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About Life & Peace Institute

Since its formation, LPI has carried out programmes for conflict transformation in a variety of countries, conducted research, and produced numerous publications on nonviolent conflict transformation and the role of religion in conflict and peacebuilding. The main focus of our work has been on Africa, with the Horn of Africa Programme being established and well-known in the 1990s, not least our work in Somalia. Other initiatives have been carried out in Congo-Brazzaville, Croatia, Sri Lanka and East Timor. We have strengthened the capacity of our civil society partners to address the conflicts in their own context, in some of the most difficult and war-torn countries.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dealing with diversity

No state or society is mono-religious. As this special issue of Horn of Africa Bulletin illustrates, believers in mutually exclusive and competing confessional statements of faith, distinct and segregated ritualistic practices with different holidays on the calendar, demonstrative dress codes and mannerisms, and hostile perceptions and mutual suspicion of one another, live side by side in towns and villages across the Horn.

The opening article of this special issue—by Kindeneh Endeg Mihretie—describes the general public's day-to-day life experience in Addis Ababa. The competition between the established Orthodox Church, Muslims and the relatively new Pentecostal movements to increase their sphere of influence, visibility in the public space and numbers of followers has become a permanent feature of urban culture in the Ethiopian capital. Ironically, as Mihretie notes, this scenario is partly a result of Ethiopia's transition from socialistic and authoritarian regimes to a pluralistic-secular political order.

How clergy and leaders of different religious traditions portray the image of one another is the theme Michael Brislen's article on Muslim and Christian perceptions of each other in Kenya. Stereotypical images based on religious and (in the case of Somalis) ethnic appearances create social friction, are used as symbols in the political arena and even as markers of nationalism and patriotism.

In his article on Kadhi courts—courts for Muslim only for jurisprudence in matters of marriage, divorce and inheritance—Hassan Ndzovu focuses on a 2010 court judgment that had declared them unconstitutional, leading to challenges by both the Kenyan government and Muslim groups. This debate on the extent of religious freedom within Kenya's secular constitutional dispensation—should it allow a sectarian judicial and legal system just of one group of citizens?—is the topic his paper.

The question of the role of religion in Kenyan politics is directly linked to its Somali Muslim population which, in turn, is inseparable from the conflict in Somalia. Markus Hoehne traces the evolution of Islamic movements in Somalia—from a predominantly traditional sufi-oriented culture to the emergence of groups and movements like Al-Shabab that stress a strict adherence to the original scriptures. He argues that despite apparent hostility and differences, these groups have the common goal of establishing an Islamic state. In that context, he asserts, the counterterrorism policy framework is simplistic and binary—extremists versus moderates—and has failed to take into account the full spectrum of Islam in Somalia.

As is evident from the scholarly discussions in this issue of the Bulletin, religious movements and organisations are multiplying in numbers and gaining political and social ground in the Horn region in a manner unprecedented in history. Terje Ostebo wraps up this issue with an overview of the dynamics of religious resurgence in countries in the Horn. From social media and globalisation of communities to the local cultural and political undercurrents, Ostebo identifies a number of factors that have led to the proliferation and enhanced socio-political role of religion in states in the horn.

Najum Mushtaq
Life & Peace Institute

Addis Ababa public space an arena for religious rivalry

By Kindeneh Endeg Mihretie

The prominence of religion in the public space is one of the dominant features of life in today's Addis Ababa. This essay discusses interreligious rivalry and competition, involving Orthodox Christians, Protestants and Muslims. The paper seeks to show that the religious rivalry and competition is much more pervasive and widespread, involving mainstream religious institutions and the majority of their followers, than something confined to reformist movements on the fringe as often assumed.

Introduction

For more than a decade now, the public space in Addis Ababa has become an arena of interreligious rivalry and competition among the major confessional groups in town. Most taxicabs and other public service vehicles display posters and stickers with overt polemical messages. The ever expanding sectarian spectacle accompanying regular religious processions in the annual calendars of these confessional groups is another manifestation of the phenomenon. The popular Epiphany procession is perhaps the best example on the Orthodox Christian side. Small banners and ribbons, mostly in green, yellow and red, the colours of the Ethiopian national flag, hang from Orthodox Christian churches and blanket the city. The sight has become part of holiday festivities. The procession also sees giant crosses and huge, billboard style posters of saints and angels, adorn thoroughfares and public squares.

Not to be outdone, during the two principal Islamic annual holidays, *Eid al-Adha* and *Eid al-Fitr,* as well as the weekly *Jumu'ah* (Friday) prayers, Muslims also turn out in large numbers to claim as much of the public space as they can. Having little by way of religious artefacts and elaborate processions, they do so mostly via display of sheer numerical size. And, at first sight, Protestants who are seen as late-comers to the country (which denies them an officially recognized separate liturgical calendar for public processions) may seem to be at a disadvantage. A closer inspection, however, proves the case to be otherwise. To give but one example, Protestants engage in what they call "gospel crusades". This involves frequent patrolling of town, calling upon residents to join their campaigns, using powerful loudspeakers, mounted on a van or minibus that can be heard from miles away.

