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**RELIGION AND CONFLICT
IN AFRICA**
WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON EAST AFRICA

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Abstract

The report provides a brief overview of the religious landscape of Africa with a special focus on the role of religion in the continent's several conflicts. It then proceeds to look at East Africa, where the three religious "families" of traditional religion, Islam and Christianity are all present in large numbers. It does not find any significant correlation between conflict propensity or terrorism and religion, neither in the sense that religious diversity gives rise to any "clash of civilizations" nor in the sense that the predominance of any one religion (e.g. Islam) make a country more prone to conflict or terrorism. It then proceeds to country case studies of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, providing a brief overview of the history of religion and conflict and an assessment of the present situation and the prospects for the future.

Executive Summary

The report provides a brief overview of the religious landscape of Africa, exhibiting a more or less even spread of the three main religious "families" of traditional religions, Islam and Christianity, and with a predominance of syncretism. Just as Africa may well be the world's most religious continent, it may also be the one where the religions are most mixed.

Religious elements have been present in many of Africa's conflicts ever since pre-colonial times, just as European colonialism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries gave rise to resistance movements that were partly inspired by religion – either by traditional religions or Islam. Since independence, religions has also played a role in various armed conflicts, e.g. in West Africa.

The report then "zooms in" on East Africa, where the three religious "families" of traditional religion, Islam and Christianity are all present in large numbers. It does not find any significant correlation between, on the one hand, conflict propensity or terrorism and, on the other hand, religion – neither in the sense that religious diversity gives rise to any "clash of civilizations" nor in the sense that the predominance of any one religion (e.g. Islam) make a country more prone to conflict or terrorism.

Moreover, the report does not find East Africa to be particularly prone to terrorism. With the exception of the two almost simultaneous terrorist attacks against U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, terrorism has not been much of a problem in East Africa; and most of what is sometimes labelled religious terrorism has much more to do with nationalism than with religion. There is even less support in the available data for the assumption that Islamist terrorism is a serious problem, as most of the region's religiously-motivated terrorism has been perpetrated by a group calling itself Christian, namely the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda.

The report then proceeds to country case studies of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, providing a brief overview of the history of religion and conflict and an assessment of the present situation and the prospects for the future. Whereas religion played a role in the struggle against colonialism in Sudan, Somalia, Kenya and Tanzania, since independence

religion is only found to have been the decisive factor in the conflict in Sudan, whereas seemingly religious conflicts in other of the region's states really been about something else, either nationalism or politics pure and simple. Even in Sudan, the North-South conflict contains a number of other elements than religion, e.g. a struggle over resources, against marginalisation and for democracy and political rights, while the conflict in Darfur has virtually nothing to do with religion, pitting two groups of Muslims against each other.

Preface

Even though one might have thought that with modernity and globalisation religion would recede into the background as far as politics and conflicts are concerned, we seem to be witnessing the exact opposite. Contrary to the fashionable secularisation thesis, religion thus seems to be motivating a growing number of people, also as far as their political attitudes and behaviour are concerned – and sometimes this even takes the form of violent struggle.

Even though these phenomena are not confined to the developing world, but are also found in, for instance, the United States, the manifestations tend to be more violent in these "peripheral regions", where bizarre spectacles such as riots over Miss World contests in Nigeria, the burning of Danish flags and embassies, motivated by a seemingly "trivial" matter as the printing of caricature drawings of the Prophet, seem to have become the order of the day – and where more serious manifestations such as religiously motivated terrorism are also attracting growing attention, mainly because they also affect the developed world.

There is thus an urgent need for what one might call a "polemology of religion", i.e. theories of the relationship between religion and conflict.[1] This theoretical endeavour has however been relegated to a future study, whereas the present one is devoted to the more concrete topic of the relationship between religion and conflict in Africa, with a special focus on the East Africa, which seems to be attracting the most attention in the West.

The paper commences with an overview of the three main religious "families" on the continent, i.e. what is, for lack of a better term, labelled "traditional religion" as well as the various versions of Islam and Christianity. Each of them is analysed for its presumed attractions, seen from the point of view of African populations, as well as for their conflict potential. This general overview of sub-Saharan Africa is followed by a chapter on some general features of East Africa, including the propensity for terrorism – which is, perhaps surprisingly, found to be much more limited than often assumed and not specifically related to Islam. In fact, since 1999 most terrorist attacks have been perpetrated by self-proclaimed Christians.

This general account is followed by case studies of all the region's states, i.e.

Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, providing some historical background, but concentrating on the recent past and the present.

Religion in Sub-Saharan Africa

Most observers agree that Africans are generally much more religious than the Europeans, perhaps even than Americans – both in the sense of believing in "an invisible world" and of actually practicing religion.[2]

Table 1: World Religions (2003)					
Denomination	Africa (000)	%	World (000)	%	Africa/ World
Christians	394,640	46.3	2,069,883	32.9	19.1%
Muslims	344,920	40.5	1,254,222	19.9	27.5%
Ethnic Rel.	100,420	11.8	283,096	3.8	42.2%
Other	5,134	0.6	2,030,693	32.3	0,3%
Nonrel.	6,442	0.8	932,929	14.8	0.7%
Population	851,556	100.0	6,287,732	100.0	13.5%

Not only do virtually all Africans thus profess adherence to a religion, but they also tend to take their religious beliefs more seriously than the secularised Europeans. Even though the figures in Table 1 should be taken *cum grano salis*, as no exact and reliable census figures are available,[3] they nevertheless show Africa to host about one fifth of all the world's professed Christians (of various denominations) and about one fourth of its Muslims as well as close to half of all its adherents to various strands of traditional (or "ethnic") religions, but only a minute share of its non-believers.

Fig. 1: Religions in Africa
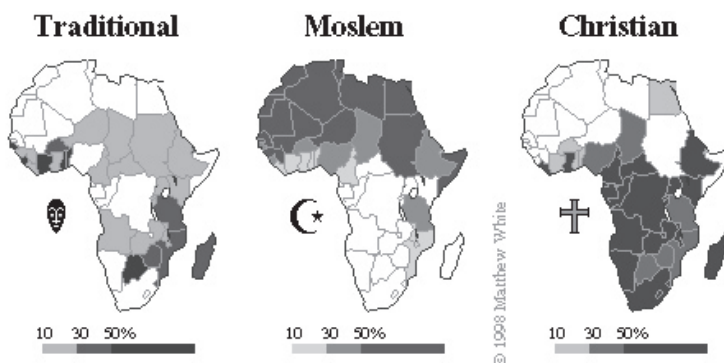
Fig. 1 in turn illustrates the relative strengths across the continent of the three main religious "families" in the 1990s,[4] showing an almost even split between Christianity and Islam, with traditional or indigenous religions coming in third.

This religious map of Africa is the result of the encounters, over centuries, between the indigenous religions of the continent with the Arabs and the Europeans. First came an Arab colonisation combined with Islamic missionary activities,[5] which was then followed by a Christian colonisation and dispatch of missionaries from Europe[6] (*vide infra*).

Whereas both non-African religions were obviously successful in their proselytising activities in quantitative terms, i.e. with regard to the total number of converts, they may have been much less successful in qualitative terms, i.e. with the regard to the "depth" of the conversions, as indigenous beliefs exhibited a remarkable resilience and "stickiness". As a result of this process, religions in Africa tend to be less "pure" than in Europe and most of them are syncretic or "creolised", i.e. they represent amalgams of indigenous and foreign elements.[7]

Fig. 2: Traditional Religions in Africa
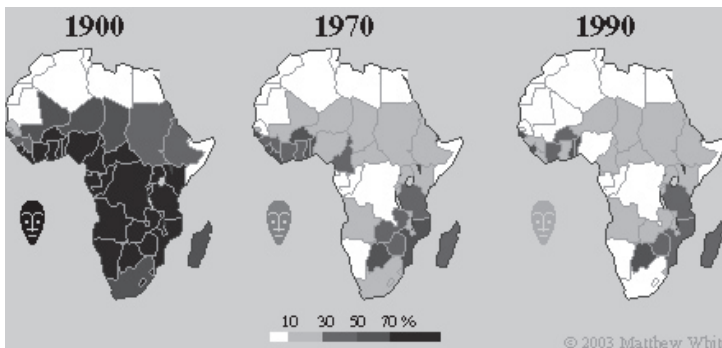
Traditional Religion

There are different terms for what is here called "traditional religion", some of which refer to different phenomena which it may not even be warranted to subsume under a single category. Leaving aside as politically incorrect as well as misleading the term "primitive religion", terms such as "totemism", "animism", "ethnic religion" (as in Table 1 above), "ancestor worship", magic and the like do not seem to cover the entire field. Even though these traditional religions have receded in Africa, as shown in Fig. 2, they remain a significant factor and

even more so if one were to include their following even among Christians or Muslims in the sense of syncretism.

What is "Traditional Religion"?

As it is beyond the scope of the present paper to elaborate on these issues in any depth, it must suffice with a brief mention, in general terms, of some of the characteristic features of these traditional religions, both as far as beliefs, norms, practices and institutions are concerned. The account is based on some of the central analysts, including "classics" such as Tylor, Durkheim, Evans-Pritchard, Malinowski and Claude Lévi-Strauss.

Among the central tenets of "generic traditional religion" are the following, not all of which are, of course, shared by all varieties of traditional religion. Indeed, anthropologists and sociologists might insist on the specificity,[8] as each religion is supposedly "designed" to meet the particular societal needs of each community – even though Durkheim argued "all religions are comparable, all species of the same genus [and] all share certain essential elements".[9]

- The belief that nature is animated by spirit(s) – sometimes referred to as animism – either in the (pantheistic) form of one supreme deity present everywhere or in a polytheistic fashion with specific deities or spirits for trees, water, etc.[10]
- The belief that certain things are thus holy or sacred, i.e. untouchable or only to be approached by certain persons or in a certain way – sometimes referred to as totemism.[11]
- The belief in some kind of afterlife, often reflected in a veneration of (individual or collective) ancestors with whom it is believed to be possible to communicate, e.g. through worship, sacrifice or prayer, and who may somehow interfere in present affairs.
- The belief in magic,[12] sometimes seen as either good ("white") or bad ("evil" or "black"), but more often as ambivalent. In either case it is assumed to presuppose skills only mastered by specialists such as witches or sorcerers, against the machinations of whom people may feel the need for protection from others with access to magical powers such as shamans or healers.[13]
- The belief in the occasional possession of human beings by spirits, either those of ancestors or others – and, once again, either for good or bad. In the former case, the possessed person may exercise special powers, whereas in the latter, exorcism may be needed.[14]

Traditional Religion and Anti-Colonial Struggles

Considering that both the Arab and the European colonisations of Africa were accompanied by missionary activities (*vide infra*) it is hardly surprising that the resistance against them also brought into play traditional religious beliefs, institutions and practices, in at least three different senses:

- Some Africans seem to have sought a spiritual refuge from the religious onslaught by the foreigners in their indigenous ("traditional") religions.
- Others seem to have adopted the "strategy" of co-optation, in the sense that they managed to incorporate parts of their indigenous religious beliefs and practices within their particular versions of Islam or Christianity, thus making the latter syncretic or "creolised", a phenomenon to which we shall return in due course.
- Still others waged a more active, and sometimes even armed, struggle against the intruders, occasionally instrumentalising traditional religions as ideological weapons in this struggle.

The general picture of at least the European "scramble for Africa" was one of very limited active resistance on the part of the indigenous population.[15] There are not all that many (recorded) examples of armed resistance and even fewer which were successful, but a few of them nevertheless deserve mentioning. In some cases, resistance was organised by traditional (chiefly or royal) authorities, whose entitlement to rule rested on foundations of traditional religion. This was, for instance, the case of the following:

- In the Ashante Wars (1873-84) and the subsequent uprising of 1900 the indigenous monarchy (claiming divine sanction of its rule, manifested in the "Golden Stool") raised a fairly well organised African army against that of the British colonialists, who had to resort to the unusual means of a predominantly white army, numbering 1,500 Europeans to a mere 700 Africans.[16]
- In the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 the Zulus under King Cetschwayo inflicted a crushing defeat on the British forces at Isandlwana in 1879, but they subsequently succumbed to a more forceful and brutal British invasion.[17]
- The Matabele War of 1893 was fought by the Ndebele people under King Lobengula, partly against the British settlers, partly against the neighbouring Mashona people.[18]

In other cases, traditional beliefs in magic, spirit possession, witchcraft etc. are recorded to have played significant roles as motivational or morale-boosting factors relating to the combatants themselves. This was, for instance, the case in the following struggles:

- In the Transkei rebellion against the British in 1880, both witchcraft accusations and (what was held to be) sorcery played a certain role.[19]
- During the *Chimurenga* of the 1890s in the present Zimbabwe, spirit mediums and other agents of traditional religion were used by the guerrilla leaders in their resistance to the imposition of British rule. The same happened during the "second *Chimurenga*" in the 1970s against the white minority regime, which also saw the use of spirit mediums, mainly to boost the morale of the fighters but also in more mundane roles as guides and scouts.[20]
- In the uprising in present Sierra Leone against British rule in 1898 over the imposition of a "hut tax", the rebels under the leadership of Bai Bureh seem to have been animated, at least partly, by beliefs in magic and to have been enrolled in the struggle via the various "secret societies" related to traditional religion.[21]
- During the struggle against Portuguese colonial rule in the sixties and seventies, the (ostensibly Marxist and thus atheist) MPLA (*Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola)* seems to have made use of witchcraft accusations to brandish suspected traitors to the cause.[22]
- As we shall see in the chapter on East Africa, indigenous religions also played integral parts in both the Maji-Maji rebellion against the German colonialists in the present Tanzania and in the Mau-Mau rebellion against the British in Kenya.

On at least one occasion, resistance to white colonial rule inspired by indigenous beliefs (combined with elements of Christianity) took the form of acts which were in retrospect almost tantamount to an "auto-genocide". In 1856, a young Xhosa girl, Nongqawuse, thus had a prophetic vision (from "two strangers from overseas") of future redemption of her people. Her vision promised an expulsion of the whites from Africa and future prosperity for the Xhosa, if only they cleansed themselves of witchcraft by slaying their cattle. So they did over the following thirteen months, killing an estimated 400,000 cattle, resulting in a disastrous famine which cost the lives of around 40,000 people – in addition to weakening the Xhosa nation in their rivalry with not only the British, but also other indigenous nations in South Africa. Nongqawuse

herself survived the famine, but she was later arrested by the British and sent to Robben Island.[23]

Even though traditional religion thus provided the idiom for anti-colonial struggles, it also came to play an important role in the system of governance of the British and other colonial empires. Rather than deploying the number of Europeans required for the administration of the vast territories, the Europeans tended to prefer indirect rule, entailing the appointment (often rather arbitrarily) of certain "traditional rulers" as the agents of the Europeans – and an accompanying endorsement of the traditional beliefs on which these rulers often based their legitimacy.[24]

Traditional Religion in Modern African Societies
Even though traditional religions have thus long been in retreat (as illustrated in Fig. 2),[25] the statistics in Table 1 shown that they continue to command the allegiance of around twelve percent of Africa's population. The figure would probably be much higher if one were to include in this category the traditional element lingering on in the African versions of Islam and Christianity (*vide infra*) such as beliefs in spirit possession, divination, magic, witchcraft, sorcery and healing. On the other hand, elements of both Christianity and Islam have also been co-opted into traditional religion, where Christian saints (or even the Virgin Mary or Christ himself) or Islamic figures have sometimes been admitted alongside traditional objects of worship such as ancestral spirits or deities from nature, just as Christian or Muslim practices and institutions have been combined with "pagan" initiation rites or secret societies.[26]

Traditional religion is thus a factor to be reckoned with, both in times of peace and war. A possible explanation of its attraction in times of peace is that it has something significant to contribute to the lives of the African population, either by offering convincing explanations of what might otherwise seem opaque or of offering promising avenues for addressing problems, or indeed both.

One might, for instance, see the widespread beliefs in the presence of magic, witchcraft, sorcery and spirit possession[27] as reflecting the real power relations in African societies – even in more developed states such as South Africa.[28] The real political structure in these societies differs significantly from the official power structure as prescribed in constitutions or described in western political science textbooks.

Many or even most African states are thus neopatrimonial in the sense that real power is primarily exercised via personal networks and patron-client relations, which may be hidden from sight and which are thus tantamount to invisible forces preying on the common man. In some cases, secret societies also play important roles maintaining unity among the ruling elites, either in the form of clandestine societies based on traditional religion such as the "Leopard Society"[29] allegedly headed by warlord-turned-president Charles Taylor of Liberia (also a born-again Christian) – or in the shape of western "secret societies" such as the Freemasons, which seems to have had a considerable following among the ruling Americo-Liberian elite in the very same country.[30] The mysterious order of the Rosecrucians (related to Freemasonry) also seems to have a considerable following among the elites in several African states.[31]

The term "vampire states" used by George Ayittey in his work with the telling title *Africa in Chaos* may thus capture the experience of the African "man on the street" with the powers that be.

> The African state has been reduced to a mafia-like bazaar, where everyone with an official designation can pillage at will. In effect, it is a "state" that has been hijacked by gangsters, crooks, and scoundrels. (...) The inviolate ethic of vampire elites is self-aggrandizement and self-perpetuation in power. To achieve those objectives, they subvert every institution of government: the civil service, judiciary, military, media, and banking. As a result, these institutions become paralyzed. (...) Regardless of their forms, the effects of clientelism are the same. Politics is viewed as essentially extractive. The state sector becomes fused with the political arena and is seen as a source of wealth, and therefore, personal aggrandizement.[32]

It is, however, also possible to view neopatrimonialism in a somewhat more favourable light, i.e. as entailing an informal social contract, as do Patrice Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz in their work with the equally telling title *Africa Works*:

> [T]he foundations of political accountability in Africa are both collective and extra-institutional: they rest on the particularistic links between Big Men, or patrons, and their constituent communities (...) That is why, despite the undeniably large gap (in terms of resources and lifestyle) between elites and populace, leaders are never dissociated from their suppporters.

They remain directly linked to them through a myriad of nepotistic or clientilistic networks staffed by dependent intermediaries.[33]

If the two authors are right, then the various rites and sacrifices of traditional religions (or creolised Islam or Christianity) may simply be symbolic representations of the actual "rules of the game" of society and its political system. The exchange relations in society simply resemble the *quid pro quos* and *do ut des* of magic and witchcraft.[34]

Not only does traditional religion thus offer a satisfactory explanation for the otherwise inexplicable, it also offers strategies and instruments for addressing the problems thus identified. One of these is accusations of witchcraft quite frequently hurled against incumbent holders of positions of power, and the use of witchcraft-like methods against them, e.g. in the form of magic spells.[35] At the very least such magic may have a certain "placebo effect" in the sense of emboldening the one casting it to take initiatives which are actually effective.

Another strategy for contravening the perceived clandestine power is to form countervailing secret societies – as seems to have happened in the Liberian civil war, where the traditional Poro and Sande secret societies seem to have expanded considerably. At the very least such organisation in secret societies may be an effective way of recruiting followers and of boosting morale.[36]

It has also been argued that traditional religions serve an empowerment function. As it is often women who serve as spirit mediums, diviners, healers, etc., such practices may contribute to their empowerment and even enrichment, as these are usually services performed in exchange for payment or services.[37]

Traditional Religion in African Civil Wars

Just as traditional religion played a role in the anti-colonial and other freedom struggles, it has also exerted an influence on the conduct of civil wars – perhaps better labelled "uncivil wars" – mainly in West and Central Africa. The following are merely examples of a more widespread phenomenon.

• As described by Stephen Ellis in his analysis of the Liberian civil war, quite a few fighters of the opposing sides practiced rituals from indigenous religion as an integral part of their struggle, including unappealing ones such as can-

nibalism (*sic!*). Moreover, the aforementioned secret societies (including the Poro and Leopard societies) also served as "bonding mechanisms" within the various warring factions.[38]

- Partly the same phenomena also appeared in the civil war in neighbouring Sierra Leone.[39] This led to an extraordinarily bloody civil war of the 1990s, in the final phases of which the "strategy" of the RUF (Revolutionary United Front) largely consisted of a systematic terrorisation of the civilian population through gratuitous violence, wanton atrocities, amputations of limbs, rapes and looting, which seems to have received some religious sanctioning. However, the war also saw the use by the government of "traditional" hunters, the *Kamajores*, as auxiliaries. The initial core of this force consisted of local "traditional hunters", mainly recruited among the Mende ethnic group and based to some extent on the "secret" Poro initiation societies. Whereas their traditional task was to provide their tribes with game as well as to protect them against intruders, they were now reorganised as a militia, partly by the tribal chiefs – and subsequently trained, also by an international private military company, the South Africa-based Executive Outcomes. Most accounts agree that the *Kamajors* behaved far better than both the regular troops and the RUF, perhaps because of their ethos of protection which "happened to be" quite in line with the humanitarian laws of war – and especially so when they were deployed in their home areas. Gradually, however, the original core seems to have been diluted, e.g. by the *Kamajores*' incorporation into the more amorphous CDF, by the defection of RUF combatants to their ranks, and the deployment further afield. Upon the achievement of peace, at least some of the former Kamajores seem to have joined LURD in neighbouring Liberia.[40]

- In the DR Congo the *Mai-Mai* militias seem to have been (and probably still are) animated by totemist beliefs.[41] They are presently aligned with the remnant of the former armed forces of Rwanda ("ex-FAR") and the genocidal *Interahamwe* militia – both organised in the FDLR (*Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda*), which was created in 2000 through a merger of ALIR (*Armée pour la Libération de Rwanda*) with other forces.[42]

It thus seems that traditional religions have played important role on African history and continue doing so in independent African states, both in times of peace and war, notwithstanding the apparent dominance of the two foreign religions, Islam and Christianity, to which we shall now turn.

