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‘TERRORISM’ IN EAST AFRICA
The
Tanzanian Experience

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Islam, Terrorism and African Development

Introduction

The current threat of attacks in countries whose governments have close alliances with Washington is the latest stage in a long struggle against the empires of the west, their rapacious crusades and domination. The motivation of those who plant bombs in railway carriages derives directly from this truth. What is different today is that the weak have learned how to attack the strong, and the western crusaders’ most recent colonial terrorism exposes “us” to retaliation.

John Pilger – ‘The Unmentionable Source of Terrorism’

In order to understand the Tanzanian political environment and to appreciate and comprehend the impact of ‘terrorism’ as defined by the United States, first we need to point out that this phenomenon was and still is a problem which involves the government of the United States and to a limited extent its allies. The shock of 9/11 forced the United States to not only to include its allies in its war against terrorism but also other governments not forming part of the United States geo-political sphere like Tanzania. It is in this way that Tanzania and other African countries were included in the war against terrorism. Secondly, we have to look into the perception of associating Islam as an ideology which nourishes terrorism, the notion which seems to be gaining ground. Thirdly, we have to qualify the notion of ‘terror.’ What kind of violence qualifies to be considered as an act of ‘terrorism’ and therefore deserving condemnation? At the moment it seems it is only when civilians are targeted for attack that the act assumes the connotations of ‘terror.’ This is in contrast where modern weaponry is used by nation states in annihilation of a people. Examples of the latter are abound. The sight of a suicide bomber in television screens is just as familiar as
the sight of the Apache helicopters supported by heavy fortified tanks bombing, killing and maiming innocent civilians, be it in Afghanistan, Gaza or Iraq. Now where do we draw the line between these two scenarios?

**The Bombing of the US Embassies in East Africa**

‘Chickens Coming Home to Roost’

Discriminate killing of innocent people or ‘terrorism’ as the analogy is known today has never been a problem to Africa save the terror unleashed on its people by the colonising powers, notorious among them were the Portuguese in Mozambique and Guinea Bissau, the French in Algeria during the war of liberation, Boers in South Africa, and the British in Kenya during the Mau Mau. Power is addictive to terror. Acts of terror were not a monopoly of the colonial governments only. Indigenous African governments have their own share. In East Africa there have been summary executions in Zanzibar under Abeid Amani Karume. While under Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel Arap Moi Kenya has experienced torture and executions, Uganda experienced mass executions during the reign of Idi Amin Dada. In other words Africans have experienced terror even before the word ‘terror’ became fashionable. There is no need to mention the 1994 Rwandan genocide. All this is enough proof that Africa has tasted terror from the colonising authorities as well as terror from its own indigenous governments.

The United States is more concerned with international terrorism while Africa is obsessed with domestic terrorism. The question which the United States should reflect upon is that why is it that the United States is considered a legitimate target for attack by terrorists? In the answer probably lies the key to solving the problem. It is a pity that terrorism as a field of inquiry is yet to be taken up by actual victims of terrorism. The inquiry has been monopolised by scholars from societies which at most have suffered one or two bomb attacks. This erodes the realities of the subject as would be perceived by the actual victims of terrorism whose lives have seen nothing but sufferings. Selective sampling will always as a rule provide wrong premise. Today the world knows what took place in Auschwitz from the victims who went through the extermination camps during
the Holocaust.\(^1\) We are yet to get first hand experience of terrorism from those who had lived and experienced it in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, Nicaragua etc. documented with the same intensity as the world had documented the holocaust.

Why do Muslims’ eyes fill with tears when they watch on TV fighter bombers of the United States Army raining bombs on Iraq and Afghanistan; or Israel American made fighter bombers raining bombs on refugee camps in Gaza. Why do some Muslims rejoice sometimes with chants of ‘Takbir Allahu Akbar’ when a suicide bomber strikes? Why some Muslims do not show remorse when a suicide bomber kills? Why is it that we now have ‘refuseniks’ - soldiers in the Israel Defence Force (IDF) who refuse to kill for unjustified cause? This belief is also encroaching into the United States forces in Iraq. Why a suicide bomber is romanticised in certain parts of the world and is rejoiced as a hero while an American soldier is seen as a villain?