Fierce competition for the public space and the predominantly urban nature of the religious dynamics described above are among the themes least explored in the growing body of secondary literature on contemporary religious issues in Ethiopia. There has been a disproportionate focus on the activities of reformist movements, especially the 'political' Islam of the *Wahhabiya* and *Salafiya* variety and Evangelical Pentecostalism, which conveys the impression that most of the religious dynamism is the work of these groups.[1].

On the other hand, there are quite a few scholars who call for locally situated analyses and understanding of the phenomenon that takes into account the post 1991 secular

pluralistic order. Followers of what came down historically as minority religions, especially Islam and Protestantism, started to enjoy the benefits of freedom of worship and religious plurality that grant them equal rights with followers of Orthodox Christianity, the state religion until 1974[2]. Building on the works of scholars who situate the phenomenon within the context of the post 1991 secular-pluralistic order, this article seeks to contribute to the discussion on the causes behind the ongoing interreligious tension and rivalry in Addis Ababa by highlighting the role of mainstream liturgical activities of the Orthodox Church and Islam.

The central argument here is that the rivalry and competition is much more widespread and pervasive than something confined to the activity of reformist movements on the fringe. The paper draws on personal observations of the author over the past four years as well as interviews with city residents in the spring of 2013.

Epiphany: subversive discourse against the secular order?

The 2009 Epiphany procession in Addis Ababa featured many of the city's Orthodox youth wearing a T-shirt with the slogan "Ethiopia, a Christian Island". Shortly after, the incident was condemned by the head of government at the time, the late Prime Minster Meles Zenawi, as "anathema" to constitutionally sanctioned "religious equality".[3] Viewed in this light, it is interesting that other recent additions to Epiphany with similar, if not more exclusivist sectarian implications, have eluded the same level of official scrutiny.

Epiphany—*Timqet* in Amharic—is one of two annual holidays on the calendar of the Orthodox Church that involves public processions. As much as it purports to be just religious, the holiday is however every bit social and political as well. Hence the slogan, "Ethiopia, a Christian Island" resurfacing specifically in connection to Epiphany. This essay proposes the possibility that it might represent a symbolic attempt to restore the right of the Orthodox Church to exclusive entitlement of public space, deriving from the status of the Orthodox Christianity as the official religion of the historic Ethiopian state prior to the 1974 socialist revolution. The performances and visual imageries of Epiphany with such symbolism and signification include blanketing the city with the national flag (hence appropriation and redeployment of a national symbol for sectarian activity and, thereby, also betraying a wish for a remarriage of church and state, pre-1974 style), saturating the public space with huge signs of the cross and large posters of saints and angels. No wonder then that most incidents of violent confrontations between Muslims and Orthodox Christians across the country, especially over the last decade or so, have occurred during Epiphany celebrations.[4]

Show of numerical strength a source of entitlement?

"Why this obsession with blocking the roads?" one often hears many Christian residents of Addis Ababa complain every Friday. This is in reference to the familiar scene of Muslims flowing out of mosques into the surrounding areas during *Jumu'ah,* the weekly midday Friday prayers. Muslims defend this as a matter of necessity, a matter of simple maths, emphatically asserting that the number of worshipers participating in the weekly

prayers far exceeds the holding capacity of mosques.

Many Christians would have none of this. To the more furious, the practice is simply an abuse of the freedom of worship on the part of Muslims, done for the sheer pleasure of making life difficult for other city dwellers. In support of their argument, Christians often cite the case of the hundred plus mosques built over the last two decades in the capital. These mosques, Christians contend, are more than enough to accommodate every Muslim in the city. Others, while not so skeptical and less ready to impugn motive, nonetheless betray similar frustration, complaining that regardless of the reasons, the practice is taking a toll on their daily lives. .

Many mosques have been built over the last two decades in Addis Ababa, as well as the country at large. However, Muslims view their gains regarding the right to build worship houses to be precarious, pointing to the alleged aggressive backlash from Christians. They also complain that when it comes to fulfilling the promise of the constitutional freedom of worship and religious plurality, Muslims are given the short end of the stick and the state has still a long way to go in terms of ensuring and safeguarding the rights of all religious groups. Some Muslims argue that redressing centuries of inequality and discrimination requires more than just the ratification of a secular constitution. Muslims contend that the declaration of religious freedom meant that now they can fulfil the requirements of their religion by doing things that were forbidden by law in the past, such as the very public act of participating in the weekly Friday prayer and the two annual *Eids*.[5]

Viewed in this light, this study argues that the numbers game in general and the evident zeal of Muslims to ensure maximum turnout for the *Jumu'ah* and two annual holidays needs to be seen within the context of the politics of the ongoing struggle of Ethiopian Muslims to overcome their historical plight, which involves defending the recent gains while striving for more.