Islam

The Coming of Islam

Not only is Islam Africa's second largest religion (see Fig. 3). It is also the continent's fastest growing religion and certainly the one causing most concern in the West, for all sorts of reasons (mainly wrong ones).

Fig. 3: Islam in Africa

(from www.lib.utexas.edu/ maps/africa/ africa_ islam_87.jpg)

Islam has come to Africa via four different routes.[43] First of all Islam came via conquest and expansion, e.g. the initial Arab expansion into North Africa,[44] followed by an Ottoman expansion into, for instance, Sudan (*vide infra*).[45] Once established it also expanded via the conquest of adjacent territories by the successive Muslim empires in West Africa, i.e. Mali, Songhay, Kanem-Bornu empires and the Sokoto Caliphate.[46]

Secondly, Islam arrived as a companion of international trade, via two different routes, i.e. the trans-Saharan trade, which created gradually expanding Muslim centres in the Sahel area,[47] and the Indian Ocean trade (and slaving) routes, where

Arab and other traders established (likewise gradually expanding) enclaves along the coast of East Africa.[48] The manumission and conversion of former African slaves further added to the number of Muslims.[49] Thirdly, Muslims came to Africa via the import of labour by the European colonialists from India and other Asian countries, many of whom were Muslims and the descendents of whom now constitute fairly large Muslim communities in, for instance, South Africa.[50]

Finally, large numbers of Africans were simply converted to Islam via deliberate proselytising (*da'wa*), mostly by Sufi "holy men".[51] Hence the predominance among the peoples of Africa of Sufi orders and brotherhoods, most of which are fairly liberal and often significantly "creolised", i.e. syncretic. The clergy and scholars (*ulama*), on the other hand, tend to be more orthodox Sunni Muslims, and in many cases they are closely related (via clan, ethnic or patron-client bonds) to the ruling elites.[52] The influence of the more radical and/or conservative and fundamentalist *Salafi* orders (such as *Wahhabism*) is of a much more recent vintage. We shall return to this phenomenon in the chapter on East Africa.

Islam versus Colonialism

Perhaps by virtue of its being of non-European origins, Islam has in several cases been fused with struggles against European (and thus Christian) domination.[53] As argued by Crawford Young,

> Islam represented the most comprehensive ideological challenge to hegemony available to Africa at the moment of subjugation. In the hands of determined adversaries of colonial rule, it offered a transcendental justification for resistance and a religious imperative for politico-military organization beyond ethnos and polity as these then existed.[54]

Islam thus played a significant role in the struggle against European colonialism, also during the "scramble". Examples of its role in armed resistance include the *jihads* proclaimed by the Sokoto Caliphate (also against alleged apostates),[55] as well as in the Mahdist revolution in Sudan and the 1895 rebellion in British Somalia, to both of which we shall return at some length below. An even broader, but predominantly political, resistance movement sprang up throughout East Africa in the early 20th Century under the leadership of Sheik Uways B. Muhammad Al-Barawi of the *Qadriya* brotherhood.[56]

The strength of the Muslim religion also meant that the European rulers, after

their imposition of colonial suzerainty, were often forced to rely on Islamic religious authorities as an element in their "indirect rule", as the British did in Sudan (*vide infra*) as well as in northern Nigeria, and as even the French did in West Africa, even though they tended to prefer more direct forms of rule elsewhere in their colonial empire.[57]

Islam also played a role in the struggle against "intra-African imperialism" such as that practiced by (Christian) Ethiopia against its neighbours roughly simultaneously with the "scramble". It entailed the incorporation into the Abyssinian Empire of various predominantly Muslim peoples such as the Oromi and parts of the Somali nation, as well as Eritrea with a significant Muslim minority. As a consequence, some of the struggles for secession from Ethiopia were legitimised in (partly) religious terms, i.e. as Islamic (*vide infra*).

The Present Appeal of Islam

Besides thus being viewed and used by some as a religion of resistance against, and liberation from, foreign rule, i.e. as meeting nationalist aspirations,[58] Islam has had other attractions, which may help explain its strength and apparent growth in Africa of today.

First of all, Islam holds out certain economic promises. Even though it seems to have become a prevalent view that Islam prevents economic development, the empirical facts do not seem to support it.[59] Rather than being responsible for underdevelopment, Islam may thus be (seen as) addressing some of the continent's urgent developmental problems, especially those related to poverty.

- Many Islamic charities and other organisations are involved in caring for the poor, which often gains them converts,[60] as is the case of Christianity with its charitable organisations. Because of the *Q'uranid* obligation to give *Zakat*, i.e. non-voluntary alms as well as voluntary *Sadaqa*,[61] it may even (if taken seriously) entail a certain redistribution of wealth, which is badly needed in countries with extreme inequalities.[62] Unfortunately, because of the global "war of terrorism" and its implications for the financing of terrorism, some of these charities have recently come under intense scrutiny for fear that they may be abused for these purposes, which may lead to the freezing or even confiscation of the assets of some of them,[63] even though this only seems to have actually happened sporadically.
- Interest-free "Islamic economics"[64] may appear attractive as an alternative to

capitalism, often associated with Christianity and colonialism.

- Certain politicised versions of Islam, such as the "Green Book Millenarianism" of Libya's Gaddafi resemble, in some respects, Christian "liberation theology" by offering an apparent path to liberation and development, which have a certain appeal.[65]
- Islamic organisations have often, just as their Christian counterparts, provided schooling to Africans, as an integral part of their proselytising activities – even though Islam has in some places been handicapped by the reluctance to translate the *Q'uran* into the vernacular.[66]
- Being Muslim makes a country in Africa more likely to receive development aid from richer Muslim countries, such as the oil-producing Arabian states around the Persian Gulf or, more recently, Libya.[67]

Besides thus contributing to poverty alleviation, Islam (as certain other religions) may also give meaning to it. It is thus psychologically plausible that the asceticism associated with at least some versions of Islamic Sufism and its "holy people"[68] may be appealing to poor Africans, inter alia by transforming their plight into a virtue of sorts. As aptly formulated by Clifford Geertz,

> As a religious problem, the problem of suffering is, paradoxically, not how to avoid suffering, but how to suffer, how to make of physical pain, personal loss, worldly defeat, or the helpless contemplation of others' agony something bearable, supportable – something, as we say, sufferable.[69]

Secondly, Islam may be politically attractive, both to the elites and to the general population, albeit not always for the same reasons.

- For the elites and regimes, belonging to the Islamic (or even Arab) world provides them with access to not only economic assistance, but also some political support, thus, for instance, offering a buffer against interference in their domestic affairs by the West.
- For the populations, Islam may be seen as providing some standards for government, to which the ruling elite must either conform to or face opposition and the risk of being overthrown. Even though these standards may differ from Western ones of "good governance", empirical evidence does not at all support the often-heard claim that attachment to the Muslim faith is tantamount to anti-democratic sentiments.[70]
- Islamic organisations such as the various Sufi orders or, more recently, the more

fundamentalist *Salifi* (mainly *Wahhabi*) organisations and brotherhoods[71] form part of the civil society in African countries,[72] albeit not always of the kind that is really appreciated in the West. In Egypt, for instance, the 2005 elections gained the Muslim Brotherhood many seats in Parliament, and had they been truly free and fair, they might well have won a majority.[73]

Thirdly, Islam may seem culturally attractive for both "good" and "bad" reasons, judging by Western standards:

- Islam in most of Africa has traditionally been fairly "flexible" in the sense of allowing a fair amount of syncretism, thus providing a worldview that makes sense for Africans.[74]
- In some cases of "spirit possession", Islam (and especially Sufism) has served as a means of exorcism, as is often the case of certain forms of charismatic Christianity (*vide infra*) as well as, of course, of traditional religions.[75]
- Islam may be seen as a cultural frame of reference for otherwise marginalised people, uprooted (for economic or other reasons) from their local communities. Belonging to the universal Islamic *Umma* may be an attractive alternative.[76]
- Islam may also be (ab)used by the male population for keeping the women in subordinate positions.[77]

Islam and Civil Wars in (West) Africa

All these attractions of Islam notwithstanding, it has also been a bone of contention. In a few cases, parties to an armed conflict have gone so far as to proclaim "holy war" (jihad) against their respective opponents,[78] be they foreigners or indigenous adversaries – as has been the case on several occasions in Sudan, to which we shall return below. More often, however, Islam has been merely one element in armed conflicts, which are mainly about something else, e.g. by couching political grievances or demands in religious terms or by fusing ethnicity with religion. Besides East Africa, to which most of this paper is devoted, the phenomenon seems to be most widespread in West Africa, representing a true meeting ground between indigenous religions, Islam and Christianity (see Table 2).

Table 2. Religions in West Africa (%)			
Country	**Trad.**	**Chr.**	**Islam**
Benin	50	30	20
Burkina	40	10	50
Cote d'Iv.	25-40	20-30	35-40
Gambia	1	9	90
Ghana	21	63	16
Guinea	7	8	85
Guinea-B.	50	5	45
Liberia	40	40	20
Mali	9	1	90
Niger	?	?	90
Nigeria	10	40	50
Senegal	1	5	94
Sierra L.	30	10	60
Togo	51	29	20
Source: *CIA World Factbook 2005*			

There have thus been a "Muslim element" in the civil wars in as well Liberia as Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, where it has been related to ethnic, occupational and geographical fault-lines – the Muslims typically found among the Mandingo ethnic segments in Liberia and Sierra Leone, whereas in Côte d'Ivoire they have typically been found in the northern, i.e. interior parts of the country.[79] In neither of these cases, however, has the conflict been primarily religious, and certainly not one that could be characterised as "Islamic".

Potentially much more ominous are the prospects of a religious conflict in Africa's most populous country, Nigeria. Ever since the aforementioned Muslim empires and the beginning of Christian missionary activities, there has been a divide between a predominantly Muslim north and a south which has been primarily Christian[80] – a divide which was respected by the British colonisers with their indirect rule, which in the north was largely based on Islamic law and authorities.[81] What helped keep the potential conflict latent seems to have been a combination of three factors,[82] the effects of all of which, unfortunately, seems to be waning.

• First of all, there were fairly few Christians in the north and few Muslims in the south, but more recently the number of Christians in the north has been growing.[83]

- Secondly, the federal structure of the country gave the various provinces a fair degree of autonomy, allowing for the "discrete" application of *sharia* law to family matters, Muslim education, etc. However, the typically Nigerian form of federalism also entailed a complicated balance-of-power game , which may have exhausted its opportunities to serve as a means of conflict prevention.[84]
- Thirdly, whereas previously more moderate and apolitical (mainly Sufi) versions of Islam predominated in the north, more recently *Salifism* and other forms of fundamentalism seem to have been gaining ground.[85]

The evidence of impending conflict thus seems to be growing – against the background of a rather weak, and profoundly corrupt, Nigerian state, also featuring several other conflicts which are unrelated to religion.[86] Not only has *sharia* been introduced in several northern states since 1999, but in 2002 the country also witnessed the bizarre spectacle of the "Miss World riots", featuring three days of killing over a seemingly trivial issue such as the holding of the Miss World contest, which could arguably be traced back to the introduction of *sharia* in the areas affected two years earlier.[87] It does not help at all, that certain Christian denominations or sects such as the Pentecostals seem to increasingly demonise Islam as such.[88]

Christianity

Despite the rapid growth of Islam in Africa, Christianity is still the largest religion on the continent, especially as far as sub-Saharan Africa is concerned. Not only does every fifth of the world's Christians live in Africa, but African Christians also tend to take their religion more seriously than at least their European co-religionists.

Christianity and Colonialism

Even though the present image of Christianity may be somewhat tarnished by its association with colonialism, the Christian faith predated colonialism in at least one African state, namely the present Ethiopia, to which we shall return at length in the next chapter, just as it predominated in parts of the present Sudan until it succumbed to an Islamic expansionist drive (*vide infra*). Apart from these two examples, however, Christianity did indeed come to the continent as a companion of the successive waves of colonisation.

First came the Portuguese, who in 1493 had been granted by Pope Alexander VI (in his bulls *Inter caetera* and *Dudum siquidem*) the right to the world east of line running a hundred leagues west of the Azores (leaving everything west

of the line to their Spanish rivals), an arrangement that was subsequently codified in the bilateral Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494.[89] Believing (as Catholics) in the doctrine of apostolic succession,[90] the Portuguese seafarers could thus claim a divine sanction for their explorations. Initially, however, they were not particularly interested in Africa as such, as their quest was for a sea route to the Orient, in its turn made all the more attractive as the Ottoman Empire, after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, had gained control of the old Silk Route through Central Asia.[91]

As the Portuguese seafarers moved down along the western coast of Africa they established trading posts, initially without showing much interest in what the continent might contain other than the food and other provisions needed for the onward journey towards the Orient. However, with the gradual Portuguese exploitation of Brazil and the Spanish exploitation of the silver mines in South and Central America, a need and a market arose for slaves as robust and cheap labour – hence the infamous "triangular trade" in African slaves.[92] Even though pope Pius II had in 1462 declared slavery to be *magnum scelus*, i.e. a great crime, the Catholic Church was quite willing to turn a blind eye to the slave trade and only very gradually came around to a more critical view,[93] albeit mainly with regard to the Muslim slave trade.

Along with the traders and seafarers gradually came Christian missionaries, yet without making much of an impact, if only because the first colonialists had little interest in the continent or its peoples.[94] A significant convert to Christianity was, however, the ruler of the kingdom of Kongo in the present Angola, who Christianised his kingdom, but where the new faith did not survive long.[95]

The real breakthrough for Christianity in Africa came with the aforementioned "scramble for Africa" in the late 19th Century, where the European powers attempted to establish actual control over their respective slices of the continent.[96] Central auxiliaries in this quest for overseas colonies were the various Christian missionary societies, whose task it was to win the "hearts and minds" of the peoples of the new colonies, thereby making control less demanding in term of manpower.[97]

This entailed not only proselytism and evangelisation, but also the provision of real services to (segments of) the population, manifested in the establishment of schools, hospitals and similar institutions.[98] The ideologies promulgated by

the missionaries included such as gave the subjects of the respective colonial empire an obligation to work hard, i.e. to "eat their food by the sweat of their brows" (*Genesis*, 3:19), to rest content themselves with merely a small part of the produce of their labour, thus "giving to Caesar what is Caesar's" (*Matthew* 22:21). Above all, however, they were to remain submissant. The colonial subject was thus urged to

> submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves (*Romans*, 13:1).

The missions and churches were initially run by European and American missionaries with a distinctly paternalistic attitude (such as the "White Fathers"),[99] sometimes bordering on outright racism, but there was also a black American missionary movement, partly related to the growing anti-slavery movement and recruited among former slaves in the United States.[100]

The very same global movement was also implicated in the two special cases of colonisation, where it was a matter of settling former slaves after their manumission and of disposing of so-called "recaptives", i.e. slaves liberated by the Royal Navy's boarding of slaving ships on the high seas.[101] Two such colonies were set up, in Liberia[102] and Sierra Leone,[103] of which the former received an influx of black Americans, whereas the latter became a haven for so-called "Congos", a somewhat derogatory generic term for African recaptives. These "Congos" came from all of Africa, but the British abolitionists did not see any need for distinctions, but held the simplistic view that "Africa is Africa".

In both cases, new elites were created, the members of which were, in the words of Basil Davidson,

> all absolutely African in their origins; and yet they were divided from Africa by an acute experience of alienation. Africa had sent them into slavery. Europe, but especially Britain, had rescued and set them free. Converted to Christianity by the campaigning missionaries of the nineteenth century, the liberated victims naturally looked to Britain as the shrine of salvation (…) They saw themselves in any case as the agents of

Christian civilization in an Africa sorely in need (…) of every form of salvation.[104]

Box 1: *King Leopold's Soliloquy* (Mark Twain)
Miscreants – they are telling *everything!* Oh, everything: how I went pilgriming among the Powers in tears, with my mouth full of Bible and my pelt oozing with piety at every pore, and implored them to place the vast and rich populous Congo Free State in trust in my hands as their agent, so that I might root out slavery and stop the slave raids, and lift up those twenty-five millions of gentle and harmless blacks out of darkness into light, the light of our blessed Redeemer, the light that streams from his holy Word, the light that makes glorious our noble civilization – lift them up and dry their tears and fill their bruised hearts with joy and gratitude – lift them up and make them comprehend that they were no longer outcasts and forsaken, but our very brothers in Christ.

The new Europeanised and Christian elites became "creolised" and made a point of distinguishing themselves from the natives, both via their religion, "secret societies" such as the Freemasons (*vide infra*) and via dress and mores, thus laying the foundations of later ethnic conflicts, typically pitting the coastal elites against the subalterns in the hinterland.

In most of the rest of Africa Christianity (typically personified in missionaries) was deeply involved and implicated in the entire colonial project from its very beginning. The most problematic such involvement was undoubtedly that in the Congo Free State under the reign of King Leopold II. What was in reality a ruthless and cynical quest for profits derived from the economic exploitation of the Congo and its riches (e.g. rubber) was couched in terms of "spreading the faith" and "evangelising the heathen", as satirically described by Mark Twain in his venomous *King Leopold's Soliloquy* (see box 1).[105]

Indeed, Leopold's reign was initially "legitimated" with reference to the need to combat (Arab) slavery,[106] even though his own exploitation of the indigenous population came very close to slavery, exacting a death toll of genocidal proportions among the indigenous population.[107] Even though the Church was thus implicated in these "crimes against humanity" (as they would be labelled

today),[108] it must in all fairness be added that there also Christian clergy among Leopold's sternest critics, among whom George Washington Williams who concluded his open letter to the Belgian monarch (18th July 1890) with an "appeal to our Heavenly Father".[109]

Christianity also played a central role in providing theological justifications for the introduction and maintenance of apartheid, often referred to as a special case of colonialism. In South Africa, the Dutch Reformed Church (NGK, of Calvinist persuasion)[110] was thus all too happy to support the regime from the very beginning until the late 1980s,[111] when it finally came around to admit the incompatibility of Christianity and apartheid. However, the South African Council of Churches had, by the late 1980s, come under black leadership and it played an important role in the struggle against apartheid.[112]

There were, however, several exceptions to the rule of missionary support for colonialism, e.g. in the form of (at least verbal) support for African resistance or more substantial support for the victims of the brutal counter-insurgency campaigns of the colonialists. This was, for instance, the case during the Herero War in the German colony of South-West Africa, i.e. the present Namibia (1904-5), where the missionaries both petitioned for mercy for the defeated rebels and protested against the genocidal form of counter-insurgency applied by the colonial army – thereby paving the way for an almost complete conversion of the Herero nation to Christianity in the aftermath of the war.[113] Even during the insurgency some resistance seems to have been motivated by indigenised forms of Christianity,[114] and in the following period Christian converts occasionally used their new religion as a means of asserting their national identity, thus spurring a "passive" (in the sense of non-violent) resistance. This could, paradoxically, even involve the demonstrative use of such ridiculous emblems of European culture as the use of top hats by indigenous clergy, as persuasively argued by Philipp Prein:

> Africans did not so much decide between adapting and rejecting Christianity; rather, they appropriated its ideoms and struggled for access to them against the claims of the mission. They defended their notions of Christianity against German claims to possess the only valid interpretation (…) Indeed, in this sense Franz's resistance represented a sincere threat to the colonial system. It did so not because Franz planned it that way, but because ultimately the colonial system was unable to deal with African thought, culture and action.[115]

Africanisation of Christianity

Whereas the Christian missions and churches were initially manned with whites from Europe or the United States, as well as controlled from the overseas, even before independence most African churches had become "Africanised". In some cases (as that of the rather bizarre Kenyan "cliterodectomy crisis" described in the section on Kenya below) this was a result of a clash of cultures. In others, it was the result of a learning process, in the course of which missionaries came to realise the inherent limitations of the initial paternalistic approach. In still others, it was a simple matter of a shortage of personnel, necessitating the training of indigenous preachers. Some of these African clerics later became proponents of African rights, national consciousness and even independence, as was the case of, for instance, rev. Edward Blyden, one of the first African nationalists.[116]