The United States should reflect on these sentiments. Reasons for the reign of terror in Kenya, Uganda and Zanzibar, Rwanda and other places are known. The United States with its array of social scientists and research centres should be able to come up with conclusive findings on the root cause of terrorism and why America has become a terrorist target. Post-independence Kenya has experienced bomb attacks when in 1975 a bus stand was bombed in Nairobi followed by another bomb attack on Norfolk Hotel in 1980.\(^2\) Mtwara a small town in southern Tanzania was bombed several times by Portuguese war planes during the struggle for liberation of Mozambique. Neither Kenya nor Tanzania internationalised the bombing of its territory because both countries knew why they were under attack. Tanzania was being attacked by the Portuguese with the

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\(^2\) Norfolk Hotel was bombed on New Year’s Eve 1980. 15 people were killed, including 2 Americans, 85 were injured, and half the hotel was destroyed. The owners are members of a Kenyan Jewish family. It seemed the attack was motivated by revenge against Kenya by the Palestinians for aiding the Israeli commando team that rescued hostages hijacked by Palestinians to Entebbe airport in Uganda in July 1976.
cognisance of the United States because it was the springboard for guerrillas fighting White supremacy and foreign domination in Mozambique, Angola Namibia and South Africa. Is it really difficult for the United States to know why it is now being targeted?

It is difficult to understand what purpose is saved for a suicide bomber to walk into a hotel and kill men, women and children gathered to celebrate a Muslim wedding. But it is not very difficult to see the reason behind the bombing of the Trade Centre in New York or the recent bombing of the London Underground. That these attacks happened at the time they did it is an obvious fact that the two attacks were to a large extent motivated by vengeance. The United States and Britain have to be made to mourn as the people of Afghanistan and Iraq are mourning and to grieve for the lost of their loved ones as other victims of their irresponsible bombings are grieving. Indeed, the so-called great powers have to be made to taste the pain of loosing an entire family and the horrible fear of death. It does not matter to the terrorists if the victims are innocent or guilty - the driving force is revenge. In blind fury for revenge, a terrorist takes his war to any country he can find his enemy - be it in Africa, Asia, Europe or Latin America. It is the feeling of the terrorist that through terror justice can eventually be attained.

Out of its own free will Tanzania after the bombing of the United States Embassy in Dar es Salaam in 1998 and after 9/11 found itself being dragged into a war of attrition which it had no justified cause to get involved. Despite of the Cold War politics of the post WW II era Tanzania had never considered the United States as an adversary much as it was supporting oppressive regimes and conducting illegal acts of aggression in Vietnam, Laos Cambodia, Nicaragua and in many other places. Nowhere was this policy abhorrent than in South Africa under apartheid and in Palestine where Israel is forcefully with the full support of the United States was occupying Muslim land, killing and maiming innocent children with lethal weapons supplied by the United States. Through its policies in the Middle
East and elsewhere the United States was creating and is still creating more enemies, but it does not care because the primary objective of the United States is to guard its national interest, other matters are secondary. And to back up its national interest the United States has in possession a formidable war machine which no country on earth can defeat in conventional warfare.

Realising that they could not match the mighty of the United States in conventional warfare, its enemies have taken their war of revenge from their local battlefields to the American civilian population under its own peculiar strategy unprecedented in the history of combat. Terrorists in bombing targets inside the United States and elsewhere had widened the theatre of conflict taking the war into American territory and pursued Americans and those in support of American policies wherever in the world they could be found. Whereas the people in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam never pursued the United States outside their own national boundaries for revenge; this new foe opened a war front wherever he could strike against his target. The targets are chosen randomly with no established pattern. The bomb attack of Trade Centre in New York (1993), Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia (1996) and that of the United States Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam (1998) was a manifestation of that struggle.

On the 9th of September 2001 hijacked planes hit the Twin Towers in New York and the Pentagon in Washington. The war was taken inside American territory. Overtime the hunter became the hunted. Whereas the United States had vast experience in warfare it had not experienced anything close to the tragedy of 9/11. The Kamikaze attacks by the Japanese during WWII in the Pacific were an enemy the United States could see and even predict hence counter attack in the war zone. But the suicide bomber was not usually operating in a war zone or in a conflict theatre; he was unpredictable as he was determined. Whereas ‘Desert Storm’ reports in the electronic media showing ‘high precision bombings’ of Iraq by the United States forces and its allies became a sort of entertainment on TV
screens, the 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers was a horror movie alien to Americans.

For the first time in history the American public realised that they too like the people of Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine were also vulnerable to enemy bomb attacks although from a different setting. The seemingly senseless deaths of Americans affected public morale and American psychology. The American macho image was dented beyond imagination. Americans throughout history are not used to see their blood being shed particularly by a people they consider from their estimation as ‘backward,’ ‘inferior’ or ‘uncivilised’ - the master and slave relationship mentality of the slave owner in the plantation. Violence is not alien to Americans. Its own history of the Founding Fathers was built on violence. Slavery in the south was built and abolished through violence. The Civil Rights movement of 1960s was characterised by violence on blacks.

Since the American Civil War Americans had never experienced war being fought in their own soil. The Pentagon the symbol of American military mighty and prestige, had already been turned into a target of terrorists attack, did not yet have the manual for counter-insurgency to this new war. Terrorism was a war game, which the United States could not duplicate for American kids to enjoy in their play stations or computers while relaxing in the safety of their comfortable living rooms.