Muslims also dispute the assertion that their number is less than the Orthodox Christians both in Addis Ababa and the rest of the country. They claim that their minority status is a product of historical injustice rather than numerical size. They contend that it is because they were confined to the private sphere that they appear fewer than their actual number. By huge turnout, it therefore seems that Muslims are arguing their version of history, that what makes them appear smaller than their actual size is historical injustice. Flooding the public space in large numbers also seems, partly, to be an effort to expand their gains. If the number of Muslims is at parity or exceeds the number of Orthodox Christians, it follows that they have a right to physical space, proportional if not more than their Orthodox Christian counterparts.

Such performative signification of the practice of huge turnout is further evident in the fact that applications to the city municipality for a plot of land for the construction of mosques in Addis Ababa over the last decade or so have met with fierce resistance from mostly the Orthodox Christian residents of the respective localities, who lodge counter-applications opposing the move, with the assertion that the number of mosques in the

city has already outstripped the need of worshipers.[6]

Stickers, posters and gospel songs: the sacral pop culture

As indicated at the opening section of this essay, the space that was formerly reserved for European Football stars and Hollywood celebrities in the thousands of small taxis and minibuses in Addis Ababa is being taken over by polemical religious stickers and posters. On the Orthodox side the favourite themes of this quite innovative sectarian media features images of the various saints and angels usually accompanied by captions that emphasize the intercessory power of the saintly figures to grant the faithful access to God.

Muslims and Protestants also make good use of this medium of popular culture. The most popular taxi posters and stickers on the Protestant side, include; "Just Jesus will do", " I belong to Jesus", "Jesus saves", "Jesus is Lord" etc. The unmistakable polemical exchange with the Orthodox Christian counterpart is implied in the exclusive emphasis on Jesus Christ deriving from the Protestant denial of the intercessory role of saints. On the Muslim side, the most popular sticker is "For me just Allah will do", a self-evident textual polemical sparring with the Orthodox. Other Quranic verses and even the *shahadah*, i.e., the Islamic profession of faith, are also common.

Conclusions

This essay foregrounds competition in the public sphere between the three faiths. This recent phenomena relies on standard liturgical practices and 'new' media. It underlines the importance of the role of mainstream religious practices as tools of gaining prominence and public space. These practices have become symbols in religious competition and ultimately signify the evolutionary adaptability of religious competition in the urban sphere. The potential for public manifestations of religious competition to lead to tensions and hostility suggests the need for government regulation and policies to ensure that this does not occur.

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[2] Hussien 2006; Dereje, 2011& Østebo, 2008

[3] Dereje 2011

[4] Hussein, 2006

[5] Hussein, 2006

[6] Hussein, 2006

KENYA

Images in a cracked mirror - Muslim and Christian perceptions of each other in Kenya

By Mike Brislen

Some observers have characterised the relationship between Christians and Muslims in Kenya as one of longstanding conflict.[1] The recent Al-Shabaab attack at the university in Garissa, where reports indicate that Christian students were especially targeted, may seem to confirm this observation.[2] There were similar reports concerning the Al-Shabaab attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi in 2013. However, this form of terrorist violence is best understood as a conflict between the Kenyan state and a militant, religious-political group, Al-Shabaab, which is also engaged in a war with the government and other Muslim groups in Somalia. The specific targeting of Christians—though it should be noted that Muslims were also killed by Al-Shabaab militants at Westgate and at the university in Garissa – appears to be a tactic intended to divide Kenya along religious lines in imitation of Boko Haram hoping to control large sections of territory in Nigeria.[3]

This tactic raises questions about the character of the relationship between Christians and Muslims in Kenya. Rather than attempting to document periods of peaceful coexistence and episodes of conflict, which assumes “the stability of society and notion of social order”[4] as theoretical norms, it should prove helpful to examine each religious community’s perceptions of the other.

These perceptions are not formed in a religious vacuum, but rather as Kenyan Muslims and Christians engage in symbolic contests over public and political space. Though open conflict is rare, tensions often remain high as the two religious communities battle symbolically for increased political power, for more access to government resources and for their respective visions for Kenya to be realized. This is best understood as a contest for symbolic power that enables a community to gain the legitimacy to define Kenya’s national identity and their place within the nation.

The concept of symbolic power comes from French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who views it as the ability of social groups “to shape perceptions of social reality.”[5] The two religious communities confront each other symbolically through attempts to enhance their own public prestige (increase their own symbolic capital in Bourdieusian terms) or through attempts to devalue the public standing of the other (reduce the other’s symbolic capital).

Symbolic Confrontations

The symbolic confrontations that will be examined centre on the following questions. Who best represents what it means to be Kenyan? Who carries the greater religious and ‘moral’ status in Kenya?

Neither the Kenyan Christian community nor the Kenyan Muslim community represents a united group with a single perception and approach to their own religion or to the

symbolic contest over public space. Within each religious community intrareligious symbolic contests also exist along both ethnic and confessional lines. Though these contests will not be discussed in any detail, it will be necessary to indicate where major differences of viewpoint exist within a religious community.

Who best represents what it means to be Kenyan?