In any case, this Africanisation not only entailed the establishment of independent African religious institutions and a growth of the African share of the clergy. It also affected the substance, as the new forms of Christianity (in most cases, but not always) became more "flexible" in their attitude to indigenous belief systems and, perhaps even more so, religious practices, hence partly syncretic – processes which have continued after the attainment of independence. This was, to a limited extent, the case of the growth of the strong Kimbanguist movement in the Congo, founded in the colonial period and recognised as a church in 1959.[117] It is, to an even greater extent, the case of some of the more recent "charismatic" (or even "ecstatic") Christian sects which have become very prominent role on the religious scene in Africa, including Pentecostalism.[118]

Table 3: Global Growth of Pentecostalism (mill.)					
	1900	**1970**	**1990**	**1995**	**2000**
Pentecostalism	1	72	425	477	524
Christians total	558	1,236	1,747	1,877	1,999
Share	0%	6%	24%	25%	26%

Pentecostalism is, by far, the most rapidly growing Christian denominations (if so it is) in the world (see Table 3),[119] and especially in Africa. Some estimates have it that Africa is home to 41 million Pentecostals, whereas other sources count as many as 126 million.[120] Even if the numbers are thus controversial nobody is disputing the basic facts, i.e. that Pentecostalism is growing very fast

(not least in Nigeria and the rest of West Africa)[121] and holds the promise of becoming the world's leading form of Christianity and of making Africa the centre of Christendom. Perhaps significantly, the most recent conference of the Pentecostal World Conference was thus held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in September 2004.[122]

Box 2: Pentecostalism: Central Biblical Passages
And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues (*Mark* 16:17)

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (*Acts* 2:1-4)

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. (*Acts* 10:44-48)

Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied (*Acts* 19:2-6)

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines (*1 Corinthians* 12:7-11)

The theology of Pentecostalism (see Box 2) places the main emphasis on the Holy Spirit, i.e. on pneumatology as opposed to Christology, but the Pentecostals are divided as to the "status" of this Spirit between "oneness" and "Trinitarian" Pentecostalists,[123] i.e. on whether the one God merely has three manifestations or somehow comprises three persons – a dispute with a significance which escapes non-believers such as the present author. What further characterises their views is the emphasis on glossolalia, i.e. "speaking in tongues" as a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit.[124]

What may explain its obvious appeal to Africans is the emphasis on praxis over theory and personal experience over dogma,[125] and the fact that is has been undogmatic and flexible enough to allow for a "syncretic" co-optation of many indigenous African beliefs.[126] Pentecostal services are thus generally very emotional, sometimes inducing trance-like altered states of consciousness.[127]

What may also make Pentecostalism attractive to Africans are the promises of empowerment and even enrichment of the followers (reminiscent, in some respects, of the bizarre Melanesian "cargo cults"),[128] which is surely something with an appeal to poor and disempowered Africans. In many respects Pentecostalism, as many other forms of Evangelism, is thus directed towards an improvement in this world rather than to the afterlife, perhaps even biased towards consumerism.[129] Indeed, Pentecostal ministers seem to make a point of flushing their prosperity as evidence of their being blessed. The funeral of the Nigerian preacher Benson Idahosa thus featured a specially imported coffin, a US$ 120,000 tomb and a funeral cortege of expensive cars, and the possessions of his church (Church of God Mission International Inc.) were inherited by his wife.[130] Part of the explanation for such wealth may be the skilful use which the Pentecostal churches have made of such modern media as TV and video,[131] pretty much like in the United States.

The Pentecostal churches are thus catering for a "market", implying that they must meet some basic needs of their constituencies.[132] One of these needs may be related to the aforementioned beliefs in witchcraft, sorcery and spirit possessions, prevalent in all African societies. Rather than simply rejecting such beliefs as heathen, pagan or heretical, Pentecostalism has arguably embraced and co-opted them, interpreting spirit possession as the presence of a demon,[133] thereby being able to offer its services for exorcism and deliverance in the name of God.[134]

It has even been persuasively argued by one of the most prominent students of Pentecostalism, Birgit Meyer, that the religion has been able to "disenchant the market", i.e. to remove the spells sometimes believed to be attached to (economically unobtainable) commodities, but thereby actually, paradoxically and probably inadvertently, contributing the enchantment of the economy[135] in a baroque and extreme form of the "commodity fetishism" and alienation analysed by Hegel and Marx.[136] She further criticises Pentecostalism's "gospel of prosperity" for substituting symbolic assistance to the economic plight of their congregations rather than the actual social work undertaken by many other churches. She thus recalls a fasting service in The Lord's Pentecostal Church in Ghana, where she heard "the pastor ask all members to rise, close their eyes and fill in a cheque in their minds which was then sent up to heaven; the people were assured that God would sign this cheque and that they would, in the future, receive the money requested – if only they believed".[137] While a certain "placebo effect" is perhaps conceivable (say, if this ritual instils hope in the believer, allowing him or her to undertake, sometimes lucrative, economic ventures), it is surely not the most effective form of poverty alleviation.

Pentecostal preachers and ministers have further acted as diviners and prophets as well as in the role as healers, both of which also go down well in societies where the future seems uncertain (and bleak) and where health systems are utterly inadequate.[138] Perhaps even more importantly, however, they seem to have often offered some hope and self-confidence to people in desperate need thereof. [139] Hence perhaps the attraction it seems to have offered to e.g. people coming out of armed conflict such as the Igbo in Nigeria after the Biafra war of the late 1960s.[140] However, such "services" are not without problems. For instance, whereas Pentecostalism may give women a sense of worth, it also tends to legitimise the patriarchal system.[141] It may also be (ab)used to boost the legitimacy of regimes which do not really deserve it, as has been the case (rather paradoxically) with the ZANU-PF regime in Zimbabwe[142] and (somewhat more logically) with the reign in Zambia of ("born again") Frederick Chiluba, who went so far as proclaiming the country a "Christian nation".[143]

Christianity, Armed Conflicts and Genocide

As we shall see in the section on Uganda, Christianity (or rather some rather bizarre versions of syncretic Christian beliefs) has been involved in the ongoing civil war with what began as the Holy Spirit Movement and is now known as the Lord's Resistance Army. An even more dramatic example of the (ab)use of Christianity for violence, however, is the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

Box 3: Noah's Curse

The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the earth. Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father's nakedness. When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, he said, "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers." He also said, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem. May God extend the territory of Japheth; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be his slave." (*Genesis* 9:21-27)

One of the ideas used by the Catholic Church (including the famous and immensely influential historian and cleric Alexis Kagame, 1912-81) was the "Hamitic myth", derived from the Old Testament (see Box 3) about the "lost tribe of Israel". Through history and in different parts of the world this myth has alternatively been exploited to depict certain ethnic or other groups as inferior *qua* descendents on the infamous Ham – or, indeed, for the exact opposite, i.e. the "theory" that a particular group is superior to various indigenous tribes by virtue of its decent from the Israelites. The myth has thus been abused to defend anti-Semitism in Germany, slavery in America and it is presently found in the anti-Semitic and white supremacy ideologies of some of the most extreme right-wing groups in the United States.[144] In Rwanda the myth was mainly used by Hutu extremists to portray the Tutsi as alien conquerors from Ethiopia, to which country they should be returned, as formulated in a speech by Léon Mugesere in 1992, who obviously referred to dumping the bodies of the "Hamites" in the Nyabarongo River leading to Ethiopia.[145]

Not only had the Catholic Church contributed to laying the foundations for ethnic resentment by initially privileging the ("Hamitic", hence superior) Tutsi and then from the mid-1950 switching to privileging the Hutus[146] and provid-

ing some kind of divine sanction for their racist attitudes. Members of the clergy, from bishops to ordinary priests and nuns, also took an active part in first planning and then orchestrating and perpetrating the genocide itself, and some of the worst atrocities actually took place in the churches.[147] Moreover, the international Catholic Church stubbornly refused to acknowledge, much less to contribute to stopping, the genocide, once it was in full progress.[148]

Summary
We have thus seen that all three religious families have had a considerable appeal to Africans, albeit for different reasons. The many varieties of traditional religion, Islam and Christianity all have further been used and abused for both oppression and liberation, and all three have been accomplices to both armed conflicts and widespread violence – just as all three have also contributed to peace. Neither of them can really claim the high moral ground over the others.

Religion, Conflict and terrorism in East Africa

Following this general overview of religion and conflict in Africa, we shall now "zoom in" on East Africa. The region (if so it is) is for the present purposes defined as comprising Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, i.e. the countries comprising the sub-regional organisation IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development)[149] plus Tanzania which belongs to another organisation, but nevertheless seems to identify itself mainly as an East African state.

In the present chapter an overview of some general features is provided, presenting a rather mixed picture with no obvious patterns. This is followed by an assessment of the alleged risk of (Islamic and other) religiously-inspired terrorism. For specifics, the reader is referred to the following chapter, featuring country case studies.

Fig. 4: East Africa

Clash of Civilisations/Religions in East Africa?

Statistics of the religious affiliation of the populations in the states of East Africa are generally quite poor. The overall picture is nevertheless given in Table 4, which is based on the 2005 edition of the US State Department's annual *International Religious Freedom Report.*[150]

Table 4: Religion in East Africa: Summary (2005)								
Country	**Rel. Free-dom**	**Religious Demography (%)**						**Rel. con-flict**
		Christians		**Muslims**		**Other**		
Djibouti	PF			Sunni	99			No
Eritrea	PF	Orth Cath Prot	30 5 2	Sunni	60	Trad	2	?
Ethiopia	PF	Orth Evan	*45* 10	Sunni	*45*	Misc	?	?
Kenya	PF	Prot Cath	38 28	Sunni	*7*	Misc	?	?
Somalia	NF	?	?	Sunni	100	Misc	?	No
Sudan	NF	Misc	10	Sunni	65	Trad	25	Yes
Tanzania	PF	Misc	30-40	Sunni	30-40	Misc	?	?
Uganda	PF	Cath Prot Misc	42 36 7	Sunni	12	Misc	2	Yes
Legend: PF: Partly Free; NF: Not Free; Orth: Orthodox Christian; Cath: Roman Catholic; Prot: Protestant; Evan: Evangelical and Pentecostal; Trad: Traditional Religion; Misc.: Miscellaneous; Italics: contested figure								

No general picture seems to emerge from these figures. Two countries (Djibouti and Somalia) are overwhelmingly Muslim and two are overwhelmingly Christian, namely Kenya and Uganda, whereas there is a more even mix in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and Tanzania.

Regional alignments (or what others call "patterns of amity and enmity")[151] between states do not at all appear to follow "Huntingtonian" inter-civilisational fault-lines.[152] The two religiously mixed (but Christian-dominated) countries, Ethiopia and Eritrea, were thus quite recently (1998-2000) at war with each other, whereas relations between Christian Ethiopia and Muslim-dominated Sudan are quite amicable, but relations between the two almost entirely Muslim countries, Somalia and Djibouti are quite strained.[153]

Neither does the pattern of intra-state conflicts seem to conform to any amended version of the clash of civilisations theory, in the sense, for instance, that religiously mixed countries should be more conflict-prone than religiously homogenous

ones and that the fault-lines within them should be determined by religion. Whereas this is, at least partly, true of the north-south conflict in Sudan, it is not at all the case of the Darfur conflict (*vide infra*), and the general picture of the region does not support this hypothesis either. On the contrary, the most conflict-ridden of all countries in the region is Somalia which is almost totally homogenous, both ethnically and with regard to religion – whereas the equally homogenous Djibouti has largely been spared (religious or other) conflicts, as has the secessionist Somaliland, which has been de facto independent since 1991, albeit without achieving international recognition (*vide infra*). Ethiopia and Tanzania resemble each other by both having an approximately even share of Christians and Muslims (and by being dominated by the Christians), but whereas the former has been rife with conflict for decades, the latter is almost a haven on tranquillity (see Table 5).

Table 5: Religion/Conflict in East Africa			
Conflict	Dominance		Mix
Relig.	Christian	Muslim	
- Yes	Uganda	Sudan	Eritrea Ethiopia
- No	Tanzania	Djibouti	Kenya
Other		Somalia	

It is not even the case that the unfortunate propensity of states for proxy warfare through support for rebel movements in neighbouring countries is determined by religion.[154] There have certainly been instances of Muslim states supporting Islamist rebels, e.g. Somali support for first the WSLF (Western Somali Liberation Front) and then the ONLF (Ogaden National Liberation Front),[155] but such support might just as well be explained by ethnic kinship.[156] Moreover, there are also examples of "cross-religious proxy warfare", such as the support from (Islamist) Sudan for the (Christian) Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda or Eritrean support for the Islamist JEM (Justice and Equality Movement) in Darfur (*vide infra*).

Neither the predominance of any particular religion nor any particular mix of religions within or between countries does thus seem to predestine countries for conflict or to determine the patterns of conflict. However, since the 11th

of September 2001, special attention has been given to one particular form of conflict, namely terrorism and especially to "international terrorism" as a rather ill-defined species of this genus. Whether there are serious risks of such terrorism in East Africa, whether this is determined by religion and, if so, whether any particular religion merits special concern – those are the questions to which we shall now turn.

Religious Terrorism in East Africa?

It seems to be a rather widespread view that East Africa is a potential "hotspot" of Islamic terrorism.[157] For instance, the United States in 2003 launched a special East Africa Counter-Terrorism Initiative (EACTI), intended to help the states in the region to prevent or contain and defeat terrorism in their respective societies, premised on the assumption that it constitutes a serious problem.[158]

However, the available statistical data do not seem to really support the alarmist view of the threat. Table 6 below is compiled as a complete listing of all the terrorist incidents in the region, based on the incident records in the "Terrorism Knowledge Base".[159] This seems as good as any other database and one that is unlikely to underestimate the threat, as it is referred to as the authoritative database by the very same US Counterterrorism Office which has placed the spotlight on East Africa.

Table 6: Terrorist Incidents in East Africa, 1998-2005

Country	Year	Date	Inc.	Inj.	Fat.	Perp.	Nature	Targ.
Djibouti	2004	18/01	B	6	0	?	?	Train
Eritrea	2003	10/08	As	1	2	EIJM	Isl	Car
	2004	01/03	B	12	3	EIJM	Isl	Hotel
	2004	24/05	B	50	3	?	?	Gov.
Ethiopia	1999	03/04	K	0	0	ONLF	Pol	Aid
	1999	13/11	B	1	2	?	?	Train
	2000	22/03	LM	1	14	OLF	Pol	Kenyans
	2000	17/08	R	0	6	?	?	El. mon.
	2002	23/07	B	?	?	OLF	Pol	Vehicle
	2002	11/09	B	38	1	?	?	Hotel
	2003	19/01	M	1	0	?	?	?
	2003	20/03	B	12	0	?	?	Hotel
	2003	10/09	AA	?	1	?	?	Aid
	2003	26/09	B	9	2	?	?	Train
	2004	04/01	B	0	0	?	?	Vehicle
	2004	05/04	AA	0	0	OLF	Pol	Education
	2004	02/05	AA	3	1	OLF	Pol	Business
	2004	24/06	B	?	?	OLF	Pol	Gov.
Kenya	1998	07/08	B/S	5,000	291	AQ	Isl	US Emb.
	2002	28/11	R	0	0	AQ	Isl	Aircraft
	2002	28/11	B/S	80	13	AQ	Isl	Hotel
	2002	18/12	B	0	0	?	?	Discotec
	2002	20/12	Ar	0	0	?	?	Discotec
	2003	08/03	B	0	0	?	?	Mosque
Somalia	1998	15/04	K	?	?	?	?	Aid
	1999	19/09	B	0	0	ULA	Isl	Oil pipeline
	2001	16/11	AA	9	18	?	?	Quran School
	2003	28/07	B	0	0	?	?	Hotel
	2004	20/06	K	?	?	?	?	NGO
	2004	04/10	As	0	1	?	?	Aid worker
	2005	09/02	As	0	1	AI	Isl	Journ.
	2005	17/02	B	6	2	?	?	Hotel
	2005	03/05	B	38	15	?	?	Gov.
	2005	11/07	AA	?	1	?	?	NGO
Sudan	1998	02/07	B	?	?	?	?	Airport
	1998	02/07	B	?	?	?	?	Power plant
	1999	18/02	K	0	4	SPLA	Pol	NGO
	2001	23/01	B	0	0	SPLA	Pol	Oil pipeline
	2001	05/08	?	?	?	SPLA	Pol	Oil pipeline
	2002	26/04	AA	0	60	LRA	Chr	Funeral Party
	2002	15/10	H	?	?	?	?	Saudi aircraft
Tanzania	1998	07/08	B/S	77	10	AQ	Isl	US Emb.
Tanz. (Z)	1999	23/12	B	0	0	?	?	Beer depot
	2004	20/03	B	0	0	?	?	Restaurant
	2004	20/03	B	0	0	?	?	Gov.
	2000	12/11	B	1	0	?	?	Gov.

	1998	04/04	B	2	0	?	?	Hotel
	1998	04/04	B	5	2	?	?	Hotel
	1998	12/07	B	3	1	?	?	Restaurant
	1998	18/07	B	?	?	?	?	Civilians
	1998	25/08	B	6	30	NALU	Pol	Bus
	1998	27/11	AA	17	16	LRA	Chr	Aid
	1999	01/03	B	4	0	?	?	Restaurant
	1999	01/03	K	0	8	IH	Pol	Tourists
	1999	10/04	B	4	0	?	?	Taxi park
	1999	11/04	B	13	2	?	?	Taxi park
	1999	14/04	B	35	4	?	?	Restaurant
	1999	24/04	B	16	5	?	?	Stadium
	1999	06/05	B	1	0	?	?	Civilians
	1999	07/05	B	10	1	?	?	Civilians
	1999	30/05	B	12	2	AMM	Isl	Restaurant
	2000	04/05	K	0	0	LRA	Chr	Rel.
	2000	01/10	As	?	1	LRA	Chr	Rel.
	2000	09/10	B	60	9	LRA	Chr	Disco
	2001	14/03	B	3	2	?	?	Civilians
	2001	16/03	B	4	1	?	?	Civilians
Uganda	2001	07/07	B	13	1	?	?	Civilians
	2002	24/07	K	?	?	LRA	Chr	Gov.
	2003	01/09	Am	?	22	LRA	Chr	Vehicle
	2003	13/10	AA	20	22	LRA	Chr	Restaurant
	2003	18/11	AA	?	12	LRA	Chr	Civilians
	2004	01/02	AA	?	8	LRA	Chr	Civilians
	2004	21/02	B	60	239	LRA	Chr	Refugees
	2004	05/02	AA	50	47	LRA	Chr	Refugees
	2004	14/04	AA	8	13	LRA	Chr	Vehicle
	2004	18/04	K	0	0	LRA	Chr	Rel.
	2004	17/05	AA	10	7	LRA	Chr	Vehicles
	2004	20/12	AA	1	2	LRA	Chr	Vehicle
	2005	19/01	As	0	1	LRA	Chr	MP
	2005	23/02	AA	7	1	LRA	Chr	Civilians
	2005	26/02	Ae	8	1	LRA	Chr	Civilians
	2005	09/03	AA	16	6	LRA	Chr	Civilians
	2005	15/03	AA	7	2	LRA	Chr	Civilians
	2005	26/03	K	13	?	LRA	Chr	Civilians
	2005	05/05	AA	?	4	LRA	Chr	Vehicle
	2005	05/05	AA	14	10	LRA	Chr	IDPs
	2005	10/07	AA	?	14	LRA	Chr	Civilians

Legend: AA: Armed Attack; AI: Al-Islah; Am: Ambush; AMM: Ahmadiya Muslim Mission; AQ: Al Qaeda; Ar: Arson; As: Assass; B: Bomb; C: Christian; EIJM; Eritrean Islamic Jihad Movement; H: Hijacking; I: Islamist; IH: Interahamwe; K: Kidnapping; LM: Land Mine; LRA: Lord's Resistance Army; M: Mortar; NALU: National Army for the Liberation of Uganda; OLF: Oromo Liberation Front; ONLF: Ogaden National Liberation Front; P: Political; R: Rocket; S: Suicide attack; SPLA: Sudan People's Liberation Army; Tanz(Z): Tanzania (Zanzibar); ULA: Ummah Liberation Army

Table 7: Terrorism in East Africa			
Year	Inc.	Inj.	Fat.
1998	11	5,110	350
1999	14	96	28
2000	6	62	30
2001	6	29	22
2002	9	118	74
2003	10	43	61
2004	18	200	324
2005	13	109	58
Av. 1998-2005	10.9	720.9	118.4
Av. 1999-2005	10.9	93.9	85.3
Legend: Inc: Incidents; Inj: Injuries; Fat: Fatalities; Av: Annual Average			

Table 6 above has taken 1998 as the starting year, for the simple reason that this was the first year with data for both international and domestic terrorism. Figures for 2005 were those available on the 18th of December 2005. All the categorisations are based on the author's interpretation of the "raw" incident and group descriptions in the database. However, 1998 was special because of two almost simultaneous incidents, i.e. the attacks on the USA embassies in Kenya and Tanzania on the 7th of August, which account for about one-third of the total fatalities for the entire period and almost ninety percent of the total recorded injuries. The interpretative tables have therefore also included totals without the 1998 figures.