‘Terrorism’ and Islamophobia
Fanning Fear and Hatred

Realising the determination of the terrorists in punishing the United States government and being encircled inside its own territory and overseas, the American government had no alternative but to turn the problem of terrorism, which strictly speaking was an American predicament, into an international agenda. It was in this way that Tanzania and its Muslim population was dragged into the war against terrorism. Through aid diplomacy Tanzania was made an ‘ally’ of the United States in its strategic plan on war against international
Islam, Terrorism and African Development

But the truth still remains that Tanzania was in reality an innocent bystander being dragged into a conflict, which was between the United States and enemies, which it had created through its foreign policy, adversaries which only the United States government can identify. Since terrorism was conveniently linked to Islam, the United States had to search for its enemies in whatever country where Muslims could be found.

That is why although the bombing in Kenya took place in Nairobi intensive investigations by the FBI were mainly concentrated in Mombasa where Muslims are a majority, and in Tanzania it had to be Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar for the same reason. For reasons which ‘Insha Allah’ we shall discuss later the government in Tanzania was more than willing to cooperate with the United States in its war against terrorism although hitherto the country due to its principled stand on international arena enjoyed good international relations with many countries and could not easily be a target for any reprisal attack as experienced in Kenya. There is nothing in Islam, which condones discriminate killings.3 Killing of innocent people is a serious crime whether by terrorists or

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3 See ‘The Hijacked Caravan’ ihsanic-intelligence.com which is the first and only Islamic legal ruling which unequivocally condemns suicide bombing in all circumstances.

- Suicide terrorism has no precedent in fourteen centuries of Sunni Islamic tradition
- Islamist terrorist groups like al-Qa'eda have adopted the use of suicide bombings from the Hindu-Marxist terrorist groups like the Tamil Tigers and kamikaze pilots from Japan
- Islamist terrorists killing Muslims are considered to be in the tradition of the khawarij, an ancient Islamic heretical sect which also assassinated Prophet Muhammad’s cousin, Imam Ali
- Suicide bombings invoked under the rubric of Islamist terrorism, outside Israel and the Palestinian Territories, grew three-fold within the space of three years after 9/11, killing twice as many people as had been killed over two decades.
- Within the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict, a case often given global exception by some scholars for using this tactic, suicide bombings doubled as did the number of people killed in the three years after 9/11 compared to the previous seven years of suicide terrorism. Worldwide, in merely three years after 9/11, the number of suicide bombings had increased three-fold than it had over two decades, whilst the number of people killed had doubled.
- Worldwide, for every person who undertook a suicide bombing prior to 9/11, 18 people were likely to be killed. After 9/11, this figure fell to killing of 14 people on average, which was only as a result of the disproportionate rise in the “export” of this practice to groups worldwide.
- Suicide bombing in the name of Islam has occurred in more than 20 countries: Lebanon [1981], Kuwait [1983], Argentina [1992], Panama, Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories [1994], Pakistan, Croatia [1995], Saudi Arabia [1996], Tanzania, Kenya [1998], Yemen, Chechnya [2000], USA, Kashmir, Afghanistan [2001], Tunisia, Indonesia, Algeria [2002], Morocco, Russia, India, Iraq, Turkey [2003], Uzbekistan and Spain [2004] - and possibly United Kingdom [2005].
United States’ military machine. Muslims do not have to be apologetic simply because a suicide bomber carries a Muslim name or purports to carry out the attack in the name of Islam. In the same breath Muslims in the United States did not call for apology from Christians when Timothy McVeigh carried out the Oklahoma bombing in the United States. The world has not called for apology from Christianity or to be specific from Protestants for the holocaust.

Islamophobia has always existed in East Africa and nowhere in the region has it gained ground and lodged itself in the political system as in Tanzania. The rise of Islamophobia in Tanzania therefore did not need the bombing of the United States Embassy or 9/11 to bring it to the surface. The bombing merely gave it momentum and means to legitimise and justify government action against Muslims who were agitating against Christian hegemony in the country. The political system in Tanzania is very much skewed against Muslims although they form a majority; and it was the drive of Muslim militancy during the struggle for independence, which drove the British out of Tanganyika.4 After independence Muslims found themselves holding a short a leash.