Being truly Kenyan is contested through the promotion of one's own history and the devaluation of the history of the other. Christians tend to emphasize their role in the struggle for independence,[6] while pointing out the history of the Muslim community's involvement in slavery.[7] In this way Christians are presented as freedom fighters and the architects of modern Kenya, while Muslims are shown to have enslaved Africans, occasionally phrased as 'enslaving our ancestors'.

In contrast Muslims highlight their long history of urban development and civilisation along Kenya's coast; sometimes implying that the ancestors of modern Kenyan Christians were uncivilized, living in the jungle.[8] Muslims also frequently refer to Christianity as a European religion, the religion of the colonizers. Islam is, therefore, portrayed as the agent of Kenyan civilisation, while Kenyan Christians are depicted as following in the way of their former colonial masters. Each community portrays itself as the true founder of Kenya and depicts the other as essentially 'foreign' to the nation.

Being truly Kenyan is also debated over the issue of indigeneity. Christians frequently infer that Muslims along the coast are Arabs; even Kenyan secondary school history textbooks describe the Swahili people as Swahili-Arabs, indicating their 'foreign' nature. In addition Somali Kenyans are more often referred to as 'Somalis' than as 'Kenyans'.[9] It is not particularly unusual for a non-Muslim Kenyan to shout 'go home' to a Muslim on the streets of Nairobi.[10] Christians assume their own indigenous origins, often mentioning their ancestral lands in Kenya. While this issue tends to be more stressed among Christians, Muslims will argue that Islam is indigenous to Kenya and Africa; then Christianity is said to be a foreign imposition. The goal of this symbolic contest is to identify the other as primarily foreign, and therefore an illegitimate representative of Kenyan values.

Christians, in particular, have adopted the self-perception of being African Christians. Catholics and mainline Protestants, especially, have developed African Christian Theologies in which the "reconstruction" of the nation is understood to take place through a commitment to finding African solutions to African problems.[11] Christianity, once divorced from Western historical trappings, becomes compatible with Africanness and the true African values of enhancing life. Through the involvement of Christian scholars in this issue, Muslims are sometimes invited into the conversation. Yet, there appears to be some questioning of Muslim commitment to Africanness, which is the basis of relationships of trust from the African Christian perspective.

Kenyan Muslims, on the other hand, have not placed the same emphasis upon being African. Historically, they have resisted the label. For example, during British colonialism Somalis in Nairobi protested for the right to pay higher taxes, which was

considered preferable to being classified as native Africans.[12] Kenyan Somalis from North Eastern Province, who are travelling to Nairobi, frequently say that they are going to Kenya,[13] and it can sometimes be heard that they are visiting Africa. Swahili Muslims have also contrasted *ustaarabu* (Arabness) with *nyika* (bush) to emphasis their cultural superiority over native Africans.[14] In this symbolic contest each community is making very different claims. Christians assert their Africanness as a sign of being truly Kenyan, and therefore they carry the legitimate privilege to define Kenyan national identity. Muslims, whose Africanness is questionable, remain outsiders. On the other hand, Muslims—while declaring their indigeneity—contend that their superior civilisation over African (Christian) backwardness legitimizes their claims to defining Kenyan identity.

Who carries greater religious and 'moral' status?

To make claims that one is more religious or 'moral' than another is viewed as lacking humility. Therefore the symbolic contests to affirm one's religious and moral legitimacy critique the spirituality and morality of the other, rather than exalt one's own status.

Mainline Protestant and Catholics, whose leaders participate in interreligious gatherings, tend to have more positive views of Islam than Neo-Pentecostals. Leaders, writers and scholars from Catholic and mainline Protestant churches usually understand Muslims and Christians to worship the same God. In the same way, Muslim leaders also participate in interreligious gatherings and tend to refrain from disparaging Christianity.

However, at a more popular level Neo-Pentecostals and ordinary Muslims have found ways to question the religious legitimacy of the other. Neo-Pentecostal magazines, which can be easily found throughout Nairobi, contain testimonies of conversions and other stories that link Islam with 'evil' spirits.[15] African traditions, Catholics, mainline Protestants, Hindus, Masons, the government and others are also frequently linked with evil spirits, indicating that Islam becomes part of the negative spiritual background against which Neo-Pentecostals believe themselves to engage in a spiritual battle of good versus evil. Though Muslims are not singled out exclusively in association with evil (i.e., non-Christian) spirits, this link is explicitly discussed in several popular Christian magazines where the writers attempt to symbolically delegitimize Islam as an appropriate religious actor in public space. It can also be assumed that many ordinary mainline Protestant and Catholic Christians share at least some of these negative assumptions.

The practice of *mihadhara* (confrontational street preaching) by Muslims in Kenya has become a form of both actual and symbolic confrontation as Muslim speakers seek to discredit the Christian scriptures and Christianity, often by reinterpreting Christian scriptures to support their own conclusions.[16] These confrontations are public performances, and though their effectiveness at converting Christians to Islam may be questioned, *mihadhara* preachers strongly endeavour to delegitimize Christianity as a viable religious option in the public space. Though *mihadhara* meetings and preachers have not received official sanctioning from national Muslim leadership, they do seem to

receive tacit approval. This practice then provides a quasi-official symbolic contest in which Christianity is directly denigrated, while allowing the national Muslim leadership to 'keep its hands clean.'