The first observation is that neither the total number of terrorist incidents in the region, nor the numbers of deaths or injuries from terrorist attacks seem particularly alarming. Around eleven incidents on average per year with an annual death toll of around hundred people (See Table 7). Compared with deaths from, e.g. the periodic famines, natural disasters or the HIV-AIDS pandemic haunting the region, the statistical risk of being killed by terrorists is clearly negligible.

Table 8: Terrorism by Motivation			
Motive	**Inc.**	**Inj.**	**Fat.**
Unknown	42	284	71
Political	11	10	57
Christian	26	291	497
Other Islam	8	105	21
Emb. attacks	2	5,077	301

Secondly, as is apparent from Table 8, with the exception of the two incidents on the 7th of August 1998, most terrorism has been politically, rather than religiously, motivated. Moreover, when religion has been the driving force, it has usually not been Islam but Christianity which has spurred the terrorists into action, albeit the particularly perverted and sectarian form of Christianity represented by the LRA, more on which in the case study on Uganda. Twenty times as many people have thus perished in terrorist attacks perpetrated by "Christians" than in ones launched by the dreaded Islamist terrorists of the *al-Qaeda* type.

Thirdly, the terrorist risk seems to vary quite a lot from country to country as set out in Table 9. Uganda clearly comes out as the most terrorist-ridden of the eight, at least if the two embassy attacks are excluded. The table also reveals mainland Tanzania as a very secure country, as all the (small-scale) terrorist incidents have taken place on Zanzibar.

Table 9: Terrorism by Country			
Country	**Inc.**	**Inj.**	**Fat.**
Dibouti	1	6	0
Eritrea	3	63	8
Ethiopia	15	191	43
Kenya (A)	6	5,080	304
Kenya (B)	5	80	13
Somalia	10	53	38
Sudan	7	0	64
Tanzania (A)	5	78	10
Tanzania (B)	4	1	0
Tanzania (C)	0	0	0
Tanzania (D)	4	1	0
Uganda	41	422	496

Legend: Inc: Incidents; Inj: Inju-ries; Fat: Fatalities; (Kenya and Tan-zania) A: Total; B): without embassy bombings; (Tanzania) C: Mainland; D: only Zanzibar

It thus seems that the threat from what the West calls terrorism, and even more so that of Islamic terrorism, is blown completely out of proportion. This may not only be the West's fault, as it may also be in the interest of governments in East Africa to exaggerate the threat. First of all, positioning themselves as the allies of the United States in its global "war on terror" is likely to gain them some much needed goodwill. Secondly, it also makes them eligible for support from the EACTI pool, e.g. for military or police upgrading programmes. Thirdly, and more problematically, it may allow governments to label their opponents terrorists, thereby allowing them to resort to "extraordinary measures" to defeat them, as is entailed by a "securitisation move", regardless of whether this remains pure rhetoric, i.e. a simple "speech act".[160]

On the other hand, even though international terrorists may not be a genuine problem in East Africa, armed conflict certainly is a serious problem for most countries, and some of the parties to such conflicts may actually deserve being labelled as terrorists – and some of them are undoubtedly motivated, at least partly, by religious beliefs, which might make their being categorised as religious terrorists quite appropriate.

East African Case Studies

In the following, a brief overview of the various countries in East Africa is provided which focuses mainly on their various conflicts and the role played by religion therein.

Djibouti

Only a very brief and superficial overview will be provided of Djibouti, both because it is probably the least significant of the region's states, due to its small territory and population (see Box 4) and because it is also one of the most peaceful.

Box 4: Djibouti: Basic Facts *(CIA World Factbook 2005)*	
Independence	1977 (from France)
Area (land)	21,980 sq km
Borders (land)	508 km: Eritrea 113 km, Ethiopia 337 km, Somalia 58 km
Population	476,603 (2005 est.)
Ethnic groups	Somali 60%, Afar 35%, French, Arab, Ethiopian, and Italian 5%
Religion	Muslim 94%, Christian 6%

Djibouti is also the second youngest of the states in East Africa and only appeared on the map when France in 1977 granted independence to what used to be the "French Territory of the Afars and the Issas" (better known as French Somaliland). Indeed, the inhabitants had in 1958 turned down the option of independence in a referendum.

The immediate run-up to independence was characterised by ethnic division and strife, as the Afars dominated "parliament", whereas the Somali majority was effectively disenfranchised, even though the *Ligue Populaire Africaine pour l'Indépendence* (LPAI) was officially recognised whereas the more militant *Front de la Côte des Somalis* (FLCS) was banned and operating out of Somalia. The first elections did, however, invert the roles of the two ethnic groups, as the

ethnic Somalis now won all seats in the new ("real") parliament and the ethnic Somali Hassan Guled became the first president – partly because the Afars had boycotted the elections, resorting instead to extra-parliamentary opposition. In 1991, this escalated to a full-blown armed rebellion over Afar autonomy, which abated after an agreement in 1995,[161] only to flare up again in 1998 for a short while.

However, the rebellion continued as a political opposition, the *Front pour la restauration de l'unite et de la democratie* (FRUD) which on the 12th of May 2001 signed a peace agreement with the government (now under the nephew of the first president, Ismail Omar Guelleh) laying down arms in return for some decentralisation of the country and five seats in the government.[162] Nevertheless, there remain serious contenders to the predominance of the ruling party, the People's Rally for Progress, even including a government in exile,[163] and the human rights record leaves quite a lot to be desired.[164] The democratic record is also not beyond reproach, to say the least. Djibouti thus remained a one-party state until 1992 when three additional parties were allowed to register. In September 2002, President Ismael Omar Guelleh announced the introduction of a genuine multi-party system.[165] As it happened, however, the former government bloc won all 65 seats in the national assembly at the elections in January 2003.[166] In the 2005 elections, Guelleh was re-elected, unsurprisingly, as the opposition boycotted the elections.[167]

While Djibouti has thus not been completely free from conflicts, or even armed ones, these have, first of all, been on a much smaller scale than in neighbouring Ethiopia, Eritrea or Somalia. Secondly, none of them have much to do with religion, as both the Somalis and the Afar are Muslims (the six percent listed in Box 4 being mainly expatriates) and neither of their significant political representations are Islamist.[168] Even though the government has been accused of being an instrument of the Somalia-based *Al-Ittihad* movement (*vide infra*) and of having a secret Islamisation agenda,[169] this could probably safely be dismissed as Ethiopian propaganda. While the constitution proclaims Islam to be the state religion, and the president is required to take a religious oath on his inauguration, there does not seem to be any significant opposition to these arrangements.[170]

Since 11 September 2001 Djibouti has become an important "hub" in the US "war on terror", allowing the United States to open a base in 2002 (CJTF-HOA:

Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa, under the auspices of CENTCOM: Central Command). However, this is not so much intended for operations in East Africa as in the Persian Gulf and Yemen.[171]

Ethiopia
Both with regard to size and location, Ethiopia is a very important country, being the largest in the region and sharing borders with five of its other states, quite a few of which are contested (See Box 5). Here we find both a wealth of conflicts and a significant religious element in at least some of them.

Box 5: Ethiopia: Basic Facts *(CIA World Factbook 2005)*	
Indepen-dence	Independent for at least 2,000 years
Area land)	1,119,683 sq km
Borders (land)	5,311 km (Djibouti 337 km, Eritrea 912 km, Kenya 830 km, Somalia 1,626 km, Sudan 1,606 km)
Population	73,053,286 (2005 estimate)
Ethnic groups	Oromo 40%, Amhara and Tigre 32%, Sidamo 9%, Shankella 6%, Somali 6%, Afar 4%, Gurage 2%, other 1%
Religion	Muslim 45-50%, Ethiopian Orthodox 35-40%, animist 12%, other 3%-8%

From Axum and the Ethiopian Empire to the Dergue
Ethiopia is arguably one of the world's oldest states, able to trace its history back to the kingdom of Axum, established around 100 BC (i.e. during the early Iron Age) by the Tigrayans in the northern parts of the present Ethiopia. This was a rather decentralised political structure where only Axum proper was under the rule of the king, whereas vassal states merely paid tribute to Axum's suzerainty.[172] From an early stage (fourth century AD) Christianity became the official religion, underpinning the monarchy – as reflected in the mediaeval myth of the legendary Christian monarch "Prester John".[173]

Contrary to the neighbouring Christian kingdom of Nubia (roughly the present Sudan), Ethiopia managed to withstand the pressure from Islam and to survive

as an independent Christian kingdom. It was gradually transformed from the larger multiethnic Axumite empire into the smaller kingdom of Ethiopia (also known as Abyssinia), which was initially based on the Tigrayan population, but later came to be dominated by the Amhara ethnic group.

A very important unifying element was the myth (including grains of historical truth) about the Solomonid dynasty, the founder of which, Menelik I (ca. 970-933 BC), was held to be the son of none others than the biblical King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. This special version of the aforementioned "Hamitic myth" is, inter alia, found in the national epic, the *Kibre Negest* ("Glory of the Kings").[174] Another element of cohesion of the empire was the recruitment of an exclusively Christian army, as well as the granting of considerable autonomy to the constituent parts of the empire.[175] In the onslaught on it by Muslims in 16th century, led by Ahmad Gran, however, Ethiopia had to accept the assistance of the Portuguese.[176]

The Christian monarchy rested fairly firmly on an almost European-style feudal system,[177] which provided it with quite substantial military strength. Having nevertheless been defeated by the Europeans in 1867, Abyssinia transformed its "feudal levy" system of enrolment into a genuine national army, which allowed it to withstand the pressure from neighbouring Muslim states. Under Emperor Yohannes (1872-1889) it was thus able to repel Egyptian invasions as well as the Mahdist onslaught from Sudan (*vide infra* under Sudan). By the 1890s, under Emperor Menelik II (1889-1913), Ethiopia was able to field an army numbering around 100,000 troops, capable of repulsing, in the famous Battle of Adowa in 1896, an attempted conquest by another Christian power, i.e. Italy.[178] This victory was followed up with raids against neighbouring states to expand the empire with territories mainly populated by Muslims such as the majority of the Oromi and almost all the Somali – but, at least according to some historians, nevertheless sharing a cultural identity as "Greater Ethiopia".[179]

After a brief interlude with the weak regent Lej Iyasu (1913-16),[180] a *coup d'état* in 1916 brought Ras Tafari Mekonnen to power as regent under the Empress Zawditu, and he was in 1930 crowned as Emperor under the name of Hailie Selassie. He later (but even during his lifetime) became a symbol of African pride and resistance. Indeed, he is even worshipped as a deity by the rather weird Rastafarian cult, which has a substantial number of followers, mainly among the African diaspora in the Caribbean, but also in Africa.[181] In actual fact,

however, Hailie Selassie did much less well than Menelik II, when the fascist regime of Italy in 1935 invaded Ethiopia in an attempt to establish a colony.[182] Having been defeated, he was only reinstated by the British after their victory of the Italians.

During the reign of Hailie Selassie, the Ethiopian empire exhibited many feudal characteristics, including an extremely uneven land distribution and an almost complete lack of democratic structures.[183] Apart from military strength and control of appointments, and a combination of patriarchalism with traditional patrimonialism,[184] the Emperor also derived legitimacy from his mythical dynastic descent from King Solomon as well as from the support given to the monarchy by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC), a branch of what is often referred to as "monophysitism", even though it prefers the characterisation as "non-Chalcedonean".[185] The EOTC was until 1959 subordinated to the Coptic church of Egypt, but ever since this attainment of autocephaly, it has been independent, albeit not spared some attempts at interference from the "mother church".[186]

By the end of Hailie Selassie's reign, the presence of the Church was visible everywhere, with a ratio of one clergy per forty Christians, a total of a quarter million priests, deacons and cantors, fifteen thousand churches, and 800 monasteries with 15,000 monks – all representing a substantial drain on the resources of one of the world's poorest country,[187] That religion served as an important underpinning of the Empire does not mean, however, that it was completely subordinated to the monarch. On the contrary, the OETC was fairly autonomous – basing its legitimacy, among other things, on its control of what is still claimed to be the original Ark of the Covenant (the *tabot*) – and only rarely did secular powers interfere in church matters, or vice versa.[188]

Because of the symbiotic relationship between the crown and the church, other religions were disregarded and discriminated against, albeit only rarely really persecuted. Muslims were neither allowed to own land nor allowed into the civil service and *sharia* courts were granted no legal status, but they were usually permitted to operate without government interference, mainly with de facto jurisdiction over family law for the Muslim population. Needless to say, the Muslim community also did not enjoy any of the very substantial subsidies given to the EOTC.[189] Traditional religions also continued to play a role, either directly or through syncretic elements in Christianity or Islam.[190]

After having badly mishandled a severe famine,[191] the Emperor was overthrown in a military coup in 1974, bringing to power the so-called *Dergue*, which abolished feudalism in favour of a rather ill-conceived socialism – and which became increasingly dictatorial and despotic under the leadership of Mengistu Hailie Mariam.[192] After some initial attempts at reconciliation with the various ethnic rebel movements among the Oromi, the Somali and the Eritreans, which had already sprung up during the Empire, the *Dergue* proceeded with the attempted military suppression of the rebellions, as had the empire – yet with exactly the same lack of success.[193]

The church was, likewise, subjected to some oppression by the *Dergue*, which abolished its status as state church and subsequently secretly executed its patriarch, enforcing the election of a successor expected (as it turned out, wrongly) to be more accommodating and subsequently (in 1988) having a third candidate appointed under heavy pressure. The latter (Patriarch Abune Merkorios) became so compromised by the collaboration with the Mengistu regime that he had to abdicate upon the latter's defeat in 1991.[194] In addition, some church lands were also confiscated.[195]

The religious persecution also affected other religious denominations, such as the rather substantial Jewish population (known as *Falasha* or *Beta Israel*), some of which were "rescued" (i.e. airlifted to Israel) in 1985 in "Operation Moses", launched by Israel with some discrete assistance from Sudan and again in 1991 immediately before the fall of the *Dergue*.[196] The Muslim population however, initially seems to have benefited from the *Dergue* regime, but as this became increasingly committed to Marxism-Leninism as well as more and more dictatorial, some of the religious rights initially granted to Muslim were retracted.[197]

The EPRDF, Ethnicity, Nationalism and Religion

Whereas there had thus for centuries been religious elements in the various conflicts in the Ethiopian multinational empire, they had only rarely predominated. Most conflicts had predominantly been national and, at most, referred to religion (mainly Islam) as a complementary argument in support of the nationalist cause. Religious identities simply tended to overlap with the ethnic and territorial ones, as the Abyssinian Shoa (both Amhara and Tigrayans) and immediately adjacent areas tend to be Orthodox Christian whereas the more distant provinces, including those in which the majority of the population were Oromi or Somalis, are predominantly or almost entirely Muslim.[198] It was thus

inherently plausible that the formula adopted by the present regime, the EPRDF, of democracy and ethnic federalism (*vide infra*) would go a long way towards defusing the religious issue.

The EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front) was created through a merger of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) under the leadership of the present President (subsequently Prime Minister) Meles Zenawi with other national liberation movement such as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). In 1991 the armed forces of the TPLF and the EPLF (Eritrean People's Liberation Front, *vide infra*) captured Asmara and Addis Ababa, respectively, and deposed the *Dergue* – the TPLF assisted by the pressure of the OPLF on the regime in the southern parts of the country.

Having effectively allowed Eritrea to secede (*vide infra* in the section on Eritrea), the EPDFR then proceeded with the introduction of democracy, at least on paper, including a constitution granting an extensive array of civil and religious rights to the population, including a separation of state and religion (art. 11).[199] The constitution also codified the new formula of "ethnic federalism" for solving the national problems, entailing the proclamation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE)[200] and making ethnic federalism the basis of an administrative subdivision into "national regional states" and "special administrative areas".[201] The constitution even grants these constituent parts the right to further subdivision (art. 47) as well as, even more surprisingly, the right to secession from Ethiopia under specific conditions, i.e. presupposing a two-thirds majority in the state legislature and a subsequent referendum (art. 39).

While this might seem to indicate that ethnic federalism is the antithesis of state-building, it may also be the case that the granting of such extensive rights to the various ethnic groups (and their definition in territorial terms) may be the only viable compromise which will prevent disintegration, or even state collapse, by violent means. It is, of course, also entirely conceivable that ethnic federalism is pure window-dressing, and that actual secession will never be tolerated.[202] At the very least, however, the formula seems to have pacified most of the armed nationalist insurgencies and thereby also indirectly solved most religious conflicts.

Even though Ethiopian history has seen many national liberation movements,

the most important have surely been those of the Oromi (also known as Galla), the Somalis and the Eritreans.

- Oromo nationalism was partly a response to an Abyssinian imperialism posing as Christian, hence it occasionally posed as Muslim, even though quite a number of Oromi were in fact Christians.[203] The EPRDF sought to pacify the OLF by cooptation as well as by supporting new parties to represent the Oromi nation: the Oromo Peoples Democratic Organisation (OPDO), a member of the ruling coalition, as well as the Oromo Liberation United Front (OLUF) and the Oromo National Congress (ONC), both of which became represented in parliament. However, the traditional "representatives" of the Oromi have been the OLF, the goal of which is "to exercise the Oromo peoples' inalienable right to national self-determination".[204] The wording notwithstanding, this has not so much been a call for actual secession as for equal treatment, reflecting a sense of repression and exploitation of the Oromi by successive Amharic and Tigrayan rules in Addis and a desire for an influence proportional to the Oromi share of the total population. The OLF reserves for itself the right of armed struggle, but it claims "an unswerving anti-terrorism stand and opposes terrorism as means of struggle".[205]
- As far as the Somali region of Ethiopia (mainly the Ogaden) is concerned, the link between Somali nationalism and Islam has been more authentic, as virtually all ethnic Somalis are indeed Muslims.[206] The Ogaden province has now been renamed Somalia National Regional State and is represented in parliament by the Somali People Democratic Party (SPDP). The veteran Western Somalia Liberation Front (WSLF), founded in the mid-seventies, has now been overshadowed by the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), created by defectors from the WSLF. Other ethnic Somali organisations include the locally-based SALF (Somali Abo Liberation Front) and the radical Islamist organisation *Al-Ittihad al-Islamia* (Islamic Union Party), labelled by both the Ethiopian government and the United States as a terrorist organisation.[207]
- Finally, until the secession of Eritrea in 1991 (formalised in 1993), the secessionist movement of Eritrea was probably the most serious challenge, but this problem was solved by the granting of independence – even though this was followed in 1998 by a war between the two countries. I have relegated the treatment of the Eritrean liberation movements and their religious components to the following section devoted to Eritrea.

The Present Situation

In the evaluation of a country the size and complexity of Ethiopia one should probably not set one's standards too high. Against the historical background of an empire and an almost totalitarian dictatorship, the present state of democracy must, for all its undeniable shortcomings, surely be acknowledged as a tremendous improvement. Elections are certainly not completely free and fair, but at least they are held with the participation of an authentic opposition. The various ethnic groups comprising the Ethiopian nations may not be completely equal, but at least all of them enjoy certain rights and have a certain representation – and what remains of armed liberation struggles are minuscule compared to the not so distant past.

As far as religion is concerned, religious freedoms still leave scope for improvement, but they are generally satisfactory. The US State Department's *International Religious Freedom Report 2005* thus reported that "The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, on occasion local authorities infringe on this right." It further reports of good working relations between the government and the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council (EIASC), of a "generally amicable relationship among religions in society", and of a "decrease in inter-religious conflict and clashes". There is a general ban on the formation of political parties based on religion, but it has never been tested in practice. Inciting one religion against another is a crime under the Press Law, and defamation claims involving religious leaders are to be prosecuted as criminal cases.

There has, however, been some tension within the Muslim community between traditionalists and adherents of the Wahhabi sect.[208] The latter seem to result mainly from the growing number of Islamic scholars visiting Saudi Arabia and returning to propagate Wahhabism, but the Saudi influence may also have grown as a result of relief efforts to famine victims in 2003 by the Islamic International Relief Organization and by the construction of mosques by the (likewise Saudi financed) *al-Haramain* Islamic Foundation.[209]

As far as religiously inspired terrorism is concerned, this does not seem to be a major problem. Some minor terrorist attacks have been conducted by the aforementioned Somali *Al-Ittihad Al-Islamiya* (AIAI), alleged by the Ethiopian government to have ties to *al-Qaeda*, as well as by the ONLF – both of which are, however, primarily national, rather than religious movements. Moreover,

operating from Somali territory they have been fairly easy for Addis Ababa to come to grips with through cross-border raids into neighbouring Somalia.[210]

Eritrea

Religion has only played a very minor role in the conflicts involving Eritrea, which has mainly revolved around statehood as such.