**The Prevention of Terrorism Act of 2002**

After 9/11 the United States passed the Patriot Act of 2001. Soon after it had sailed through the Congress in record time the United States pressurised other governments to pass similar anti-terror legislation and join in its campaign

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4 Among African countries with sizable population of Muslims and Christians, like Tanzania and Nigeria, the inquiry as to which faith commands a leading majority, is a source of potential conflict and controversy. Tanzania is of no exception. Different sources provide different Muslim-Christian religious distribution figures. These conflicting figures are as a result of sensitivity of the subject. The 1967 Population Census, the first census since independence, probed Tanzanians’ religious adherence (Muslim, Christian, Other (e.g. Hindu, Buddhist etc.) or traditional, e.g. Pagan. Results showed that Muslim constituted 63% of the population. It is believed that in early 1970s the Statistical Department was ordered to destroy all the 1967 census result simply because they showed Muslims in Tanzania to be in majority. The government position is that Muslims do not form a majority. Tanzania National Demographic Survey figures for 1973 put Muslims slightly above Christians at 40%, Christians 38.9% and local belief 21.1%. According to Africa south of the Sahara, Muslims in Tanzania are a leading majority at 60%. This figure has remained constant in all its publications since 1982.
against terrorism. Through diplomatic manoeuvres and veiled threats many African governments passed what came to be known as Anti-Terror Legislation. Tanzania passed the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 2002, which in all intent and purpose replicated the United States Patriot Act of 2001. Due to under representation of Muslims in parliament the Act sailed through without any difficulties notwithstanding Muslim opposition outside the parliament. What concerned Muslims more was the fact that the law was not only draconian but also targeted Muslims. Muslims realised that with the Act in force any conflict between them and the government could be tried under that legislation and this would have very dire consequences. The Prevention of Terrorism Act was a piece of legislation, which was imposed on Tanzania with the intention to open up the country for covert operations against enemies of the United States. Although the act does not say so in so many words but it is clear the legislation is meant to protect United States and provide it with political and legal powers to expand its military hegemony in countries, which it did not enjoy, such freedom before.

On 17th May 2003 with the anti terror legislation in place the police in collaboration with the FBI (who were already in the country waiting for the president to assent the bill) arrested Muslims suspected to be ‘terrorists.’ But those arrested had nothing to do with terrorism; they were Muslims leaders who the government arrested for being ‘opponents’ of the government and ruling party the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM). Among those arrested were leaders of various Muslim charitable organisations - foreign oriented and local, who have distinguished themselves in providing social services to Muslims like building mosques, schools, orphanages etc. These were targeted for being ‘terrorist sympathisers’ or for being directly involved in ‘terrorist activities’ or for ‘providing logistic support to terrorists;’ and bank account of one prominent Muslim school - Al Furqan was frozen for suspicion of being a conduit of funds from abroad to support terrorism.
In response to these arrests Muslims staged a mass demonstration against the government and the United States opposing the mass arrests of the Muslim leadership, harassment by the local police, the FBI and against the Anti-Terrorist Legislation. The demonstration was the first of its kind, as never before had Muslims shown such solidarity against a foreign power. Ignoring the feeling of Muslims the then United States Ambassador to Tanzania Robert Royall addressed the Tanzanian Parliament expressing his government’s satisfaction in Tanzania’s support in its war against terrorists and pledged USD 100m in aid to East African governments to help combat terrorism. Investigations revealed that none of the arrested Muslims had any kind of military training whatsoever or had in anyway engaged in terrorist activities and they were quietly released without being charged. Investigations also failed to prove that the account of Al Furqan had at any one time used to transfer funds from abroad for illegal use. All this notwithstanding there was no apology from the government, the FBI or the police.

Probably unknown to the United States, the government in Tanzania had other reasons for passing the legislation completely unconnected with terrorism. The government was under pressure from Muslims to review the status quo. The government was and still is functioning as a Christian establishment completely marginalising Muslims. The Church particularly the Catholic Church is in control of the government by proxy. It controls 75% of the seats in the parliament. Among these seats Catholics hold 70% and the rest are divided among Muslims and Christian of other denominations. Muslims controls mere 6% of the total seats in parliament. Since independence in 1961 the Church was able to manipulate the political system in such a way that, its influence

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5 The thrust and vision of the Church in East Africa was to turn Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika into Catholic states through control of indigenous governments. The Church therefore established ‘The Islam in Africa Project’ with its headquarters in Kenya of which its specific aim was to convert Muslims to Christianity. This project was under Rev. James Ritchie advisor to the National Christian Council of Kenya. The White Fathers are in Tanzania and are still involved in the work, which brought them to the country more than a hundred years ago. The position of missionaries in Tanzania has not changed as detailed above.
permeates the state machinery, mass media, higher institutions of learning, employment, promotion to political office etc. etc. It also has influence in the Executive, the Judiciary and most important it controls the Parliament the highest law making body in the country.\(^6\)

The government was engaged in its own silent war against Muslims who were opposing Christian hegemony over the country and several times the government had to use force, harassment and arrest of the Muslim leadership in trying to contain the agitation.\(^7\) Corresponding to this awakening, Islam has gradually been gaining ground over Christianity in Tanzania. There is a noticeable number of Christians reverting back to Islam.\(^8\) The Church is facing opposition on two fronts. It is facing Muslims on the political front agitating against the status quo and on the second front there is Islam as a doctrinaire attacking the very foundations of Christianity. The Catholic Church is the most affected and naturally it is showing concern. The government saw in the Act an opportunity it could manipulate in its war against Muslims and roll back the tide of Islam in Tanzania.