The moral legitimacy of the Kenyan Muslim community is frequently impugned by Christians through references to slavery in East Africa, the violence associated with terrorism and suspected dishonesty. East African slavery was discussed earlier as an historical issue. Mentioning Muslim involvement in slavery is also used to question the moral character of Islam.[17]

Publicly, Christian leaders have been careful not to associate Islam directly with terrorism. However, ordinary Christians can be heard to express ideas that violence and Islam go together. There have also been subtle means that contrast the 'peacefulness' of Christianity with the 'violence' of Islam. For example, Ciku Muiruri of Nation FM wrote a public letter addressed to Al-Shabaab after the recent attacks in Garissa, in which she declares her forgiveness of the terrorists after the manner of Jesus, who pronounced forgiveness from the Cross.[18] Without doubting Muiruri's sincerity, this letter and similar responses enter the public discourse as symbolic confrontation, where Christians are represented as forgiving, merciful, peaceful etc., whereas Muslims have been signified as the perpetrators of the violence.

During campaigns for a new constitution in 2005 and 2010, there were discussions concerning the provisions for *kadhi* courts in the proposed constitutions. These courts have been provided for in every constitution that Kenya has had since its beginning, yet many Christian leaders insinuated that a hidden Muslim agenda to establish *sharia* as law and Islamize Kenya was behind the provision in the constitution.[19] The implications of asserting that the Muslim community had a hidden agenda were that the word of Muslim leaders on the topic was untrustworthy. Interestingly, Muslims leaders also accused Christians of dishonesty concerning the *kadhi* courts issue, as many Christian leaders believed that the provision for the courts in the proposed constitution was a new initiative by the Muslim community. Rather than advocate that Christians should better educate themselves about the constitution, Muslim leaders tended to accuse Christian leaders of lying. These mutual accusations – that the other is untrustworthy – go beyond the *kadhi* courts issue to hint that every public pronouncement from the other community should be suspect.

The most common way that Kenyan Muslim leaders question the moral character of Christians is through accusations made against the Kenyan state's treatment of Muslim people. Muslim regions of Kenya are among the poorest and least developed areas of the country,[20] and Muslim leaders present this disparity as a result of the corruption and injustice of the Christian-led government in Nairobi. Other forms of marginalisation, such as difficulty obtaining official documents, lower school enrolment, lack of national political power etc, are also viewed as forms of oppression by the Christian government. In the Kenyan school system secondary schools are often sponsored (i.e., subsidized) by religious organisations, mostly Christian ones. In many of these Christian-sponsored schools female Muslim students are forbidden from wearing a veil, and Muslims prayer,

celebrations, food restrictions etc, are not respected. Muslims often come to see their difficulties with both the government and in achieving personal and communal success as the conscious, intended consequences of Christians in positions of power. In terms of the symbolic confrontation, Christians are portrayed as oppressive overlords and Muslims as innocent victims.

An interesting development in the Somali practice of *saar* possession[21] reveals perceptions of Christianity found among ordinary Somali residents of the Eastleigh section of Nairobi. The *saar* spirit is understood to normally affect women. The appropriate therapy consists of a ritual celebration that includes exhaustive dancing and gifts for the *saar*. Over the past several years, Somali women have found themselves increasingly possessed by 'Christian' *saar*, who demand whiskey, cigarettes and dancing to the music of Kenya's night clubs as gifts of appeasement. This woman's practice, considered aberrant by orthodox Muslims, shows Muslim perceptions of Christians in the popular imagery. *Saar* rituals, which are also (semi-)public performances, unintentionally become part of the symbolic contestation that portrays Christians as night-clubbing drunkards, thus engaged in delegitimizing their place in public space.

Signs of positive relations

While Kenyan Christians and Muslims have been engaged in this type of symbolic confrontation since independence, it does not mean that interreligious relationships and perceptions have been uniquely negative. Programmes such as PROCMURA[22] and CCMRE[23] aim to promote better relations between Muslims and Christians. Organisations such as CICC[24] and IRCK[25] bring Muslims, Christians and others together to improve interreligious understanding and to work together on social and economic issues. As Chidongo writes, "There is a great existing need for the joining of hands (*umoja ni nguvu*) with people of other spiritualties in order to bring about a healthy and just community, with the aim of making it possible for Africans to live better lives today and after."[26] Throughout Kenya, wherever Muslims and Christians live in close proximity, the communities have cooperated in response to local difficulties, such as drought, violence, crime etc, developing perceptions of the other as people with whom one can work to better communal life.

Christian leaders have commended peace rather than revenge in response to terrorist violence. Government response to terrorism and suspected terrorists has been heavy-handed with frequent human rights abuses, such as extrajudicial killings, deportations without hearings and mass arrests of 'Muslim-looking' young men in a particular area. Muslims leaders encourage Muslims to distinguish between the police and Christians, calling for legal recourse to injustice and urging frustrated young Muslims to refrain from blaming and seeking revenge against innocent Christians and churches.[27] Leaders of both communities have managed to shape perceptions that refuse to see the other community as essentially violent.