Box 6 Eritrea Basic Facts *(CIA World Factbook 2005)*	
Independence	1993 (from Ethiopia)
Area (land)	121,320 sq km
Borders (land)	1,630 km (Djibouti 113 km, Ethiopia 912 km, Sudan 605 km)
Population	4,561,599 (2005 est.)
Ethnic groups	Tigrinya 50%, Tigre and Kunama 40%, Afar 4%, Saho 3%
Religion	Muslim, Coptic Christian, Roman Catholic, Protestant

Having been previously subjected, at various times, to Ottoman, Egyptian, Sudanic and Abyssinian suzerainty, Eritrea in 1889 became an Italian colony.[211] After the Italian conquest of Ethiopia in 1936 it was merged, i.e. federated, with Ethiopia (and British Somaliland) into "Italian East Africa".[212] It remained so until the Italian army was defeated by the British, aided by the Ethiopians, in 1941, upon which the United Kingdom assumed control.[213] The United Nations in 1950 passed a resolution mandating the federation of Eritrea with Ethiopia by 1952.[214] Henceforth, Ethiopia gradually limited the autonomy of Eritrea,[215] culminating in 1962 with the (effectively unilateral) abrogation of the federation and the incorporation of Eritrea into Ethiopia as a normal province. [216]

Even prior to this, however, the Eritrean struggle for independence had commenced, initially in the form of an unarmed political campaign waged by the ELM (Eritrean Liberation Movement).[217] By the time it decided to launch an armed struggle (1961), however, a rival movement "beat it to it" and forcefully (with some bloodshed) disarmed the ELM. This group was the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) which took up arms (under the name ELA, i.e. the

Eritrean Liberation Army) in 1961. It was self-proclaimed Islamist as well as pan-Arabic, which earned it some support from radical Arab countries such as Libya, Syria, Iraq and Sudan, but which also gradually made it a pawn in the inter-Arabic rivalries and ideological disputes.[218] Even though it also counted Christians among its members, the ELF pursued a policy of segregation, both with regard to its own members and troops, and in the areas or zones falling under its control, thereby alienating non-Muslims.[219]

The Eritrean resistance was weakened by periodic splits, until the formation in 1969 of the PLF (People's Liberation Front), i.e. the nucleus of what in 1972 became the EPLF (Eritrean People's Liberation Front). It waged an armed struggle not only against the Ethiopian state, but also against its rival, the ELF, culminating in 1972-74 in a veritable civil war between the two liberation movements.[220] Even after that, however, occasional splits occurred, periodically involving armed clashes between rival resistance movements.

Both the ELF and the EPLF were initially based on a Marxist ideology, combined, as far as ELF was concerned, with Islamism.[221] The Marxist-Leninist/Maoist ideology of the EPLF was accompanied by a structure inspired by the "democratic centralism" of the communist parties – even though the existence of an actual party within the movement was kept secret until some time after its (alleged) dissolution in 1989. This party was one of the means by which the present president Issayas Afeworki, since 1987 Secretary-General of the EPLF and, presumably, of the secret party, gradually centralised power in his own hands, e.g. by being in charge of appointments and by a rather ruthless treatment of dissenters.[222] The Marxist orientation was officially abandoned in 1987, but strong remnants of it have been obvious until the present day.[223]

The armed struggle of the EPLF had its ups and downs, but gradually a stalemate of sorts developed with the EPLF in control of large parts of Eritrean territory and with an army which, on the eve of the 1991 victory, numbered no less than 78,000 fighters out of a total population of 2.5 million.[224] The stalemate was only broken when the regime of the *Dergue* collapsed in 1991 for a number of other reasons besides the Eritrean liberation struggle. Almost simultaneously with the entry into Addis of the TPLF and its allies within the EPDRF, the EPLF then marched into Asmara and established a provisional government here. Eritrea enjoyed *de facto* independence until it was granted it *de jure* in 1993 after the

holding of a referendum, duly monitored by the United Nations (UNOVER) and the OAU. Upon the victory in this referendum Eritrea formally seceded from Ethiopia to form an independent state.[225]

Eritrea installed a provisional government in 1993 under President Isaias Afwerki which has remained in power ever since. In 1997 a formally democratic constitution was drafted and adopted, but it remains to come into force.[226] In actual fact Eritrea quickly developed into a one-party state ruled by the EPLF, renamed the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ),[227] in quite a dictatorial manner. For instance, in 2002 all religious denominations were banned except Islam, the Eritrean Orthodox Church (established after independence), the Evangelical Church of Eritrea and the Catholic Church. Not only were the religious institutions banned, but people were also prohibited from unauthorised religious practices, even in their own homes.[228]

The main opponents of the regime are the remnants of the former ELF, most of which are self-proclaimed Islamist.[229] Some of them have at various stages resorted to an armed struggle, featuring elements of terrorism. This has, for instance, been the case of the Eritrean Islamic Jihad (EJI), founded in 1988, based in Sudan, but operating in Eritrea since 1989, i.e. prior to independence, and allegedly related to *al-Qaeda*.[230] Its leader in 1998 described the goals of the movement as "to realise our position as servants of Allah, and to establish the Islamic State".

Among its grievances with the incumbent regime are, according to an interview given in 1998 by the deputy Amir of the movement, Abul Bara' Hassan Salman, that it "regards every Muslim who practices his religion and adheres to its obligations and cares for his honour as a danger, so they filled their prisons with the pious Muslims, teachers and students, politicians, leaders, and the common people, in order to arrest their fear".[231]

In addition to the militant EJI, there are quite a few (some count as many as eighteen) political opposition groups, most of them stemming from the ELF and basing themselves on an Islamist agenda, or at least couching their demands in Islamist terms. Among their grievances are the (alleged) colonisation of traditionally Muslims territories by Christians, the conscription of women into the armed forces and a general impression of being under-represented in national and local government.[232] It is, however, impossible to ascertain whether these

grievances are "genuinely religious" or whether they simply reflect a general dissatisfaction with a dictatorial government.

Sudan

At least some of the several conflicts in Sudan, however, do seem to be genuinely religious, even though they also feature a number of secular political and national issues. Because of Sudan's size and strategic locations, several of these have significant implications for its neighbours as well as for the region as such (see Box 7).

Islam in pre-Independence Sudan

Around the 6th century AD, Christianity first made its appearance in the small Nubian states in the present Sudan, and about a century later it had become the dominant religion, supported by the monarchy in return for which the new religion invested it with divine sanction.[233] Decline eventually set in when the Muslim Arab invaders (e.g. with invasions in 642 and 652) enforced a merger of the kingdoms of Nobatia and Muqurra into a new kingdom of Dunqulah (or Dongola) in the late 7th Century.[234]

Box 7: Sudan Basic Facts *(CIA World Factbook 2005)*	
Independence	1956 (from Egypt and UK)
Area	2,376,000 sq km
Borders	7,687 km (CAR 1,165 km, Chad 1,360 km, DRC 628 km, Egypt 1,273 km, Eritrea 605 km, Ethiopia 1,606 km, Kenya 232 km, Libya 383 km, Uganda 435 km)
Population	40,187,486 (2005 est.)
Ethnic groups	black 52%, Arab 39%, Beja 6%, foreigners 2%, other 1%
Religion	Sunni Muslim 70% (in north), indigenous beliefs 25%, Christian 5% (mostly in south and Khartoum)

The gradual spread of de facto independent *shaik*doms in Nubia inaugurated the era of Islam-*cum*-Arabisation, even though the Christian kingdom persisted until 1276, when the local rulers of Dunqualah converted to Islam and the state

became a tributary of Egypt. This northern neighbour had by that time become a Muslim state and was governed by the Arab *Khaliphs* and their mercenary captains, the *Mamluks*, who in the 13th Century usurped power and established a sultanate.[235]

The first phase of colonisation of Sudan was that of the Arabs, whose establishment of control over large tracts of northern Africa also extended to the present Sudan, where they not only introduced Islam but also spread Arab culture.[236] Furthermore, the Arab nations also showed a lust for slaves, which for religious reasons had to be found in the non-Muslim world, i.e. the *Dār-al-harb*,[237] as a reservoir of which the southern parts of Sudan recommended themselves. Hence the far-flung network of the Arab slave trade, mainly in East Africa and with an important nodal point in Zanzibar.[238]

Sudan was subsequently affected by the "scramble", albeit in a somewhat more indirect way that the other states in the sub-region. As early as 1820 the Funj sultanate came under Ottoman suzerainty, represented by Egypt, upon the independence of which it came under direct Egyptian rule.[239] The imposition of Ottoman rule (often referred to as the *Turkiyya*) provoked resistance in the south, mainly because of the slave trade and the levying of heavy taxes.[240] Initially it took the form of spontaneous peasant revolts as well as occasional mutinies in the army,[241] but by the 1880s a fully fledged revolt broke out, by which time, however, Egypt had fallen under British domination.[242]

The *Mahdist* revolt against the combined Egyptian-Ottoman rule from 1881-1885 was led by Muhammed Ahmad (1843-1885) who proclaimed himself *Mahdi*, i.e. "righteous".[243] Demanding the establishment of an Islamic state and the imposition of *shari'a*, he proclaimed a *jihad* against the infidels, thus launching what essentially amounted to a war of national independence for Sudan. His followers were a blend of devote Muslims and former slave traders, whose business had been damaged by the British anti-slavery raids and the imposition by the UK of anti-slavery legislation in Egypt (hence also in Sudan).[244] The armed struggle of the Mahdist *Dervishes* was remarkably successful, leading by 1884 to an Egyptian withdrawal followed by the fall of Khartoum to the *Dervishes* and the establishment of an Islamic state, the *Mahdiyah*.[245]

Upon the death in 1885 of the *Mahdi*, his successor Abdallahi ibn Muhammad established a *khalifate*, which proceeded with the *jihad*, e.g. with raids into

southern Sudan and even Ethiopia and Egypt.[246] These offensives, however, brought the UK into the struggle in a big way. London in 1895 thus issued an order to reconquer Sudan, in which endeavour the British forces finally succeeded in the battle of Omdurman in September 1898, followed by a total collapse of the *Mahdist* forces in November 1898.[247] After the crushing of the rebellion, Egypt and the UK in 1899 established "condominium" rule of the Sudan, even though since the 1920s the administration of the country was, to all practical intents and purposes, a British affair. The condominium saw a few small *Mahdist* rebellions (in 1900, 1902/03, 1904, 1908 and 1916), but none that represented a serious challenge.[248] The British-Egyptian condominium unified what is now the territory of Sudan by annexing Darfur, thus terminating the Fur sultanate for good.[249]

In conformity with its general principle of indirect rule, the British relied (under the auspices of the condominium) to a very large extent on "traditional authorities", which in the case of Sudan were Islamic. They thus supported the construction of mosques, *madrasas* and *sharia* courts.[250] Condominium rule allowed Sudan considerable autonomy, exercised via the SPD (Sudan Political Service), but it also provided some protection for the autonomy for the southern provinces by treating the south as a separate region and barring access (since 1930) for northerners to the south.[251] One manifestation of southern autonomy was that slavery was not only officially banned, but that the British also took active steps to prevent slave raids.[252]

Nationalist movements gradually emerged in Sudan, some of which were related to religion. There were by that time two main groupings among the Sudanese Muslims competing for power, as they have, arguably, done ever since. On the one hand the *Ansar*, dominated by the son of the *Mahdi*, Sayyid 'Abd al Rahman al-Mahdi (1885-1959), hence also sometimes referred to as neo-*Mahdists* – a grouping which subsequently came to dominate the political stage in independent Sudan via the *Umma* party, and which is presently headed by former president Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi.[253] On the other hand the *Khatmiyya*, another Sufi order led by al-Sayyid 'Ali al-Mirgani, who later came to dominate the National Unionist Party (NUP), subsequently renamed the Democratic Unionist Party, DUP.[254] Only later did the third main grouping, the Muslim Brotherhood make its first appearance, to which we shall return shortly.

Independence and the North-South Conflict

Sudan achieved its independence in 1956, by which time the question of the status of the south had, however, become extremely contentious. Ever since the Second World War, and accompanying the gradual devolution of power to Sudanese authorities, the latter had begun encroaching in the autonomous status of the south, e.g. with an abrogation of the "closed door" clauses, permissions for Islamic missionary activities in the south and the introduction of Arabic as the official language of the entire country.[255]

In response, southern leaders (including members of the Sudanese legislative assembly) had in 1954 convened a conference in Juba, which made its consent to independence conditional upon the institutionalisation of a federal system that would grant autonomy to the south, failing which the south demanded self-determination, i.e. the right to secede from would-be independent Sudan.[256] Despite various conciliatory gestures by the prospective government in Khartoum, an armed rebellion thus broke out in the south in 1955.[257] It did not help quell the rebellious feelings that this rebellion was crushed rather brutally by northern forces, which simply laid the groundwork for what became the secessionist *Anya-nya* movement.[258]

The future role of religion in politics was hotly debated around the time of independence. However, as argued by Sidahmed, this was rather "an attempt by the Islamist groups who had not yet constituted a strong pressure group to find a place on the Sudanese political scene".[259] The assimilation attempts by the Muslim north *vis-à-vis* the predominantly Christian south continued, e.g. via the building of *Quar'an* schools and expelling Christian missionaries.[260] By 1963 these policies had provoked a full-fledged guerrilla war, waged by the *Anya-nya,* the political wing of which was an exile movement called Sudan Africanist National Union (SANU, initially called SACDNU, i.e. the Sudan African Closed District National Union).[261]

In the north, however, opposition to the military regime gradually grew, also within the ranks, as evidenced by an abortive military coup in 1959. In the civilian sphere, the trade unions which had been dismantled by the military regime but subsequently reconstituted launched major strikes, and extremist political forces gained ground at both ends of the spectrum – the Communist Party on the extreme left and the Muslim Brotherhood, led by Hasan al-Turabi, on the extreme right.[262]

Following alternating civilian and military rule, and facing a growing guerrilla threat in the South, in May 1969 the military staged yet another coup, this time, however, initiated by a group of "Free Officers", bringing to power Ga'afar Nimeiri.[263] In 1972 he succeeded in forging the Addis Ababa Agreement with the *Anya-nya* under the leadership of Joseph Lagu. This granted considerable autonomy to the South and provided for an integration of former *Anya-nya* fighters in the national army.[264] Its stipulations were subsequently incorporated into the constitution in 1973, which also attempted to bridge the divide between the Islamist and the Christian/secular forces with the somewhat opaque stipulations in article 16:

> (a) In the Democratic Republic of Sudan, Islam is the religion and society shall be guided by Islam, being the religion of the majority of its people, and the state shall endeavour to express its values.
> (b) Christianity is the religion in the Democratic Republic of the Sudan which is professed by a large number of its citizens who are guided by Christianity, and the state shall endeavour to express its values. (…)
> (e) The abuse of religions or noble spiritual beliefs for political exploitation is forbidden.[265]

Starting off from quite a secular platform, the Nimeiri regime became increasingly infected with Islamism, partly due to the machinations of Hasan al-Turabi, who had been appointed attorney-general by Nimeiri. Another explanation was the need of Nimeiri for reconciliation and alignment with Turabi's brother-in-law, and leader of the *Umma* party, Sadiq al-Mahdi, who had in July 1976 sought to overthrow him.[266] Rather surprisingly, Nimeiri in 1983 thus took steps to introduce *shari'a* as the basis of Sudanese national legislation (the "September laws").[267]

The armed southern resistance began, once again, with a mutiny of southern-manned units, to repress which Nimeiri dispatched Lt-Col. John Garang de Mabior, a former *Anya-nya* officer. This proved to be a major mistake, as he deserted to join the mutiny and eventually become its leader.[268] The first rebels were collectively referred to as *Anya-nya II*, even though they had only little internal cohesion. However, some of them were indeed former *Anya-nya* guerrilla bands who had refused demobilisation and/or integration with the national armed forces and had continued their struggle, initially enjoying some support from Ethiopia.[269] They were gradually subdued by a somewhat broader move-

ment founded in 1983 (incorporating some of the rival movements, including part of the *Anya-Nya II*) named SPLA (Sudan People's Liberation Army) under the leadership of Garang.

Having thus provoked a mounting opposition, in 1985 Nimeiri was deposed. Post-Niemeri politics featured shifting coalitions, initially based on the *Umma* and DUP parties (the former winning the 1986 election), but with an increasingly prominent role for the new National Islamic Front, based on the Muslim Brotherhood and with al-Turabi acting as the *éminence grise*.[270] The parliamentary government initially had to amend the *shari'a* laws of Nimeiri on the insistence of both the *Umma* party and the left,[271] but against the will of the DUP. Surprisingly, the NIF of al-Turabi was rather ambivalent (or divided) about the issue.[272] Even though the SPLA was initially favourably inclined towards the forces that had deposed Niemeiri, they soon fell out with them over the demand to revoke the September laws.[273]

The growing unrest further unsettled the government, leading to yet another military coup in 1989 by a group of rather radical officers, led by Brigadier Omer Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir. The new regime, proclaiming itself the RCC (Revolutionary Command Council) aligned itself with the Islamic right (including NIF leader al-Turabi)[274] for what they labelled a "Revolution of National Salvation".[275] NIF had been founded in 1985 by *Ikhwan,* the local branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, and based its power, *inter alia*, on its control of "Islamic banking" as well as on the infiltration of the civil service and civil society organisations, skilfully orchestrated by al-Turabi.

This "revolution" entailed, among other things, the introduction of a rather extreme penal code based on *shari'a*, with *hudud* punishment administered quite extensively.[276] The ideology featured *jihad,* mainly against the rebellious south,[277] inevitably only deepening the conflict with the south and the SPLA. In 1993 al-Bashir was inaugurated as president, for which post he was confirmed by "elections" in 1996. Al-Turabi was elected speaker on the National Assembly, now consisting exclusively of individuals without official party affiliations because of the ban imposed on political parties.[278]

The NIF government in 1992 resorted to the proclamation of *jihad* against the insurgents (initially in the Nuba Mountains and Southern Kordofan, subsequently in the whole of South Sudan) thus playing on the example of the *Mahdiyya*.[279]

The mastermind behind this seems to have been al-Turabi. Besides bestowing on president Bashir the religious title of *imam al jihad,* the *jihad* allowed the government to mobilise militias (partly based on original tribal militias known as *murahileen*) under the auspices of the Popular Defence Force (PDF, usually labelled *mujahidiin*) to fight the SPLA, who were now portrayed as infidels or (even worse) apostates, as far as the Muslim members were concerned.[280]

However, it seems that the *mujahidiin* were singularly ineffective as a fighting force. In the words of an SPLA fighter, they "would give us warning of their attacks by their shouts of '*Allahu Akhbar*!' The trenches were so close that we could hear the shouts and make ourselves ready when they attacked."[281] Scott Peterson recalls other comical features of the *jihad*:

> When government forces captured a rebel headquarters at Torit in 1993, a minister who had visited the town told Sudan Television that he saw angels coming down from the sky to pay their respects to the "martyrs of the *jihad*." This divine intervention was even more profound, he said, because wild monkeys marched in front of the advancing soldiers, acting as minesweepers. The government was taking the advice of one academic who suggested the use of *jinns*, spirits lower than angels that appear in human or animal form and can influence people. Bashir was quoted in the army newspaper requesting a feasibility study on "how *jinns* could help in planning strategy."[282]

In 1998 a new constitution was adopted by a (rigged) referendum which did again allow for political parties, albeit now labelled "associations", of which a multitude soon formed.[283] A dispute gradually emerged between the (still basically military-based) government and the former NIF (now reconstituted as the National Congress Party, NCP). Al-Bashir in 1999 introduced a state of emergency, dissolved parliament and even placed restriction on the activities of al-Turabi, eventually by placing him under house arrest.[284] Not only did this seem to make sense, as the former patron was now viewed as the main rival, but the curtailment of al-Turabi's power also earned al-Bashir's government some good-will from Egypt.[285]

Al-Turabi and his former NIF followers subsequently founded a new party, the Popular National Congress (PNC), trying (according to the International Crisis Group) "to reinvent themselves as moderate messengers for a new era", e.g. by

"attempting to redefine Islamism as a champion of the underprivileged".[286] By February 2001, the split had proceeded so far that al–Turabi signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the SPLA on cooperation against the regime of Bashir.[287]

The civil war thus continued until the (rather unexpected) signing of a peace treaty under the auspices of IGAD in 1997.[288] While this was never really implemented, a new agreement was signed in 2002, i.e. the Machakos Protocol, pointing forward to the peace agreement of 2005 to which we shall return shortly.