The United States government in supporting the Tanzanian government in its war against terrorism was in actual sense supporting the Christian lobby in the government in its anti Islam stand. In so doing was creating out of Muslims an unwilling adversary who had never threatened American interests. This state of


\(^7\) This has to be seen with this background - Muslims have clashed with riot police in Zanzibar (1988), Morogoro (1992), Mwanza (1983) and several times in Dar es Salaam. In these clashes Muslims have been killed and maimed. However not a single policeman has been prosecuted in a court of law. The most saddening miscarriage of justice was in 1998 when riot police smoke bombed the Mwembechai Mosque in Dar es Salaam in which four Muslims were killed. Following the Mwembechai crisis many sheikhs were arrested and put under custody without trial. In 2001 riot police attacked a mosque in Zanzibar during ‘salat fajr’ and the imam was killed. No investigation was carried out and therefore no one was prosecuted for the killing. In parliament debate on the Mwembechai crisis the parliament congratulated state organs in the way they had effectively and decisively handled ‘Muslim fundamentalist’. The government statement went further it stated that in future such operations to deal with ‘Muslim fundamentalists’ would be carried out by Tanzania Peoples Defence Force.\(^7\) Few months later all the officers who took part in the Mwembechai operation were promoted and transferred to other areas for fear of Muslim reprisals.

\(^8\) Christian converts have formed an association - Tanzania Revertees Association.
affairs forced Muslims in Tanzania to open up yet another line of defence against the United States fanning an already volatile state of affairs. Muslims had now two powerful adversaries to watch out. Muslims had to confront local adversaries as well as the United States. The Christian lobby in the government had found an unexpected ally. Muslims had to organise a line of defence against the United States’ interference into what was previously purely an internal power struggle between Muslims and Christians vying for dominance in the local political arena. The entry of the United States in the conflict on the side of the government gave the conflict religious undertones, which were translated by Muslims as an impending American crusade hidden behind the façade of war against terrorism. What was worse is the fact that in the last ten years there had been a large influx of Pentecost churches into the country from the United States and these churches were not openly hostile towards Islam but were also very aggressive towards other Christian sects. However with the passing of the anti-terrorist legislation it seemed all Christian churches in Tanzania where united in combating Islam under the banner of terrorism.

The Act was therefore seen by Muslims as yet another strategy by the government to keep Muslims under perpetual bondage. The government of Tanzania had succeeded to manipulate the Prevention of Terrorism Act for its own selfish ends. The government had shifted from its long standing progressive policy of commitment to freedom, justice and equality overtime transforming itself into an ‘ally’ of the United States whose oppressive policies it once lead other African nations to oppose. This change of policy and ideological stand unsettled the established political equilibrium. It is now out of tune for Tanzania to identify itself with the people of Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kashmir. The government was able to kill three birds with one stone. First by passing the anti terrorism legislation it had found a partner in its efforts to weaken Islam and its influence in Tanzania. Second it managed to alienate Tanzanian Muslims from the rest of the Muslim world where Islam was under siege; and lastly the government managed to position itself correctly as an ‘ally’ of the United States
and hence be considered legible for aid,\textsuperscript{9} the aid which will eventually strengthen the status quo.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act is fraught with legal defects.\textsuperscript{10} It is beyond the scope of this paper to go into all the shortcomings. Suffice to say that the act curbs democracy, free association, exchange of information, the right to own property, etc. There are also sections, which give the Minister of Home Affairs undue powers to declare any person a ‘terrorist’ on mere suspicion. In a country where the Church controls the government, one can only imagine the dangers facing Islam. The law empowers the Minister to freeze bank accounts of any suspected ‘terrorist organisation’ or individual. Nowhere is the law frightening than in part V 28 (6). This section deserves special mention. It stipulates that:

A police officer who uses such force as may be necessary for any purpose, in accordance with this Act, shall not be liable, in any criminal or civil proceedings, for having, by the use of force, caused injury or death to any person or damage to or loss of any property.

Muslims were concerned because the parliament was being manipulated by a foreign power in partnership with the Christian lobby to legitimise oppression against them. It was now legitimate to kill ‘Muslim fundamentalists’ or suspected ‘terrorists’ on mere suspicion. There were many good reasons for Muslims to register concern. There had been incidences in the past where state organs have used excessive force against Muslims resulting into deaths of Muslims. The act in a multi racial society like Tanzania incites racial and religious hatred against Muslims particularly those not of black African origin. The Act managed to fan fear and hatred against Muslims whipping up a frenzy of Islamophobia in the country. The smoke bombing of mosques and mass arrests of sheikhs over the years, were one of the means of intimidating Muslims and

\textsuperscript{9} 50\% of Tanzania’s expenditure and recurrent budget is donor funded.
\textsuperscript{10} There is opposition in United States to the renewal of the anti-terror Patriot Act unless changes are made to provide greater protections of civil liberties.
rescuing the Church from its predicament. What was there to prevent state organs from applying the Act in subverting Islam?