As a way forward, Christian leaders should advocate for justice and equality on behalf of Muslims, as well as for their own people. In addressing the marginalisation of the

Muslim community, Muslim leaders should focus upon the political character of their marginalisation, rather than emphasizing a religiously oriented interpretation of it. The government should be able to develop clear guidelines concerning religious plurality for religious-sponsored public schools and to consistently enforce the guidelines. Programmes like PROCMURA and CCMRE are funded and operated by Christians. Similar programmes can be encouraged among the Muslim community.

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The case of Kadhi courts in a secular Kenya

By Hassan Ndzovu

The number of Muslims in Kenya is a matter of contention. The 2009 census estimated Christians to be around 81% and Muslims 11%. These figures have been dismissed by Muslim leaders who feel that their population has been underestimated as a justification for apportioning them fewer state resources and appointments to positions of power. What is certain, though, is that as a minority religious group, with the highest concentration in the coastal and northeastern regions, Muslims do not constitute a dominating force in the country, either in terms of numbers or influence. Moreover, as Brislen argues in the preceding article, each community sees the other with suspicion.

The Muslim predicament is compounded by racial and ethnic cleavages within the community. The roots of this problem could be traced to the British-colonial policy of treating various Muslim groups differently, with a preference for Arab-Asian Muslims over African Muslims. This racialized and ethnicized Muslim identity has been the community's main obstacle in presenting a united front on issues affecting the community. The absence of unity has influenced the way the state has perceived the Muslim community in general. Different political regimes have exploited this ethnic and racial diversity of Muslims for political expediency. During Daniel Moi's leadership, it is alleged that he exploited these differences through clandestine support for the United Muslims of Africa as the authentic voice of 'African' Muslims, as opposed to the 'Arab' element that purportedly dominated the Islamic Party of Kenya in the early 1990s.

So, on the surface, Muslims may appear as one united group, but they remain divided along sectarian and ethnic lines: African Muslims versus Arab Muslims; Sunni versus Shia; and even coastal Muslims versus Somali Muslims or upcountry Muslims. Such divisions dilute the Muslim voice in Kenya.

Yet, when Muslims feel that their interests as a group are under threat, as in the case of the Equality Bill (2002), the Suppression of Terrorism Bill (2003) or the issue of the *Kadhi* courts, they display a high degree of unity. However, when it comes to pursuing objectives that are not related to their perceived marginalization, Muslims tend to abandon their Islamic identity and appear to be divided.

Muslim personal law: history and constitutional debates

Kenya's Independence Constitution provided special protection for minority cultural interests, especially those of Muslims whose 'autonomy' in Kenya is closely associated with the application of Muslim (Sunni) personal law in accordance with the Islamic principles. This was made possible through the entrenchment of the *Kadhi* courts in the Independence Constitution. Though the courts are constitutionally recognized, a group of church leaders had been demanding their removal from the Independence Constitution. As a result, in 2010, the constitutional court declared *Kadhi* courts to be illegal, contravening the spirit of the Independence Constitution. The ruling drew both support and sharp criticism from the Kenyan public, and it is this verdict that this article

examines, seeking to answer if the inclusion of these courts in the country's constitution is against the pillars of a secular state.

These courts have a historical background. Before it became a British protectorate in the late 1890s, the Kenyan coast was politically administered by the sultanate of Oman based in Zanzibar. As the Oman sultanate established its base in Zanzibar, efforts were made to maintain the same political system that saw the introduction of the *liwali* (governors) and *Kadhi* system of administration in the new region. The British respected Muslim sensitivities in so far as religious practices were concerned as evident from the recognition of the sultan's administrative and legal institutions. The Arab cadre of officers—*liwalis*, *mudirs* (lieutenant) and *kadhis* (court judge)—were now on the pay roll of the colonial administration. However, the jurisdiction of these courts was limited to a 10-mile strip on the Coast.

Immediately after taking over the governorship of the sultan's dominion, the colonial administration introduced a number of changes that had far reaching implications for Kenyan Muslims. The transformation culminated in the Legislative Council enacting the Mohammedan Marriage Divorce and Succession Ordinance 1897 that institutionalized selected aspects of Muslims personal law. After independence in 1963, the constitutional status of *Kadhi* courts was enshrined in Article 66 (1) to (5). In 1967, the *Kadhi* Courts Act allowed establishment of these courts in other parts of the country and the jurisdiction of the courts was restricted to issues related to personal law.

Arguments against *Kadhi* courts

In 1998, Kenya began search for a new constitution that saw the creation of the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (CKRC) to write a new constitution. In September 2002, the CKRC unveiled a proposed draft constitution, which was criticised by a section of churches over a number of issues, notably the *Kadhi* courts, abortion and same sex marriage. The *Kadhi* courts controversy instigated an intense debate between groups of Muslims and Christians. According to the opponents of the courts, the proposed draft had provided that Islamic personal laws would be a source of laws in Kenya despite the provisions in Article 9 (1) providing for a secular state. They further argued that the proposed draft had created a parallel judicial system for Muslims, which was tantamount to favouring one religion and contravenes the principle (Article 9 (3) that the state should treat all religions equally.