Throughout the conflict, i.e. for most of Sudan's existence as an independent state, religious divides had thus been the object of armed struggle, albeit closely intermingled with ethnic ones. Contrary to widespread misunderstandings, however, the conflict had not so much pitted Islam against Christianity as religious fundamentalism against secularism. According to Abdel Sidahmed,

> To be sure, this is not a question of Islam versus Christianity, but is rather the religious factor in Sudanese politics. The educated southerners, who eventually led the political activity of the South, were products of the Christian missionary acculturation and were essentially secular in their political activity, unlike the educated northerners, who were essentially conformist to their Muslim tradition. What should be emphasised, however, is not the "inherent" implications of Islam and Christianity as political and apolitical religions, respectively, but rather the particular experiences of both religions in the Sudanese context. From the eighteenth century onwards, Islam gradually became associated with politics and ideology in northern Sudan (…) In contrast, Christianity in the south (…) was kept outside the sphere of politics.[289]

The conflict may even have produced what has been aptly called "Islamic Stalinism" on the part of the Sudanese government. Despite the commitment to religious pluralism enshrined in the 1998 constitution, apostasy is still punished by death, severe *hudud* punishments are imposed under *shari'a*, including flogging and (rarely) amputations. Moreover, bombing raids have been launched against Christian churches and other facilities in the south, and Islam has been used to legitimate a severe oppression of women, also in the south.[290] While the Sudanese government seems determined to uphold Islamic law, at least in the north, divisions remain within the oppositional

NDA (National Democratic Alliance) over the issue of secularism. While the SPLA is unequivocally in favour of it, some of its allies in the NDA merely prefer a more moderate use of *shari'a* and Islamism.[291] Religion thus remains very much a contentious issue.

The CPA and Darfur

In 2002, a breakthrough occurred for the peace negotiations sponsored by IGAD, producing the so-called "Machachos protocol".[292] Besides the stipulation that a referendum should be held in the South, after a six year transition period, about possible secession, the protocol also included an "Agreed Text on State and Religion", in which Sudan was described as "a multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-lingual country" in which "religion shall not be used as a divisive factor". It further included the following stipulations:

> 6.2 There shall be freedom of belief, worship and conscience for followers of all religions or beliefs or customs and no one shall be discriminated against on such grounds.
> 6.3 Eligibility for public office (…) and the enjoyment of all rights and duties shall be based on citizenship and not on religion, beliefs, or customs.
> 6.4 All personal and family matters (…) may be governed by the personal laws (including Sharia or other religious laws, customs, or traditions) of those concerned.

The text further mentioned a number of concrete religious freedoms and underlined that all of the above should be "reflected in the Constitution".

The signing of this protocol was followed by negotiations along different tracks, producing agreements on, for instance, power and wealth-sharing as well as on the conflicts raging in some of the peripheral areas – and it was all included in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in January 2005.[293] By the time of writing (March 2006), a draft constitution for Sudan had also been prepared,[294] which did indeed reflect the above principles. It also addressed the thorny issue of the national capital, Khartoum, stipulating that non-Muslims would not be subjected to *sharia* law (art. 156-158). A draft constitution had also been prepared for Southern Sudan, which clearly stipulated the separation of church and state and the principle of equal treatment of all religions.[295] The peace process thus seemed to be on track, and so firmly so that it was able to

survive the accidental death of the SPLA leader, John Garang, in August 2005, shortly after his inauguration as Vice President of Sudan.[296]

In the meantime, however, another conflict had erupted in the Darfur region in western Sudan, which was, by the time of writing, still raging and producing both deaths and a massive flow of refugees and internally displaced persons. It had little to do with religion, however.

Even though the conflict in Darfur is usually reckoned as having commenced in February 2003,[297] its roots go back much further. Antecedents and precursors include the centuries-old conflicts between the various African and Arab tribes in the region, typically intensified during the all too frequent famines; and occasionally flaring up into local civil wars as in 1987-89.[298] These conflicts had, inter alia, given rise to "Arab supremacy" groupings and ideologies in the 1990s (e.g. the "Arab Gathering", *Tajumu al Arabi*);[299] and, in response, a political organisation of the non-Arab tribes and their resort to armed self-protection.[300] Virtually all of the parties to the conflict have been Muslims, however, as is nearly the entire population of the Darfur provinces.

- The Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A, formerly DLF: Darfur Liberation Front) emerged in February 2003[301] and by 2004 it had established a loose alliance with the SPLA under the auspices of the all-Sudanese NDA.
- The Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) made its appearance in the spring of 2003, seemingly inspired by al-Turabi who had by then become totally estranged from the government.[302]
- On the government side are the local horse or camel-mounted Arab militias, the *Janjaweed*,[303] drawn from the *Baggara* Arab tribes with some prior experience with counter-insurgency warfare, e.g. in the "Masalit War" of 1994 against the SPLA.[304] The militias seem to be under the supreme command (to the extent that there is one) of Musa Hilal, who is collaborating closely with the government. He seems to have a more or less genocidal agenda, wanting to "change the demographics of Darfur and empty it of African tribes" and to "justify" this by proclaiming it a *jihad;*[305] rather surprisingly as the victims of this war are all devout Muslims.

As this conflict has very little to do with religion, however, we shall leave it at this, i.e. with the optimistic, but very tentative, conclusion that the (partly) religious conflict in Sudan seems to have come to an end, at long last.

Somalia

Box 8: Somalia: Basic Facts *(CIA World Factbook 2005)*	
Independence	1960 (merger of British and Italian Somaliland)
Area (land)	627,337 sq km
Borders (land)	2,366 km (Djibouti 58 km, Ethiopia 1,626 km, Kenya 682 km)
Population	8,591,629 (2005 estimate)
Ethnic groups	Somali 85%, Bantu, Arabs and others 15%
Religion	Sunni Muslim

Somalia has attracted considerable attention since the 11th of September 2001, mainly because of the widespread (but not necessarily correct) assumption that a failed state with a Muslim population will inevitably both breed and attract terrorists. We shall revisit this assumption at the end of this section, having first analysed the role of religion, *in casu* Islam, in Somali society with a special focus on the protracted civil war.

Islam in Somalia through the Ages

Even though the Somalis are arguably one of Africa's oldest and most homogenous nations, both ethnically and in terms of religion and customs, and with a unifying myth of origin based on Islam, the nation has long been divided along other dimensions, mainly that of kinship manifested in clans, which have often resorted to violence in their struggle against each other.[306]

The subdivision of the nation into clans forms a complex picture of "major clans" (sometimes also referred to as "clan families"), (minor) clans and sub-clans. Even though they tend to congregate territorially, each clan is scattered, not only across the country but also among adjacent states, to which should be added the sizable Somali diaspora, inter alia in the Arab world and in Europe. The clans have their origins in lineage, the Somalis tracing their decent patrilineally many generations back, thus defining their identity and loyalties according to a genealogy, parts of which may be mythical, as with the myth of descent from Arabian families and perhaps even from the prophet himself.[307]

Regardless of the dubious veracity of the mythological account of a handful of Islamic missionaries dispatched from Arabia by the Prophet himself around 615 AD,[308] by the 14th Century AD a large-scale conversion to Islam had taken place, spearheaded by the *Dir* clan family, but followed by the rest of the Somali nation – all of which retained their clan structure, notwithstanding its dubious compatibility of this with the tenets of the new religion.[309] This spread of Islam may well have been linked to the proliferating Arab trade, combined with a certain immigration from the Arabian peninsula (mainly Yemen and Oman), producing an unmistakable Arab influence[310] In the area between the Shebelle and Juba rivers, an *Ajuraan* imamate seems to have been in place from the 15th to the 17th Century. If not before that, then certainly by the early 16th Century, all of Somalia was clearly Muslim.[311] The dominant form of Islam has ever since, at least until very recently, been that of Sufism.[312]

Centred around Saylac, an actual state structure seems to have been in place with the name Adal, which extended its influence inland, at least in the sense of being able to fend off Abyssinia.[313] Under the leadership of Imam Ahmad Guray, in 1527 it thus took part in a *jihad* against the expansionist Abyssinia which might have been crushed had it not been for the support it received from a Portuguese expedition (*vide supra*). The following centuries saw a rivalry between Portugal and the Sultanate of Oman and other Arabs, mainly over trading points, including those along the Somali coast. Some of these were related to the flourishing Arab slave trade, in which the Somalis were also partly involved themselves. They thus resented the restrictions gradually being placed by the Europeans (and partly by Ethiopia) on slavery in general and the slave trade in particular.[314]

Like the rest of Africa, what is now Somalia was colonised during the scramble, which effectively divided the territory as well as the Somali nation between the UK, France, Italy and Ethiopia, thereby laying the ground for subsequent irredentism.[315] In 1887 Emperor Menelik II of Ethiopia first entered the Ogaden area, effectively establishing Ethiopian sovereignty over it by the late 1890s. Even before that, however, Egypt had in the 1870s occupied the northern parts of Somalia, hanging on to them until around 1884, when its suzerainty was replaced with UK domination.[316] In 1887, partly in order to link up with its colony in Aden on the Arabian Peninsula, the UK created a protectorate named British Somaliland along the Gulf of Aden, i.e. what is now (again) the *de facto* independent state of Somaliland. Moreover, in 1895 the British established a

protectorate over Jubaland, i.e. southern Somalia and what is today the Northern Frontier District (NFD) of Kenya, likewise populated by ethnic Somalis, parts of which were, however, in 1925 ceded to Italy.[317]

Even though it followed the British tradition of indirect role, British rule in northern Somalia was not uncontested as parts of the local population, under inspiration from the Mahdist revolt in Sudan (*vide supra*), and led by the "Mad Mullah" Sheik Mohammed Abdile Hassion, launched a religiously-inspired revolt (the *Darawiish* or *Dervish* revolt) in 1895. This *jihad* featured guerrilla warfare, but also established *de facto* statehood in liberated parts of the territory, and was not quelled completely until 1920.[318]

The greatest chunk of Somali territory, however, was taken over by Italy, which began with the establishment of a protectorate in the northern sultanates of Obbia and Mijertein in 1889. Only in 1905, however, did Italy establish a formal colony, the *Somalia Italiana*. This, combined with the introduction of anti-slavery legislation, provoked an uprising, the quelling of which required a real occupation of the interior of the country besides the coastal region in which Italy had mainly been interested.[319] However, the Italian form of government was fairly unintrusive, in fact an even more extensive indirect rule than that usually used by the British, labelled "beneficient paternalism" by Robert Hess. It left both *shari'a* and customary law in place and worked through the clan structure and other indigenous authorities.[320] For a very short period during the Second World War, the entire territory populated by Somalis was even unified in the expanded, but very short-lived, *Africa Orientale Italiana* after its conquest of Ethiopia. After the war, however, the *status quo ante bellum* with its partition of "Somalia" into Italian, French, British and Ethiopian chunks was duly re-established with merely a few minor revisions.[321]

After a new period of colonialism with rather little preparation for independence, (Italian) Somalia was established as an independent state on the 26th of June 1960, as was (British) Somaliland on the 1st of July, and the two states immediately merged into one Somali Republic, which was duly formalised in 1961.[322] After an alternation of civilian and military governments a virtually bloodless *coup d'état* brought to power a military junta led by General Siyad Barre, who almost immediately suspended the constitution, closed parliament and banned all political parties, placing a Supreme Revolutionary Council in charge of the state.[323]

The Barre regime tried to mix "scientific socialism" with a secularised form of Islam, in addition to which he attempted to weaken the clan structure in Somali society, yet soon abandoning this in favour of a deliberate policy of favouring his own clan family,[324] partly in response to mounting problems following the Ogaden War which the regime launched against Ethiopia and lost.[325]

Civil War and State Collapse
After a protracted period of growing weakness and mounting turmoil, the opposition movements finally succeeded in deposing Siyad Barre in 1991.[326]

What followed was an extraordinarily messy civil war, featuring extensive inter-clan fighting and sheer banditry, combined with widespread looting,[327] also of the food and other aid provided by the relief agencies.[328] Most of the several oppositional factions were based on clans rather than on religion, as set out in Table 10.[329] There were, however, also religious elements in the struggle, to which we shall return shortly.

Table 10: Somali Factions (1991/92)			
Acron.	**Name**	**Clan**	**Basis**
SNM	Somali National Movement	*Isaaq*	North-west
SSDF	Somali Salvation Democratic Front	*Mijerteen*	North-east
USC	United Somali Congress	*Hawiye*	South
SDM	Somali Democratic Movement	*Rahanwiin*	South
SSNM	Southern Somali National Movement	*Dir*	South
SPM	Somali Patriotic Movement	*Ogadeen*	South
	Manifesto Group	*Hawiye* and *Darod*	South
SAMO	Somali African Muki Organisation	n.a.	South
SNU	Somali National Union	n.a.	South

By March 1992 Mogadishu had been nearly deserted, at least 300,000 people had died of hunger and related diseases, and the direct death toll from the fighting was around 44,000.[330] The severe famine suffered by the civilian population

(also partly caused by a drought) was finally "discovered" by the international media.[331] This spurred an international response in the form of a singularly in-effective or even counter-productive international intervention, in three stages, from UNOSOM-I via UNITAF to UNOSOM-II.[332] The main errors may have been the decision not to forcefully disarm the warlords, but rather negotiate with them. This further increased their influence, thereby indirectly weakening that of genuine traditional authorities such as clan elders and religious institutions.

By March 1994, all US and most European forces had been withdrawn.[333] However, far from producing a new, civilian government able and willing to undertake the requisite reforms, the country rapidly descended into an abyss of civil war between rivalling clans.

Since the toppling of the Barre regime in 1991, the Somali state has, to all practical intents and purposes, collapsed, taking with it also a number of sub-state structures or order. With the notable exception of secessionist Somaliland, to which we shall return below, fighting among rival clans has continued ever since, albeit with varying intensity and concentrated in the inter-riverine region and especially around Mogadishu.[334] The struggle has not only pitted rival clans against each other, but has also exhibited clear rural-urban cleavages, including struggles over land.[335] War has thus become a form of life for a substantial part of the population benefiting from its persistence, even regardless of whether they are on the winning side or not – but obviously with disastrous consequences for innocent bystanders, especially the most disadvantages strata of society, among whom the women have probably suffered most, also from such traditional com-panions of war as rape.[336]

There have been several attempts at "putting Humpty Dumpty together again" after this great fall, i.e. of recreating some kind of functioning state in Somalia,[337] just as there have been more localised initiatives towards restoring some kind of statehood.

- In the former British Somaliland, a "de facto state" has thus developed since the declared secession in 1991. It is, according to most accounts, functioning pretty well on the basis of a power-sharing formula between the clans and central role given to traditional (including religious) authorities.[338]
- In Puntland a National Salvation Council established itself as a *de facto* state authority in 1998, which managed to keep the region reasonably stable.[339]
- In 2000, a Transitional National Government (TNG) came out of a confer-

ence in Arta, Djibouti.,[340] but it never actually functioned and has by 2003 the TNG had collapsed in all but name.[341]

• In October 2004, a Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was established, with the former warlord and subsequent leader of Puntland, Abdillahi Yusuf Ahmed, at the helm. By the time of writing, however, it remained uncertain whether it would ever be able to take control of the country. Indeed, it had not even dared establish itself in the national capital for concerns over the security situation.[342]

What is surprising is, however, that elements of order have nevertheless been created in the complete absence of statehood, inter alia manifested in flourishing economic activities, including foreign trade.[343]

Islam, Conflict, Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism
Throughout the conflict, religion has played a certain role, but it is less clear whether this has been for good or bad or, indeed, both.[344]

Whereas the vast majority of Somalis are Muslims, there is far from unanimity about the proper place of Islam within society or its appropriate role in the state. As argued by Ken Menkhaus, rigid forms of *sharia* thus tend to be viewed as "an imposition of Gulf Arab customs, seen by most Somalis as 'un-Somali'", whereas more fundamentalist variants of Islam are more likely to attract a popular following among the Somali diaspora in non-Muslim lands or in Somalia proper when confronted by a foreign and non-Muslim threat.[345]

One of these fundamentalist strains of political Islam has been the *Al-Ittihad Al-Islamiya* (AIAI), which is based on the *Wahhabist* sect and an offspring of the Muslim Brotherhood. Its ancestry can be traced back to some of the early Islamic movements, and rather to the militant *Salihiyya* than to the peaceful *Qaddiriyya* order. Radical Islamic organisations were formed in the 1960s, such as the *al-Ahli* and the Muslim Youth Union (*Wahda al shabab al-Islam*), which subsequently merged to form the Somali Islamic Union (SIU, i.e. *al-Ittihad*) in 1984. By the early 1970s, furthermore, the *al-Nahda* and *al-Ahli* and the Somali Brotherhood Union were founded, followed by the *al-Islah* (Somali Islamic Movement) which was founded in 1978 in Saudi-Arabia. In 1984, finally *Ia-Ittihad* (Somali Islamic Union) was founded on the basis of *al-Takfir* and the Muslim Brotherhood, overlapping with *al-Islah*.[346] Frequent allegations to the contrary notwithstanding, it seems to have no or only weak links to *al-Qaeda* and similar networks.[347]

Since the civil war abated, *al-Ittihad* seems to have abandoned the military struggle and the ambition of holding of towns and instead moved into commerce. It has seemingly pursued a strategy of infiltration which has been called a "Turabi strategy",[348] and it appears to have some control of charitable organisations allowing it to fund patronage networks,[349] in addition to which it has sponsored Islamic courts, which have provided some law to the unruly country.[350] There may thus have been pockets of Islamists in all the main, clan-based, factions, including SNM, SSDF, USC, SDM,[351] just as there may have been some infiltration in Puntland, Somaliland, perhaps even in Djibouti.[352]

In recent years, however, AIAI seems to have virtually disappeared and it remains contested whether it even continues to exist.[353] According to a 2005 report from the UN Security Council's Monitoring Group on Somalia, it not only has survived but is presently running no fewer than seventeen training camps and importing and stockpiling armaments.[354] However, the usually at least as well-informed International Crisis Group questions this, whilst pointing to a new, and so far nameless, *jihadi* group, comprising among others former AIAI combat veterans and led by a young militia leader called Aden Hashi Farah 'Ayro, which is alleged to have links with al-Qaeda, even though these links have been questioned as based on quite weak circumstantial evidence.[355]

Part of the assumptions about an Al-Qaeda-like presence in Somalia seems to be based on a structural reasoning, according to which failed states such as Somalia are likely to become safe havens (as opposed to transit routes) for terrorists. This view seems to be held by just about everybody, including political actors such as the US and UK governments, the EU Commission and the Commission on Africa[356] as well as several renowned academics.[357] For all its superficial plausibility, this view seems to be based on a disregard (or misunderstanding) of some uncontested historical facts about the al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, who first resided in Sudan and then relocated to Afghanistan. However weak or failed both states may be, al-Qaeda seems to have selected them as bases where (in government-controlled areas around Khartoum) or when (under the Taliban regime) they were *least* weak,[358] i.e. when the terrorists could enjoy the protection of a government. Failed states such as Somalia may thus be far less attractive as safe havens for terrorists than often assumed, as the requirements of a terrorist organisation are not satisfied by what a failed state has to offer.[359]

Not only are such beliefs in spurious al-Qaeda links and imaginary dangers flowing from state collapse thus questionable. If such beliefs determine the behaviour of major actors, they are bound to have major consequences, some of which may be harmful, as has apparently been the case in Somalia. As parts of its counter-terrorist "war", the United States has thus pressured Saudi Arabia to close down a large charity, the *al-Haramayn* Foundation, believed to fund al-Qaeda-linked terrorists, but thereby put 2,600 Somali orphans on the street.[360] In the future one may fear that similar vain attempts at severing the financial ties of international terrorism may target the informal money transfer system (*Hawala*) which may, indeed, be used for supporting terrorism, but which is also an important lifeline between the Somali diaspora and their relatives in Somalia, many of whom are critically dependent on these remittances. So far, there has only been one such enforced closure of a *Hawala* company (of the *al-Barakaat* in 2001, mainly based on circumstantial evidence of links to "Salafi businesses"), but one may fear that something similar might happen in the future.[361]

Even more damaging for the contest over the "hearts and minds" of the Somali people would be a crack-down, aimed at weakening the Islamists, on other Islamic institutions such as the *sharia* courts and the militias attached to them. However much they may or may not be "infected" by Islamism, they are still the only institutions offering a minimum of order in the stateless society, just as the *quranic* schools and Muslim charities (sometimes sponsoring hospitals and health clinics) are the only ones to provide any education, medical care or social assistance.