**Manipulation of State Laws and Government Policies**

**Crusade against ‘Radical Islam’**

Tanzania being a ‘secular’ state the government had no legal ground to intervene in matters of religion, which according to the constitution were outside its jurisdiction. The anti terrorism legislation was seen by the government as a Godsend piece of legislation which could be used to resolve what it perceived as ‘radical Islam’ once and for all. But what important was the fact that no one could accuse the government of partisanship for passing the Act since the legislation was passed as a general world concern on terrorism. Soon after passing the Act, the government embarked on plans to make amendments to the constitution because as it was, the constitution had proved to be giving Islam unlimited freedom of propagation. This freedom provided a level ground, which favoured Islam but detriment to Christianity.

Soon after passing the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 2002 the government made amendments to the constitution. Before the amendment the constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania aptly stated that:

> Every person has the right to the freedom of thought or conscience, belief or faith, and choice in matters of religion, including the freedom to change his religion or faith. Without prejudice to the relevant laws of the United Republic the profession of religion, worship and propagation of religion shall be free and private affair of an individual; and the affairs and

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12 In a special synod in Rome on Islam the Catholic Church singled out ‘Muslim fundamentalism as its greatest challenge. See *Kiongozi*, 16 - 31 May 1990. While visiting Tanzania the then Archbishop of Canterbury Dr. George Leonard Carey stated that in Tanzania ‘Muslim fundamentalists’ were a danger to peace.
management of religious bodies shall not be part of the activities of the state authority.\textsuperscript{13}

The constitution as it were before the 14\textsuperscript{th} amendment was giving Islam unhindered plane of propagation and Islam was gaining ground over Christianity. Unless the constitution was amended there was no law, which could inhibit Islam. The government had to have a constitution, which could be used to protect the Church. Without the amendment the government could not effectively apply the anti-terror legislation in confronting Muslims and in arresting the mass conversions to Islam.

The gist of the 14\textsuperscript{th} Amendment of the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania 2004\textsuperscript{14} prohibits the use of propagation of religion in such a way as to ‘endanger peace and national unity’ or ‘scorn the teachings, belief or faith of another sect.’ The law dictates what is to be and what is not to be professed or propagated. The amendment affects Islam more than Christianity. Doctrinaire Christianity is far different from that which its adherents practise. It is this philosophy propagated by Muslims preachers, which managed to attract Christians to Islam.

Christianity does not condone homosexuality or paedophilia, which has of late become an embarrassment to the Church. If Muslims were to attack such a trend in society in comparison to Islamic teachings this could be taken as ‘scorn to the belief of another faith’ or ‘danger to peace and national unity.’ The amendment therefore stifles Islam while it provides a new lease of life to Christianity in Tanzania. Muslims protested against the amendment but the government ignored their protests. The amended constitution provides the government with full authority to intervene in matters of religion and Islam was the target. This should be perceived in the context that in a landmark

\\textsuperscript{13} Right to Freedom of Religion Act No. 15 of 1984 s.6 Act 4 of 1992 s.9.
\textsuperscript{14} The English version of the 14\textsuperscript{th} Amended of the Constitution of 2004 is not available at the time of writing this paper.
judgement even before the amendment of the constitution, in 2000 the High Court of Tanzania ruled out that it is a criminal offence to hold and to declare the Muslim belief that Allah (God Almighty) is not Jesus son of Mary.\textsuperscript{15} This was tantamount to banning the Holy Qur’an and its teachings because most of its teaching is contrary to Christian beliefs.