After an unresolved debate at the constitution review conference in July 2004, a section of Kenyan churches went to the High Court challenging the legality of the *Kadhi* courts in the Independence Constitution and the proposed draft constitution. The applicants argued that the historical reasons for which these courts were given constitutional protection are no longer tenable. They claimed that after several years of independence, the former 'subjects' of the sultan of Zanzibar should no longer require any constitutional protection as Kenya is now a unified sovereign state where all enjoy equality irrespective of race, gender, or religion.

The petitioners argued that the entrenchment of *Kadhi* courts in the country's

constitution was a step towards introducing Shari'a in Kenya. It was also pointed out that the maintenance cost of *Kadhi* courts from public resources was unjust and amounted to development of one religion. They interpreted this practice as Islam being declared a state religion, contradicting one of three draft constitutional provisions in Article 9 (2) that there shall be no state religion. Therefore, the court was urged to declare Section 66 of the Independence Constitution, which provided for the *Kadhi* courts, unconstitutional and expunge the same from the proposed draft constitution.

Responding to the arguments raised by the litigants, Muslim groups insisted that the inclusion of *Kadhi* courts in the Independence Constitution was not because the beneficiaries were merely 'subjects' of the sultan of Zanzibar, but because the courts were a core institution in the practice of Islam. They claimed that the laws applied by *Kadhi* courts are not a creation of the sultan of Zanzibar but a product of the teachings of Islam.

A controversial ruling

In May 2010, the court declared *Kadhi* courts to be unconstitutional. Church leaders welcomed the ruling and urged the government to implement it; whereas the government termed the verdict unconstitutional and challenged the ruling. A section of Muslims also petitioned against the verdict claiming their constitutional rights had been violated. They argued that *Kadhi* courts provided an essential dispute resolution mechanism without which a vacuum will be created in administering justice.

Although the judges made categorical pronouncements in their verdict against *Kadhi* courts, the then Attorney General argued that the constitutional court had no jurisdiction to strike down Section 66. His position was that it was an existing provision and could not be struck out (on the basis that there is no provision of the constitution that is superior to the other). Consequently, it was wrong to declare *Kadhi* courts illegal if the country's constitution provided for them.

On the other hand, the judges in their verdict declared that any form of religious courts should not form part of the judiciary as it offends the doctrine of separation of state and religion. Their position was a clear advocacy for "assertive secularism"—as opposed to "passive secularism"—which intends to eliminate any expression of religion from the public sphere.

State, politics and religion

The role of religion in politics and state structures has been widely debated by scholars and statesmen. Generally, "state policies toward religion are the result of ideological struggles" which manifest in competition between "passive secularists" and "assertive secularists" that shapes public policies. According to Ahmet Kuru, passive secularism is a political principle that attempts to uphold state neutrality towards followers of various religions, thereby allowing for the public visibility of religion, whereas assertive secularism is a "comprehensive doctrine" that intends to purge religion from the public sphere. Due to the realization that it is difficult to have a complete separation of religion

and politics, modern states have grappled with the question of the extent to which this interaction in the public and political sphere should be accepted.

For instance, the 2010 court judgment also held that the application of *Kadhi* courts beyond the Ten Miles coastal strip to be unconstitutional. This judgment attempted to limit the courts to the Ten Miles coastal strip, even though their expansion outside the strip had been sanctioned by an Act of parliament.

Nevertheless, it was necessary for the judges to examine the circumstances under which Kenya had accepted the courts. Though associated with the coastal region, during the colonial period the British had recognized the importance of this institution and extended it outside the Ten Miles strip and appointed the first state-funded *Kadhi* for the Somali Muslims of the North Frontier District (NFD) in 1927.

During the early years of the first president of Kenya, the expansion of *Kadhi* courts to the Somalis of the NFD was used to help end the *Shifta* war. As part of the peace agreement brokered in Arusha in 1967, the government of Kenya accepted to expand the *Kadhi* courts to the residents of the NFD. This is an important background that should have informed the decision of the judges. More so, the expansion of the courts is informed by the justification that “Kenya is not a federal state and that it will be wrong to expect a citizen to enjoy a right in Mombasa and not have the same right in other parts of the country.”

Regarding government funding for the courts, the constitutional court declared that it is discriminatory. The conclusion was informed by perceiving *Kadhi* courts as religious courts and not part of the judiciary as such. According to the Kenyan constitution, the critics of the judgment argued, *Kadhi* courts formed an integral part of the judiciary, which is why the public coffers is used in maintaining them.

Conclusion

Though the High Court has yet to give a final ruling on the government’s appeal, the *Kadhi* courts saga seem for now to have been resolved. In August 2010 Kenyans voted for a new constitution that entrenches *Kadhi* courts as part of the judicial system. The adoption of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya in a referendum illustrated that most Kenyan support *Kadhi* courts. Despite Kenya being a secular state, *Kadhi* courts are recognized as subordinate courts within the legal system. Yet, an undercurrent of opposition remains palpable in many sections of civil society and churches.