Any enforced closure of such institutions is a recipe for losing the hearts and minds of the Somali people as would be a campaign against the non-jihadist political Islamic organisations and groupings such as *Harakat Al-Islah* (the Somali branch of the Muslim Brotherhood), Sufi organisations such as *Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a* or *Majma 'Ulimadda Islaamka ee Soomaaliya*, or purely missionary societies such as *Al-Ansar as-Sunna* or *Jama'at al-Tabligh*. However much they may criticise the US "war on terrorism" and advocate rigid versions of Islam and *sharia* regarded as repulsive by the West, they are probably the best allies of the West against the tiny minority of real *jihadis* and actual terrorists and the best approximation to a Somali civil society.[362]

Kenya

Kenya was colonised by the British[363] whose establishment of control was actively resisted by parts of the Kikuyu nation, whereas the Maasai initially did not resist, as had been expected. As a consequence of the rather brutal repression by the colonialists, the Kikuyu seem to have felt a more profound resentment against the Europeans than the Maasai who had been quite generously compensated for the British land grabs.[364] Hence, most of the subsequent resistance also came from the Kikuyu, even though the Maasai subsequently found other forms of resistance,[365] as did tribes such as the Nandi and Kipsigis, led by the ritual leaders (*orkoiik*) of their traditional religions, and employing witchcraft in their resistance.[366]

Cliterodectomy Crisis and Mau Mau Rebellion

Box 9: Kenya: Basic Facts *(CIA World Factbook 2005)*	
Independence	1963 (from UK)
Area (land)	569,250 sq km
Borders (land)	3,477 km (Ethiopia 861 km, Somalia 682 km, Sudan 232 km, Tanzania 769 km, Uganda 933 km)
Population	33,829,590 (2005 estimate)
Ethnic groups	Kikuyu 22%, Luhya 14%, Luo 13%, Kalenjin 12%, Kamba 11%, Kisii 6%, Meru 6%, other African 15%, non-African (Asian, European, and Arab) 1%
Religion	Protestant 45%, Roman Catholic 33%, indigenous beliefs 10%, Muslim 10%, other 2%

As elsewhere, Christian missionaries accompanied (and in some instances preceded) the colonial administration with its repressive machinery,[367] generally behaving in a paternalistic (and often racist) fashion, but providing some education, inter alia as a means of converting the indigenous population to Christianity.[368] In this endeavour, the missionaries encountered indigenous religious beliefs such as the Maasai beliefs in the heavenly origin of the cattle on which they rely for their livelihood and the Kikuyu cosmological beliefs in divine creation.[369]

The missionaries also encountered a Muslim community that was fairly well established, mainly along the coast, including Mombasa.[370] Both here and elsewhere, there were, moreover, considerable elements of syncretism, working both ways – in the form of an inclusion of traditional beliefs (e.g. for healing) in the practices of devout Muslims as well as an integration of Islamic beliefs in indigenous religions – just as there is, even today, some mixing of Christianity with Islam, e.g. manifested in the veneration by Muslims of "Issa ibn Maryam" (i.e. Jesus, son of Maria).[371]

A harbinger of worse to come was the "cliterodectomy crisis" of 1929, which pitted the Christian churches and missions against traditional Kikuyu (and Maasai) religious and cultural authorities, who wanted to uphold their custom of what is today (rightly) referred to as female genital mutilation (FGM). The outcome of this crisis was the growth (with the consent of the colonial authorities) of independent Christian churches in Kenya, allowing for a continuation of the morally repugnant and life-endangering traditional custom.[372]

In 1952 a growing unrest among particularly the Kikuyu exploded into the Mau Mau rebellion against British colonial rule.[373] Even though the roots of the uprising may well have been economic, to a very large extent, as well as political, the ideology of the insurgents was based on traditional Kikuyu religion, as well as were the oathing rituals (including animal sacrifice and the drinking of blood) which remained central for the maintenance of cohesion among the insurgents. The British declared a state of emergency, which they exploited for a brutal counter-insurgency war with casualty estimates ranging from eleven to fifty thousand Kikuyu and a staggering number of 900 hangings by the end of the first year of the rebellion. By that time, most unrest had been quelled, even though the last rebels only surrendered in 1958.[374]

Independent Kenya

By the time of independence in 1963, Christianity had become the dominant religion in Kenya as a whole[375] – even though traditional religion continued to stand for the largest number of followers and elements of its beliefs and practices had been incorporated into "Kenyan Christianity".[376] Christianity thus became the religion of the ruling elite of the KANU (Kenyan African Union), from Kenyatta to Daniel Arap Moi (the latter even incorporating Christian beliefs into his peculiar Nyayo ideology).[377] However, various independent sects and charismatic churches without any direct relation to the state have attracted a growing following.[378]

Religious freedoms were ensured in the constitution and have continued to be so through the various revisions, including also provisions against defamation on religious grounds.[379] Nevertheless, despite constitutional safeguards of democracy and human rights, the incumbent rulers became increasingly authoritarian (especially under Moi),[380] thereby forcing the churches to take a stand – or not, in which case they are bound to be viewed as accomplices of the regime. Gradually, the main Christian churches thus came to play an independent and critical political role, e.g. via support for demands for democratic reforms and human rights.[381]

There has, indeed, been quite a lot to be critical about, including massacres and ethnic cleansing during the country's first president, Jomo Kenyatta (a Kikuyu), directed against the Luo ethnic group in 1969; followed by growing authoritarianism and ethnic favouritism on behalf of the Kalenjin group by his successor, Daniel Arap Moi (1978-2002). This has been accompanied by violence, in most cases pitting rival ethnic groups against each other, e.g. Kalenjin against Kikuyu, Nande against Kikuyu, etc. – in most cases apparently instigated by leading politicians for their personal power-political reasons and often reflecting resentments having to do with economic, social or political matters.[382]

In 1997, widespread violence erupted in the coastal regions, exacting a total death toll of more than a hundred and displacing some 100,000, according to the international NGO Human Rights Watch. The background was the votes of the region in the last elections (1991) and the fear that the electorate would, once again, support the opposition. Hence, the violence seems to have been instigated by the government and the security forces, who not only turned the blind eye to the violence but often directly assisted the youth militias supporting KANU. In the recruitment of the troops a traditional healer, Swaleh Salim bin Alfan, played a central role, by conducting oathing ceremonies (reminiscent of the Mau Mau oathing practices mentioned above), involving cuts with razors and taking place under a sacred baobab tree and claimed to make the youths invisible and invulnerable. In the words of a young recruit,

> The oath is to make you strong and unafraid; it's for taking action. (…)
> The oath protects you from being caught. Your enemy can't see you.
> It also protects you from getting hurt. It lasts until you do things that
> aren't allowed.[383]

Some of the militiamen wore "uniforms" with religious symbols combining Islam with traditional religion, likewise believed to ensure protection by the spirits, but it would probably be wrong to view this as evidence of Islamic violence – if only because it was perpetrated on behalf of a Christian regime and partly against Muslims.

The same was probably the case of the more recent violence by vigilante and similar groups, e.g. in Nairobi. Even though one of these groups was named "Taliban", hinting at an Islamic orientation and fighting against a rival gang based on the curious *Mungiki* sect, both seem to resemble gangsters or hooligans more than Islamic terrorists. The latter ideology primarily emphasised traditional Kikuyu values, thus espousing "a mixture of Gikuyu traditionalism, harking back to a mythologized pre-colonial of egalitarianism and social order, with biblical references drawn for Old Testament texts", and a veneration of the Mau Mau ancestors (the Mungiki leader, Ibrahim Ndura Waruinge being the grandson of a Mau Mau leader). However, none of this prevented several of the group's leaders from undertaking a public conversion to Islam in June 2000 – apparently mainly for strategic reasons and without any consequences for the group's nationalist agenda.[384]

A less violent form of response to a political system from which one feels alienated may be as retreat into the private sphere,[385] for which the charismatic religions may prove an attractive option. This may be one of the reasons for the rise, in the late 1980s of the charismatic, Protestant, East Africa Awakening movement, and for the spread of Pentecostalism, partly spurred by proselytism on behalf of US-based faith communities.[386] Another religious response to a perceived disempowerment may have been a resort to traditional religious beliefs and customs, which have retained their former attraction, inter alia in the form of healing practices, spirit possessions and witchcraft beliefs. The latter are so widespread that independent Kenya has retained the colonial laws against practicing witchcraft.[387]

The Muslim Communities: Fanaticism and/or Terrorism?
Even though at least ten percent of Kenya's population are Muslims, they do not form one uniform and cohesive Muslim community. They may, for analytical purposes be subdivided into three different groups:

First of all, there are the ethnic Somalis in the Northern Frontier Districts, the overwhelming majority of whom are Muslim. However, they apparently

prioritise their ethnic identity higher than the religious one, implying that they do not really associate with the Kenyan Muslims. Nor do they seem to have caused any "problems" for the Kenyan state in terms of Islamic radicalism or terrorism since their secessionist (low-key) "bandit war" of the 1960s, which was in reality a manifestation of Somali nationalism (on the part of the locals) and irredentism on the part of Somalia.[388] The only context in which the Somali community in Kenya would seem likely to rebel is thus one of a reconstructed Somalia that would resume its former irredentism, which is surely not at all likely in the near future, as argued above.

Secondly, there are Muslim minorities scattered around the rest of the country, most importantly in the capital, Nairobi, but they are generally so fragmented as to play only a marginal role, except at supporters of a more unified Muslim force. This is where the third group comes in, comprising Muslim communities along the coast, where Muslims comprise around half the population.[389] It is, however, questionable whether this group constitutes one community, as the Muslim population is subdivided into (Bantu) Africans and (Swahili) Arabs, just as it is, as elsewhere, divided according to religious denominations. As this region has, ever since colonial times (when the British relied on Islamic authorities, including shari'a courts, as agents in their indirect rule),[390] been increasingly marginalised, the social discontent has occasionally been translated into religious unrest, as radical Islamists have sought to recruit followers with a combination of religious and socio-political messages.

According to the constitution, of course, Kenya's Muslims enjoy a freedom of religion and the degree of religious tolerance is generally held to be satisfactory. A contentious issue is the application of shari'a, some scope for which was provided with the Kadhis' Courts Act of 1967, allowing for the establishment of such (shari'a-based) courts with jurisdiction over Muslims in matters of family and inheritance law. This provision was retained in the new (draft) constitution of 2003, but the review process was, by the time of writing stalled, mainly because of disagreements on other matters. There had, however, also been some Christian opposition to the status of the Kadhis courts.[391]

The Kenyan Muslims have also, ever since independence, had some collective representation, even though this issue has also been controversial as some of these organisations have had the image of being government-controlled. Mus-

lim organisations presently include SUPKEM (Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims), MCC (Muslim Consultative Council).

Partly as an alternative to organisations not held to be "authentically Muslim", an Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK) was formed in 1992, after the introduction of multi-party elections – yet it has never been officially registered. Its expressed grievances included the under-representation of Muslims in government and public institutions; the neglect of areas with predominantly Muslim inhabitants, inter alia with regard to schools; a lack of employment opportunities and similar economic and social demands. A young sheik, Khalid Balala, became one of the leaders of the IPK, driving it in a more radical direction and, inter alia, calling for a toppling of president Moi. What further enraged the followers were warnings against an "expansion of Islam" by Christian leaders. The party did fairly well in the elections in December 1992, leading to fears that the coastal region might even secede from Kenya, perhaps even in order to unite with Zanzibar. Following the elections, the KANU government established a more moderate Muslim Organisation, the United Muslims of Africa (UMA), as a counter-weight to IPK – propagating allegations against the latter as being "brown" (i.e. Arab-dominated) in contrast to its own authentic "blackness". The dispute rapidly escalated to the issuing of *fatwas* by both sides for the killing of the other's leader, to a split in the IPK and the formation by Balala of a more radical Islamist Party, the Islamic Salvation Front, yet without much impact.[392]

According to many analysts, the Islamic communities in Kenya are changing. Whereas they have until recently been predominantly Sufi and generally peaceful, Islamic reform movements may be gaining ground, most of them related to *Salafism* and especially *Wahhabism* as a result of several factors:

- The presence of Islamic NGOs and charities, partly financed by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, believed to propagating Islamic radicalism and even sponsoring terrorism, including Help Africa People, Islamic African Relief Agency, Muslim World League, International Islamic Charitable Foundation, International Islamic Relief Organization, Ibrahim Bin Abdul Aziz all Ibrahim Foundation, Mercy Relief International and the Al Haramaiin Islamic Foundation – five of which were banned following the 1998 embassy bombing.
- The construction of mosques and *madrasas*, funded by the same Arab countries and preaching as well as teaching Wahhabism.

- Arab sponsorship for study visits to Saudi Arabia where the students are exposed to radical Islamism.[393]

Other analysts, however, argue that the trend has turned, and that the growth of Wahhabism of the 1980s and early 1990s has been replaced by a decline, as the "reformers" and radicals have simply alienated the more moderate (and Sufist) indigenous Muslims.[394]

The view sees to be spreading that "Kenya is particularly susceptible to terrorism", and especially Islamic (or Islamist) terrorism.[395] Kenya has, indeed, been host to a couple of terrorist attacks and attempted attacks, most dramatically with the bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi in August 1998 (almost simultaneously with a similar attack in Tanzania's capital), for which a hitherto unknown Islamic Liberation Army of the People of Kenya (ILAPK) with presumed links to al-Qaeda took credit. In 2002, two almost simultaneous attacks were launched against a beach resort (the Paradise Hotel) and an aircraft, both apparently seen as "Israeli".[396] There are also allegation (without any solid evidence to support them) of the present of one or even two al-Qaeda "sleeper cells" in the country, mainly among the coastal Muslim community,[397] but this is questioned by other analysts, and opinion surveys generally do not confirm the assumption that the Kenyan public (or even the Muslim segment thereof) is favourably inclined towards terrorism.[398]

Most of the "alarmist" arguments seem to rely on the opportunities a country like Kenya seems to offer for would-be terrorists, e.g. by virtue of a large Muslim minority, a considerable number of expatriates and generally inefficient security structures. However true observations such as these may be, they surely do not meet the standards of actual evidence of any looming terrorist threat. The very belief in a terrorist threat has, however, given the government access to, inter alia, US support (under the auspices of EACTI, *vide supra*) for upgrading its police force – and it has allowed it to crack down quite severely on opposition groups with Islamic affiliations.[399] This may gradually lead to a growing resentment among he Muslim population of Kenya, parts of which may, in turn, transfer their loyalties to Islamists or even turn to terrorism.

Tanzania

Box 10: Tanzania: Basic Facts *(CIA World Factbook 2005)*	
Indepen-dence	1964 (Tanganyika in 1961 from UK-administered UN trusteeship, Zanzibar in 1963 from UK, united 1964)
Area (land)	886,037 sq km
Borders (land)	3,861 km (Burundi 451 km, DRC 459 km, Kenya 769 km, Malawi 475 km, Mozambique 756 km, Rwanda 217 km, Uganda 396 km, Zambia 338 km)
Popula-tion	36,766,356 (2005 estimate)
Ethnic groups	Mainland: 95% Bantu from over 130 tribes), others 1% Zanzibar: Arab, native African, mixed
Religion	Mainland: Christian 30%, Muslim 35%, indigenous beliefs 35%; Zanzibar: more than 99% Muslim

As will be apparent from the chapter on East Africa, Tanzania is primarily interesting as a case of "the dog that did not bark", i.e. as an apparently successful instance of the management of religious diversity without major conflicts – at least until recently where ominous signs of impending conflicts have appeared, according to some analyses.

Colonialism and the Maji-Maji

The present mainland Tanzania was first colonised by the various seafaring nations around the Indian Ocean, mainly Arabs, whose growing trade also brought Islam to at least the coastal regions.[400]

Later came the Germans, who also used Christian (mainly protestant) missionaries as an integral part of their colonial rule.[401] In their missionary endeavour the Germans were thus up against not only traditional religion, but also Islam, mainly along the "Swahili Coast".[402] Some of the conversions by the missions were, as elsewhere, quite shallow, leaving considerable scope for the continued adherence to "pagan" religious beliefs and the use of traditional rituals.[403]

In their initial colonisation efforts, the German encountered some active resistance, inter alia from indigenous chiefs basing their power on traditional religion and

mobilising the forces on the basis of these religious beliefs.[404] The best known example is that of the Hehe Wars (1891-98), led by chief Mkwawa, who was believed to have direct access to the (mainly ancestral) spirits and expected to be able to administer "war medicine", making warriors invulnerable and invincible and weakening the enemies. The Hehe tribe had been expanding through raids and wars against its neighbours at the same time as the Germans were beginning to extend their control inland, bringing the two into confrontation.[405]

A more serious challenge to German rule was the Maji-Maji uprising in what had then become German East Africa, lasting from 1905 to 1907. The background seems to have been economic, i.e. a growing dissatisfaction with the heavy taxes levied by the Germans as well as their extensive use of forced labour – but the manifestation was, at least partly, religious. Among the central beliefs was that in the rebirth of a snake god named Koleo "to restore order to all that is corrupted here on Earth" and prohibiting the payment of taxes to the whites. Among the rituals the central one was the use of "water medicine" (*maji*) administered by witchdoctors to make the warriors impervious to German bullets.

The German repression of the revolt was brutal, claiming an estimated 75,000 casualties.[406] It is, however, disputed whether it was in fact a nationalist revolt, as subsequently claimed by Tanzanian nationalists – or indeed whether it was one revolt or merely a sequence of unrelated instances of resistance.[407]

After the defeat of Germany in the First World War, Tanganyika was taken over by the UK (which had already occupied it during the war)[408] as a mandate territory, which it administered primarily by indirect rule,[409] showing a certain equidistance between Christianity and Islam, albeit with some preference for the former.[410]

On the eve of independence the population of what became Tanzania seems to have been more or less evenly divided between Muslims, Christians and adherents of traditional religions. However, as conversions to both Islam and Christianity seems to have been quite shallow, "paganism" may well have been the predominant religion, at least according to anthropologists of the day, who noted, however, a "vying for souls" by both, inter alia through missionary schools and madrasas. There was also considerable mixing of systems of law, with both (local) sharia courts and official courts, yet with a predominance of customary law administered by local courts.[411]

The British also ruled Zanzibar, with an almost entirely Muslim population and a history of Portuguese rule from 1503-1698 followed by the imposition of suzerainty by Omani sultans until 1890, when the two island groups of Unguja and Penba became a British protectorate. In 1896 a palace revolution following the death of the Sultan produced a war with the UK, which has gone down in history as the shortest war ever, lasting a mere 45 minutes (*sic!*), as the Royal Navy at 9[00] on the 27th of August responded with a bombardment of the Sultan's palace and its only warship, enforcing a surrender of the (alleged) usurper (Khalid bin Barghash) at 9[45] the same day, thus ensuring the accession to power of their own favourite, Hamoud bin Mohamed.[412] Like elsewhere, the UK preferred indirect rule, leaving in place most Muslim institutions and not even abolishing slavery until 1909 – under pressure from some of the missionaries.[413]

The Independence Compromise

Tanganyika became independent in 1961 with a democratic republican constitution.[414] Zanzibar was granted independence in 1963, but the rule of the Sultan came to an abrupt end in 1964 with a revolution, partly inspired by Marxism or "Afro-socialism",[415] upon which the islands united with the mainland to form the United Republic of Tanzania.