Following the amendment of the constitution sheikhs were also quietly ‘advised’ to abstain from using the word ‘kafir’ in their ‘khutbas’ since the word offends Christians and hence could jeopardise ‘national unity’ and ‘endanger peace’ and they could be prosecuted in a court of law for breaching the peace. They were also advised to go easy on their translations particularly on verses in the Qur’an, which castigates Christians. There are Muslim radio stations which have abided by the ‘advise’ as they are sheikhs who have abstained from quoting in public passages from the Qur’an in which the word ‘kafir’ appears, for fear of breaking the law. Through the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 2002 and the 14\textsuperscript{th} Constitution Amendment of 2005 the government succeeded in adding yet another armament in its arsenal to weaken Islam. The Church through its agents in the political system managed to safely perfect its strategy to undermine the message of Islam through the force of law.\textsuperscript{16} Cardinal Otunga, Emeritus of Nairobi had once sounded a warning that unless the Church takes drastic action Christianity was on the verge of dying a natural death on the face of Muslim onslaught.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15} Republic Versus Hamisi Rajabu Dibagula, Criminal Case No. 197 of 2000.
\textsuperscript{16} There is sufficient and undisputable evidence that the government in Tanzania since independence in 1961 has been carrying out a conceited and calculated strategy to subvert Islam. Dr John C. Sivalon in his expose, \textit{Kanisa Katoliki na Siasa ya Tanzania Bara 1953 Hadi 1985}, un masks a conspiracy in the government to subvert Islam. Sivalon revealed that the Catholic Church as far back as 1961 was worried by two prospects. First, was the unity between the Muslim madhheb (sect) of Sunni, Bohora, Ismailia and Ithnasheri in Tanganyika; and the second, was the economic strength of the East African Muslim Welfare Society. The Church was worried that the resources in the hands of rich Asian Muslim community in East Africa, coupled with the political power of African Muslims, particularly in Tanganyika, would endanger Christian interests in the region. The Church therefore declared Islam as its enemy in the country and plotted to thwart its progress.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{The Standard} (Nairobi), 13 January 1993.
Having passed the anti terror legislation and after making amendments to the constitution what was now left was to abrogate the teaching of Islamic Knowledge in schools. Without warning the Ministry of Education issued a circular banning Islamic Knowledge and in its place introduced a new subject to be known as ‘religion’, which was made compulsory to all students irrespective of faith. Various reasons were advanced to explain the sudden and dramatic change. The circular postulated that students find it difficult to relate Islam or Christianity in today’s setting of globalisation. The government argued that it was therefore obligated to fill the vacuum by initiating appropriate curriculum, write textbooks and train qualified teachers to teach the subject. The circular further argued that, the new subject would help control the spread of HIV Aids among the young. What was not stated in the circular was the fact that the government was implementing its last phase of a tier system in confronting Islam. First it began with anti-terror legislation, then it amended the constitution, the focus being the tenets on religion and now it was abolishing the teaching of Islam in schools.

The teaching of Islamic Knowledge in school had registered a remarkable success as it moulded both young men and women into responsible citizens. These young men and women are the ones forming the backbone of the Muslims ‘umma’ in Tanzania spreading the message of Islam throughout the country. Some are young ‘dais’ and scholars of very high repute spreading the message attracting Christians to Islam. The former students of Islamic Knowledge are now members of powerful Muslim organisations like - Muslim Writers Workshop (WARSHA), Islamic Propagation Centre (IPC), Jamaatu Answar Sunna, Muslim Students Association of the University of Dar es Salaam (MSAUD) and Dar es Salaam University Trusteeship (DUMT). These organisations overtime became the bedrock of Islam in Tanzania responding to the hostile environment through petitions to the government, mass rallies and organising Muslims to become independent and self-reliant by building their own institutions. The government

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perceived this capacity building efforts by Muslims as divisive and banking on sectarianism - a danger and challenge to Christian hegemony.

It is difficult not to connect the banning of Islamic Knowledge in Tanzanian schools with the war on ‘terrorism.’ About the same time when Islam was being abrogated in schools in Tanzania, Pakistan, which is an important ally of the US on terrorism, was reviewing the teachings in its ‘madras’ to prevent what was perceived as the spread of ‘radical Islam.’ It is again not difficult to see the relationship between Tanzania and Pakistan on the issue of ‘radical Islam.’ It is obvious that the government in Tanzania reviewed the teaching of Islamic Knowledge in schools for the same purpose. What is not very obvious is how deep is the United States influence in this new development of abrogating the teaching of Islamic Knowledge in schools. (This should be perceived with the knowledge that there is an American Qur’an in circulation at the moment, which has distorted the true teaching of Islam).\textsuperscript{19} It was easy for Pakistan to link it’s ‘madrasas’ with terrorism, but it was difficult for the authority to take such a bold step and publicly assume such a stand taking into consideration of the hostilities between Muslims and the government simmering under the surface.

Muslims have petitioned the government against the circular and the government is yet to respond. The power of the Church in Tanzania lies in its massive influence over the government directing it to pass irrational decisions, which nourishes Christianity while at the same time eroding Islam. If the government this time round succeeds in banning Islam from schools in the pretext of combating ‘terrorism’ this could be the last straw which broke the camel’s back - laws of the country would have been manipulated once too often.

