mention the names of those ambassadors who have the habit of thinking 'I can go to State House.' Even if in your own house, if your own son or your own daughter is in the toilet, you can't go in. Please go to foreign affairs and foreign affairs will clear you but we will always like to exchange… and you ambassadors and high commissioners, find time to tour Zambia." The attack was assumed to be aimed at, among others, U.S. Ambassador Mark Storella. This led to concern that the president's supporters might march against the embassy.[19]

---

[18] "Pressure to Probe Deaths of Protestors in Anti-Film Demonstrations," *Sudan Tribune,* 16 September 2012, http://allafrica.com/stories/201209170804.html.

[19] Chiwoyu Sinyangwe, "Sata warns diplomats – Dipomats interfering in domestic politics will be expelled," *The Post*, 8 September 2012, http://www.postzambia.com/post-read_article.php?articleId=28832.

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1. REPORT DATE *(DD-MM-YYYY)*	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED *(From - To)*
October 2012	IAD Draft Final	07-2012 – 03-2013

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE

Africa's New Belt of Instability: African Responses to "The Innocence of Muslims"

5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
2012-12062700-003

5b. GRANT NUMBER
— — —

5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
— — —

6. AUTHOR(S)

Caroline F. Ziemke-Dickens

5d. PROJECT NUMBER
— — —

5e. TASK NUMBER
EE-55-3604

5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER
— — —

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

Institute for Defense Analyses
4850 Mark Center Drive
Alexandria, Virginia 22311-1882

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
IDA Document D-4828
Log: H 13-000372

9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

Institute for Defense Analyses
4850 Mark Center Drive
Alexandria, Virginia 22311-1882

10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)

11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)
— — —

12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited (18 July 2013).

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES
— — —

14. ABSTRACT
The kind of violent anti-U.S. and anti-Western demonstrations that spread across the Middle East and South Asia in the weeks following the September 11 protests at the United States Embassy in Cairo have failed to materialize in Muslim population centers in sub-Saharan Africa, even in those countries most deeply divided by religious violence. A number of factors help account for the relatively low-key reaction of African Muslims to an event that inflamed much of the rest of the Muslim world. These same factors can serve as wedges between al Qaida and other global Salafist jihadist groups and their potential support base in sub-Saharan Africa. These wedges could be exploited by regional governments and their partners (including the United States) to contain the reach of violent extremist groups such as Boko Haram and prevent them from developing broad popular support. These factors fall into four broad categories: Historical, Socio-Cultural, Political, and Ideological.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
violent extremism, Jihadism, Salafism, Sufism, traditional religions, anti-Americanism, anti-Westernism, religious violence, African Islam, Boko Haram, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			Richard Porterfield
Unclassified	Unclassified	Unclassified	Unlimited	27	19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER *(include area code)* 703-578-2812

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.