The country has generally remained "substantially democratic" and fairly liberal ever since, even though the introduction by President Julius Nyerere of the so-called *Ujamaa* ideology (with some Christian elements)[416] and a one-party system restrained political freedoms considerably. As the one party was a very broad umbrella organisation rather than a centralised and hierarchical party, it still left considerable space for political dissent and factionalism.[417] The system has also proved remarkably stable, at least by African standards, as Tanzania has never experienced a military coup. Elections and presidential successions have been quite unproblematic and some space has gradually developed for a genuine civil society.[418]

Besides the constitutional guarantees of religious freedoms, it has also helped limit religious conflicts that the successor in 1984 of Nyerere (a Christian) as president was a Muslim, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, who even had strong connections to Zanzibar.[419] From an early stage (i.e. during "Christian rule") the state also took the initiative to some collective representation of the Muslim population in the form of a Supreme Council of Tanzanian Muslims (BAKWATA) intended to unite both Sunni and Shia, African and Arab Muslims and to run mosques

and appoint religious officials. As some Muslims felt that it was too close to government, various other organisations have been created, most of them rather short-lived and with a narrower base.[420]

What may also have helped containing and mitigating conflicts is the presence of syncretic elements in both Christianity and Islam in the present Tanzania,[421] where (as elsewhere in Africa) both the two monotheistic religions have incorporated witchcraft beliefs and witchcraft accusations, which have occasionally even been used as a means of politics.[422] There also seems to be a growing influence of charismatic churches, inter alia because of their promises to meet the material needs and dreams of their adherents, e.g. for wealth and healing.[423] Among the marginalised urban youth there even seems to be a growing constituency for Rastafarianism with its message of peace and harmony.[424] Moreover, there seems to be a prevalence of cross-cutting identities, including overlapping identities, as in mixed Muslim-Christian families.[425]

Rise of Fanaticism?
The general picture of Christian-Muslim relations does thus not appear alarming at all. There have, surely, been some localised clashes, but most of them have been quite small.[426]

The year 1993 saw some Muslim riots in the capital, apparently instigated by a Sunni Sheik Yahya of the Quran Development Council of Tanzania (BALUKTA) and initially aimed at pork butcheries (*sic!*). Sporadic violence and vandalism by some Muslims seems to have led to a more widespread demonisation of the entire Muslim community by parts of the Christians.[427] However, an opinion poll conducted in 2000 gave more ground for optimism, as the vast majority of both Christian and Muslim Tanzanians viewed the respective other religion positively, just as they felt that their own religion received fair treatment by the state.[428]

There were also a conflict between the mainland and Zanzibar in 1994 over whether the latter should be allowed to join the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC); and in both 1998 and 2002 violent clashes between Muslims and Christians in a Muslim-dominated quarter of Dar es Salaam, Mwembechai.[429] Since that time, some authors argue that Wahhabism has been gaining ground in Tanzania, whereas other deny this claim, arguing that it seems to have peaked, at least on the mainland – as in Kenya (*vide supra*).[430]

The main concern therefore seems to relate to relations between mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, where there does, indeed, seem to be a certain resurgence of Islamic radicalism, even though this may also be due to other factors such as ethnicity and a general feeling of being marginalised.[431] In any case, these sentiments seem to be increasingly articulated in political demands, which would seem to bode well for peace even here – even though recent elections have seen substantial violence.[432]

Uganda

Box 11: Uganda: Basic Facts *(CIA World Factbook 2005)*	
Independence	1962 (from UK)
Area (land)	199,710 sq km
Borders (land)	2,698 km (DRC 765 km, Kenya 933 km, Rwanda 169 km, Sudan 435 km, Tanzania 396 km)
Population	27,269,482 (2005 estimate)
Ethnic groups	Baganda 17%, Ankole 8%, Basoga 8%, Iteso 8%, Bakiga 7%, Langi 6%, Rwanda 6%, Bagisu 5%, Acholi 4%, Lugbara 4%, Batoro 3%, Bunyoro 3%, Alur 2%, Bag-were 2%, Bakonjo 2%, Jopodhola 2%, Karamojong 2%, Rundi 2%, non-African 1%, other 8%
Religion	Roman Catholic 33%, Protestant 33%, Muslim 16%, indigenous beliefs 18%

Ever since the advent to power of Yoweri Museveni in 1986, Uganda has been one of the darlings of the international donor community,[433] often seen as a manifestation of "the new Africa" with President Museveni a personification of a new (and presumably better) brand of African leaders.

This image does not completely correspond to the reality.[434] Indeed, ever since independence, Uganda has been one of the most war-torn countries in all of Africa and it is, even today, host to one of the most ferocious civil wars of the entire continent. Religion plays a prominent role in this, as it has done in previous conflicts.

Colonialism and Christianity

The present Uganda was colonised by the British, who upon their arrival found a range of kingdoms in the territory, most prominently that of Buganda in the south of the territory, ruled by a *Kabaka*.[435]

The colonist had, however, been preceded by the Protestant missionaries, soon followed by Catholics. By their proselytising efforts, and especially the successful conversion of Kabaka Mutesa and his successor Mwanga, they greatly facilitated the establishment of colonial rule.[436] The missionaries also scored some successes elsewhere, e.g. in Acholiland in the north.[437] As elsewhere the British aimed for "empire on a shoestring budget" by opting for indirect rule, which entailed, among other things the creation of a hierarchical system of Native Authority, with the Kabaka at its pinnacle.[438] The Christian faith played an important role in creating a national identity among the Ugandans, in Bugandi and the rest of the colony, almost by creating an "imagined community", as convincingly argued in a recent study by Nakanyike Musisi.[439] It also helped in this respect that Uganda had a group of indigenous martyrs, who were killed for their faith in the late 1880s by the Kabaka, who were later to become national symbols.[440]

Both during the pre-colonial period and under colonial rule, there were minor conflicts between the two main Christian denominations and Islam, e.g. a coup by the Muslims in 1888 to oust Kabaka Mwanga in favour of a Muslim, Kalema, who was subsequently overthrown and Mwanga reinstated by the Christian parties.[441] None of these conflicts were, however, particularly serious or bloody, and generally the Muslim minority co-existed peacefully with the Christians, as did the Hindu minorities among the minor segment of the population stemming from Asia.[442]

Civil Wars: from Independence to Museweni

The political conflicts began almost immediately after independence in 1962, when the first elected Prime Minister, Milton Obote, soon found himself at odds with the *Kabaka*.[443] This conflict was "resolved" violently when Obote in 1966 abrogated the constitution and had himself appointed president. In the following year, he had his army chief, Idi Amin, overthrow the *Kabaka* to remove opposition to his rule – only to see a simmering unrest in Buganda for several years.[444] In 1969 Obote had his *Common Man's Charter* adopted by the ruling UPA (Uganda People's Congress) inaugurating a "move to the left",

which in turn alienated a number of his former supporters, including the army with Amin at its helm.[445]

In 1971, the army therefore launched a military coup, bringing to power Ida Amin.[446] The new ruler was a devout Muslim, but initially committed himself to maintaining the freedom of religion.[447] Even though five Christian bishops had to flee after having criticised Amin, the reason for their being persecuted seems to have had less to do with their religion than with the regime's general lack of tolerance of any kind of criticism.[448] Besides some favouritism vis-à-vis (loyal) Muslims, the religion of the autocrat thus seems to have been of minor significance, even though it did lead to Uganda's being admitted to the Islamic Summit Conference as a Muslim state in 1974.[449] In 1972, Amin with a stroke of a pen expulsed the entire Asian population in the country, but even this move was apparently unrelated to religion, and rather motivated by the quest for resources for the elaborate patronage network.[450]

When the regime's erratic policies and brutality had provoked several armed rebellions, it was finally overthrown in 1979 – albeit not so much by the armed insurgents as by the army of neighbouring Tanzania which Amin had given an excuse to intervene by his small-scale invasion into Tanzania.[451] Soon after the down-fall of the dictator, former president Obote was reinstated, forming a government in which, among others, Museveni took part in the prominent role of Minister of Defence.[452]

However, when the next elections turned out to be rigged (again), the latter took to bush, forming the National Resistance Army (NRA),[453] which waged a civil war against, first, Obote and subsequently yet another putchist government under Tito Okello,[454] until in 1986 it succeeded in taking Kampala, upon which Museveni was proclaimed president of the country.

Even though the new president has, according to some accounts, a past as fundamentalist born-again Christian,[455] religion did not seem to play any significant role in the struggle of the NRA – and since the instalment of the new group in power, it has generally observed the religious freedoms of all denominations. The formula for the new regime became "no-party democracy", centred around the political branch of the NRA, the National Resistance Movement,[456] which retained a monopoly on politics until a referendum in 2005 unbanned political parties – as a *quid pro quo* Museveni was allowed to run for a third term as president.[457]

Notwithstanding this rather "unorthodox" approach to democracy, the respect human rights has clearly improved considerably, compared with that of the former regimes, even though it still leaves a good deal to be desired.[458] The armed forces continue to play a political role, at least according to some analyses, thus perhaps representing a latent risk of resurgent praetorianism, but so far the principle of the primacy of the civilian political authorities over the military has survived.[459] Religious freedoms have generally been respected,[460] and religion and politics have generally been kept separate, even though this may be about to change. For instance, until 2004 Uganda has what was probably Africa's most effective AIDS-prevention programme (featuring, among other elements, a campaign for the use of contraceptives), but this has now been amended to merely stress abstinence – a change of course which has partly been argued in religious terms.[461]

Since the NRA took over the reins of government there have been miscellaneous insurgencies in the country, mainly in the north (*vide infra*) and in the west. The ADF (Allied Democratic Forces) rebellion launched in 1997 in western Uganda has been described by some as Muslim and based on the Salafist *Tabliq* sect (and to some extent funded by Wahhabist charities) whereas others have described it as "rebels without a cause", driven rather by "greed" motives.[462] An anonymous ex-combatant is thus quoted for the following assessment:

> The agenda of the ADF was purely political. The religious aspect came later as a way to get support and recruits . . . the ADF adapted the grievances of Islam in order to appeal to these people. Many of the young recruits also happened to be Muslim so the number of Muslims in ADF grew. Islam was a ticket, so the leaders disguised their political motives in religion.[463]

Whereas the ADF rebellion is thus probably not really a religious conflict, the one to which we shall now turn certainly is, even though it, too, is also influenced by other factors.

From the War of the Spirit(s) to the Lord's Resistance Army
Uganda is today host to one of the most atrocious guerrilla movements in Africa, with unmistakable terrorist features and based on a rather baroque form of Christian fundamentalism – the so-called Lord's Resistance Army, which is in turn an offspring of an equally bizarre, but much less ferocious movement, the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM).[464]

Fig. 4 Alice Auma ("Lakwena")

It all began with a young girl from the Acholi ethnic group, Alice Auma (See Fig. 4),[465] belonging to the Anglican Church, but later converting to Catholicism. On the 25th of May 1985 she became possessed" by a (male) Christian holy spirit called Lakwena, who had previously "inhabited" an Italian engineer.[466] Having first used the powers of this spirit for healing, Alice (now calling herself Lakwena) was subsequently commanded by the spirit possessing her to form an army to fight the NRA. The struggle was to begin with a ritual "purification" of deserted soldiers from the various armed groups, including Museveni's NRA, but also of the Acholi people as such, held to be particularly sinful and prone to witchcraft.[467]

A set of twenty, rather weird commands ("Holy Spirit Safety Precautions") were adopted, combining extracts from the ten commandments such as "Though shallt not kill" with more mundane ones such as a prohibition against smoking cigarettes and the rather bizarre admonition to (male) fighters to have two testicles, "no more, no less".[468] Even though the "theology" of the movement included condemnation of witchcraft and paganism, it incorporated strong elements of syncretism. Seeing itself as Christian, for instance, it nevertheless accommodated elements of Islam by treating both the Bible and the *Quran* as holy texts, from which a clerk every day read passages for the troops.[469] It further exhibited strong elements of animism, regarding bees, snakes, water and rocks as animated by benign spirits with whom (presumably numbering 140,000) the movement aligned itself. According to Heike Berend,

> Alice [thus] tried in a complex way to reunite nature and society, which had been separated in the colonial period by secularization and bureaucratization of the office of chief. Her inclusion of the forces of nature made

the war of the HSMF a cosmic uprising uniting man, spirits and parts of animate and inanimate nature in a struggle against evil.[470]

The army was labelled the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces (HSMF), which were organised along the lines of a regular army, albeit with the qualification that the commanders of the three "divisions" were spirits – all speaking through Alice, who also served as medium for spirits such as "Wrong Element", "Chin Po" and "Franko" (allegedly stemming from the USA, Korea and Zaïre, respectively).[471]

The military tactics of the HSMF are also rather strange. The troops were prohibited from aiming at their opponents; hence their shots were supposedly guided by the spirits, thereby protecting the troops from violating the "though shallt not kill" rule. Nor were the troops allowed to take cover, but supposed to fight from an erect position and with a naked torso – believed to be made invulnerable by the administration of holy water and by singing hymns.[472]

Incredible though it may sound, the HSMF scored some impressive victories, growing to a total size of 20,000, until they were finally defeated in the autumn of 1987 in a failed attempt to take Kampala,[473] upon which some of the troops were captured, while others joined successor movements. Alice herself was exiled to Kenya, where she apparently still resides, but now no longer possessed by the Lakwena (or any other) spirit. According to Behrend, "she was last seen in a small bar, wearing a white blouse and a blue short and drinking Pepsi Cola with gin. The spirits had left her."[474]

Upon the defeat of the HSM and a time in prison, Alice's father, Severino Lukoya, established a short-lived successor to the HSM, now claiming to also have been possessed by Lakwena. He did, however, declare it as his mission to heal people and spread the message of (basically the same) spirits as had possessed Alice (except Chin Po, who refused) as well as some new ones, such as Oyite Ojok (a deceased high-ranking officer) and Dr Ambrosoli, an Italian physician. Contrary to his daughter, however, Severino did not monopolise the spirits, which could also possess other members of his community. He further added to his daughter's "theology" certain eschatological elements about the martyrdom of the killed HSM soldiers and about the impending Judgement Day, when they would be resurrected to a New World. Severino was much less successful in his recruitment efforts than Alice had been and was in 1988 captured by the LRA,

whose prisoner he remained until the following year, when he escaped only to be captured by government forces, who kept him in prison until 1992.[475]

Some of first Alice's troops and subsequently Severino's were taken over by the LRA of Joseph Kony, who may or may not be a cousin of Alice.[476] He, too, claimed to be possessed by holy spirits, including one named Juma Oris. He first founded what he called The Lord's Army, the name of which he subsequently changed to Uganda Peoples' Democratic Christian Army (UPDCA) and later to the Lord's Resistance Army.[477] These armies were organised in a way similar to the HSMF, e.g. into three divisions, in turn subdivided into sections, called *won*, *wod* and *tipu maleng*, i.e. Father, Son and Holy Ghost, respectively.[478] In comparison to Alice, however, Kony was less open to syncretism and was firm in his rejection of both Islam and "paganism".[479]

Whereas the HSMF conducted their wars with considerable circumspection and did not target civilians deliberately, its successor, the LRA, has developed into one of the world's most cynical and atrocious rebel groups.[480] Among its most appalling practices is that of forcefully abducting children to serve as frontline troops (effectively "canon fodder") in the LRA, a fate that has befallen 20-25,000 children since 1987.[481] As a consequence, the LRA is on the American list of terrorist organisations,[482] and they have recently been indicted at the International Criminal Court.[483]

Conclusion

We have thus seen that Africa is a profoundly religious continent, where almost everybody claims adherence to one of three main religious "families", i.e. either to traditional religion, Islam or Christianity. Both of the latter faiths have grown considerably, even though there may be less to their apparent success than meets the eye, as they have often converted Africans into the new belief system by co-opting elements of traditional religion such as the beliefs in witchcraft and spirit possession – thereby making the "typical African" religion quite syncretic.

We have also seen that religion has long played, and continues to play, significant roles in the continent's all too numerous civil wars. However, even though the impression seems to predominate that only Islam is bellicose, the above account has, hopefully, shown that the picture is much less black-and-white. Just as Islam is not everywhere a force of conflict, but may also be a force for peace, both Christianity and traditional religions have also served to spur or exacerbate conflicts.

As far as East Africa is concerned, the above analysis will also have shown that some of the presumed links between religious diversity and conflict (including the "clash of civilisations" thesis) are not really supported by empirical evidence. The three most religiously homogenous countries in the region differ widely, as the almost completely Muslim Djibouti is quite peaceful, whereas the equally almost completely Muslim Somalia is the exact opposite, as is the almost as homogenously Christian Uganda. The picture is not any clearer as far as the religiously divided countries are concerned, as Ethiopia is a hotbed of conflicts, which is clearly neither the case of Kenya nor Tanzania.

A possible explanation for this absence of a discernable pattern with regard to the link between religion and conflict may be that religion is an epiphenomenon, i.e. that conflicts occur mainly for non-religious reasons such as greed (or other economic motives) or grievances over political matters, or over ethnicity. In some cases, the political, economic or other grievances behind the conflict may then be articulated in religious terms, and leaders may attempt to recruit followers by means of appeals to religion – in others not.

However, as it is beyond the scope of the present paper to pursue such an investigation, we shall have to rest content with being wiser by knowing what we do not know, as was Socrates:

> I went to one who had the reputation of wisdom, and observed to him (…) When I began to talk with him, I could not help thinking that he was not really wise, although he was thought wise by many, and wiser still by himself (…). So I left him, saying to myself, as I went away: Well, although I do not suppose that either of us knows anything really beautiful and good, I am better off than he is – for he knows nothing, and thinks that he knows. I neither know nor think that I know. In this latter particular, then, I seem to have slightly the advantage of him.[484]

Endnotes

[1] As searches for this concept on the Google and MSN search engines yield no matches, the present author appears to be the inventor of this term.

[2] See, for instance, Ellis, Stephen & Gerrie ter Haar: "Religion and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 36, no. 2 (1998), pp. 175-201; idem & idem: *Worlds of Power. Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2004), *passim*.

[3] The figures are calculated on the basis of the data in the entry "Religion" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica,* at www.britannica.com/eb/article-9396555?query=religion&ct=eb.

[4] The map is taken from http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/afrorelg.htm.

[5] Robinson, David: *Muslim Societies in African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). On the darker side of Islam in Africa see Fisher, Humphrey J.: *Slavery in the History of Muslim Black Africa* (London: Hurst & Co., 2001).

[6] Abernethy, David B: *The Dynamics of Global Dominance. European Overseas Empires 1415-1980* (New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 2000), *passim*. See also Iliffe, John: *Africans. The History of a Continent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 37-61 and 222-229; Boahen, A. Adu: *African Perspectives on Colonialism* (Baltimore, ML: John Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 15-19.

[7] On the term see Richards, Paul: *Fighting for the Rain Forest. War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone* (Oxford: James Currey, 1998), pp. 74-78; Medea, Laurent: "Creolisation and Globalisation in a Neo-Colonial Context: the Case of Réunion", *Social Indentities*, vol. 8, no. 1 (2002), pp. 125-142.

[8] See Hamilton, Malcolm: *The Sociology of Religion*. 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2001). Good textbooks are Lambek, Michael (ed.): *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002); and Blakely, Thomas D., Walter E.A. van Beek & Dennis L. Thomson (eds.): *Religion in Africa* (London: James Currey, 1994). See also Belcher, Stephen: *African Myths of Origin* (London: Penguin Classics, 2005).

[9] Durkheim, Emile: *The Elementary Forms of Religious LIfe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 6. See also Kuper, Adam: "Durkheim's Theory of Primitive Kinship", *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 36, no. 2. (1985), pp. 224-237.

[10] Tylor, Edward B: *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), pp. 8-19 & *passim*. See also Stocking, Jr., George W.: "Animism in Theory and Practice: E. B. Tylor's Unpublished 'Notes on "Spiritualism"'", *Man, New Series*, vol. 6, No. 1 (1971), pp. 88-104. For a contemporary critique see Stuart-Glennie, J. S.: "Queries as to Dr. Tylor's Views on Animism", *Folklore*, vol. 3, no. 3 (1892), pp. 289-307. For more recent reflections on Tylor's significance see Robinson, Elmo A.: "Animism as a World Hypothesis", *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 58, no. 1 (1949), pp. 53-63; Stringer, Martin D.: "Rethinking Animism: Thoughts from the Infancy of Our Discipline", *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1999), pp. 541-555; Bird-David, Nurit: "'Animism' Revisited: Personhood, Environment, and Relational Epistemology", *Current Anthropology*, vol. 40, Supplement (1999), pp. S67-S91; Schrempp, Gregory: "The Demon-Haunted World: Folklore and Fear of Regression at the End of the Millennium", *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 111, no. 441 (1998), pp. 247-256. Durkheim defined totemism, i.e. what others would call animism, as "the religion, not of such and such animals or men or images, but of an anonymous and impersonal force, found in each of these beings, but not to be confounded with any of them", i.e. as kind of a "collective conscience". See *op. cit.* (note 9), pp. 6-10.

[11] Tylor, Edward B: "Remarks on Totemism, with Especial Reference to Some Modern Theories Resepcting It", *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 28, no. 1-2 (1899), pp. 138-148; Goldenweiser, A.A.: "Totemism, an Analytical Study", *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 23, no. 88 (1910), pp. 179-293; idem: "The Origin of Totemism", *American Anthropologist, New Series*, vol. 14, no. 4 (1912), pp. 600-607; Boas, Franz: "The Origin of Totemism", *ibid.*, vol. 18, no. 3 (1916), pp. 319-326; Lang, Andrew: "Mr. Andrew Lang's Theory of the Origin of Exogamy and Totemism", *Folklore*, vol. 24, no. 2. (1913), pp. 155-186; Ridington, Robin & Tonia Ridington: "The Inner Eye of Shamanism

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[12] Hamilton: *op. cit.* (note 8), pp. 37-54; Wax, Murray & Rosalie Wax: "The Notion of Magic", *Current Anthropology*, vol. 4, no. 5 (1963), pp. 495-518; Winkelman, Michael: "Magic: A Theoretical Reassessment", *ibid.*, vol. 23, no. 1 (1982), pp. 37-66; Malinowski, Bronislaw: "The Rationalization of Anthropology and Administration", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, vol. 3, no. 4 (1930), pp. 405-430; Evans-Pritchard, E. E.: "Sorcery and Native Opinion", *ibid.* vol. 4, no. 1 (1931), pp. 22-55; Homans, George C.: "Anxiety and Ritual: The Theories of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown", *American Anthropologist*, vol. 43, no. 2 (1941), pp. 164-172; Bascom, William: "Malinowski's Contributions to the Study of Folklore", *Folklore*, vol. 94, no. 2 (1983), pp. 163-172; Rosengren, Karl Erik: "Malinowski's Magic: The Riddle of the Empty Cell", *Current Anthropology*, vol. 17, no. 4 (1976), pp. 667-685.

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