\textsuperscript{19} Al Saffee, \textit{The True Furqan}, Omega & Wine Press, USA.
Is Tanzania a Puppet or Ally?
Anti-Terrorism Legislation Compliance as a Condition for Development Aid

It is possible to assess how effective the United States is in containing the ‘seeds of terrorism’ in its confrontation with local ‘Muslim fundamentalists.’ If the over publicised United States aid streaming into the country and given wide coverage in print and electronic media is anything to go by the United States is very pleased. If the training of the Tanzania police force in the United States and the study tours to the country extended to some Muslim organisations considered moderate are anything to go by the United States is ‘winning’ its war against ‘radical Muslims’ in absence of ‘terrorists’ in Tanzania. It has been reported that the FBI have established their offices in the Ministry of Home Affairs and are in the process of establishing a school for law enforcing officers in the country. The FBI has been in action in Tanzanian soil against Muslims through arrests and freezing of bank accounts of organisation it suspected of terrorism. The government of Tanzania has closed down Muslim organisations like Al Haramain Islamic Foundation, arrested its officials and handed them over to the FBI for interrogation. One official of Al Haramain, Abu Hudhaifa who was handed over to the FBI has been deported from the country and is believed to be in Guantanamo. Muslims as a gesture of support have named a mosque after him.

For Tanzania to take any course other than complying with United States demands on terrorism was tantamount to crossing swords with the United States. United States would start having second thoughts on Tanzania’s stability and would have pointed fingers at the division in the country as a result of ‘Muslim fundamentalists.’ The government would have been probably told that, warning system in the American Embassy indicates that all is not well in the country, and that there is every indication that Tanzania would be the next flash point in Africa after Rwanda and Burundi. The government would have been advised therefore to act swiftly so as to contain ‘Muslim fundamentalists’
from ‘disrupting peace.’ The marginalisation of Muslims is the source of current tension in Tanzania and not radical Islam. Tanzania is slowly but steadily moving towards a serious religious conflict notwithstanding United States’ support to the government or the anti terrorism legislation which is being used to undermine Islam.

**Conclusions**

The war against terrorism is an American dilemma imposed on Tanzania. The government of Tanzania cooperated not out of principle but out convenience because the anti terrorism legislation that was passed helped the government to sustain itself against its own internal problems with Muslims. The government manipulated the bogey of ‘Muslim fundamentalists’ in its local politics as a bait to attract the attention of the United States to provide assistance in the fight against terrorism of which the United States was too eager to combat anywhere in the world where Muslims could be found. The struggle in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine is still continuing with a lot of bloodshed. There also seem to be no let up in acts of terrorism against the United States and its allies either. There is evidence that in desperation the United States Army used white phosphorus (a chemical weapon) as a weapon against combatants and civilians in Iraq.\(^{20}\)

Muslims in Tanzania are aware about this and they ‘kunut’ for the ‘mujahid’ in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine; and sometimes in these ‘kunut’ the imam includes the ‘mujahid’ in Tanzania in reference to Muslims who have dared to stand up in defence of Islam resisting all kind of harassment and intimidation from the government despite the anti-terror legislation. To these people the ‘terrorism’ is not their priority or responsibility. It is a phenomenon very far removed from their conscience or reality. This is in the mind’s frame of the mainstream Muslim majority comprising more than 60% of the population in Tanzania. It is interesting to note that Huntington postulates Tanzania as

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\(^{20}\) George Monbiot, ‘Behind the phosphorus clouds are war crimes within war crimes,’ *The Guardian* 22 November 2005.
comprising of ‘Christian animist mainland and Arab Muslim Zanzibar.’\textsuperscript{21} Is this wrong premise part of the reasons which in its war against terrorism United States government fails to appreciate the forces at play in Tanzania’s polity?

In Tanzania, Islam has proved that it could stand on its own. The harsh rule of Germany colonialism left it intact so did British colonialism. African Christians in post independence Tanzania who have taken over state power from the colonial administration have failed to prevent its growth and strength. It is unlikely that the United States support to the government on its war on terror would bring Islam in Tanzania to its knees. It is not lost upon Muslim that in cooperating with the United States the country would be rewarded and the resources, which would be poured into the country, would help to maintain the status quo. Much as the passing of the Prevention of Terrorism Act is a set back to Muslims’ struggle against Christian domination in the political spectrum, the draconian law has made Muslims even more determined to organise themselves to face the challenges that prevail. Further still, Muslims have equally realised that, it is only through active participation in the political arena as Muslims, that would they be able to share power and compete with Christians in governing the country and hence determine their future and that of their religion.

But most important is the fact that the FBI have been in the country for almost three years now but have failed to unearth even a single evidence to prove that Muslims in Tanzania have in any way engaged or supported acts of terrorism against the United States government. Neither the United States nor the Tanzanian government have managed to amass enough courage to admit this in public and offer apology, at least for the time being. Tanzania is now among 23 countries nominated by Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) for assistance from the United States in 2006 after fulfilling eligible condition for aid.\textsuperscript{22}


\textsuperscript{22} See \textit{Mtanzania}, Novemba 10, 2005, p.3.
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