To sum up, the opponents of *Kadhi* courts claim to have embraced the ideal of secular state against the adoption of religious laws, while it is a matter of general observation that the role of religion in public life in Kenya is pervasive and deeply entrenched. On the other hand, the supporters of *Kadhi* courts are oblivious of the implications of religious laws in the national context characterized by pluralism. Secularism is not about the absence of religion, but it is “an independent social category, containing multiple dimensions” that are unable to be discussed exclusively “with respect to religious behaviour.”

The constitutional and political expression of secularism in Kenya has not been anti-religious—the Independence Constitution as well as the 2010 Constitution provide for freedom of religion to all citizens. The objective—at least, on paper—is not to promote one religious conviction at the expense of others, but to provide an enabling environment to all creeds to separate religion from the politics of the country, and confine it as a private matter outside the scope of state legislation.

Nevertheless, attempt to separate religion, state and politics in Kenya have not diminished the influence of religion, as references to God are embedded in the national fabric. Despite the claim that it is a secular state, one never fails to notice the presence of religious symbols and rituals in government affairs and state functions. Religion continues to play a significant role in public life as the general public and political culture remain deeply associated with religion.

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Somalia: the changing spectrum of Islam and counterterrorism

By Markus Virgil Hoehne

In the mid-20th century, new Islamic reform movements emerged throughout the Muslim world, including Somalia, advocating for strict adherence to the written sources of Islam— the Koran, Hadith, and authoritative comments. An important motive of these movements was to correct what they saw as aberrations of politicians influenced by eastern, western or non-aligned positions during late colonial rule and the Cold War. It is in this context that the term 'political Islam' gained currency and relevance.[1] The term refers to actors involved in religious reform in the way just mentioned. Political Islam covers social reform movements, as well as militant or so-called 'jihadi' groups.[2] The boundaries between these various and often ideologically heterogeneous strands of political Islam are blurred. Any clear cut 'black-and-white' (e.g., 'moderate' versus 'extremist', 'Sufi' v 'Salafi', 'nationalist' v 'globalist') separation is misleading.

From an analytical perspective, one can argue that the only common goal of all political Islamists is to erect Islamic states and in the long run, a new Caliphate, in which the divine law (Shari'a) rules; but the strategies how to reach these aims differ tremendously.[3]

Foundations of Islam in Somalia

Islam reached the Somali peninsula early on, already in the 7th century AD. It concentrated along the coast and the caravan routes inland. There, sultanates came into existence between the 12th and the 19th century (e.g. Ifat, Adal in the north and later, Ajuuraan in the south).[4] Somali Islam was until the 20th century characterized by the Sufi tradition. The Qadriya *tariqa* (Arabic for 'path'—one of four main Sufi orders in Somalia) reached the Somali peninsula in the 15th century. Harar, now in Ethiopia's Somali region, became an early centre of Muslim learning in the Horn. The Sufi 'orders' usually incorporated local traditions into their system of belief.

In the Somali case, Lewis has shown how Somali genealogy, focusing on certain ancestors as 'segmentary nodal points', and the veneration of saints in Qadriya tradition fit together.[5] Ancestors frequently transformed into venerated sheikhs. Some of their tombs can still be visited in Somalia, such as Aw Barkhadle's tomb near Hargeysa, Sheekh Isaaq's tomb near Maydh in the north, but also the tomb of Sheikh Uways near Biyooley in the south, between Baydhabo and Huddur. Saints and shrines like these have been the centres of Somali religious activity before the newer reform movements gained power in the late 20th century.

Islam provided the first script for Somali (in Arabic), and some vernacular scripts derived from Arabic, such as Osmaniya, developed by Osman Yusuf Kenadid in the early 20th century. It provided for the first formal curriculum and the social differentiation of Somali groups into religious specialists, such as Asharaf or Sheekhaal, and others. The

former were traditionally teaching the latter. Closely related to conquest and trade, the Islamic influence certainly also fostered an early urban culture in some places in the Horn, with a focus on the southern Benaadir coast.

In the legal sphere, Shari'a existed besides customary law (Somali: *xeer*) since long and in many regards, *xeer* takes up basic provisions from Shari'a. In the late 19th century the Ahmediya and Salihiya orders established themselves as Sufi reform movements in Somalia. They distanced themselves from the veneration of saints. The Salihiya inspired the anti-colonial uprising of the Dervishes between 1899 and 1920 which in some regards had proto-nationalist aspects.[6]

Recent Islamic transformation and 'civil' war

Until the mid-20th century, the Sufi tradition in Somalia went unchallenged. An obvious religious and political transformation of Islam in Somalia began in the 1950s and 1960s. Egypt and Sudan increased their influence on the Somali territories (partly instigated by the British colonisers) in the form of scholarships for Somali students and establishment of schools in colonial Somalia. A 'modern' religious elite came into existence in late colonial and early post-colonial Somalia influenced by the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood (founded in Egypt in the 1920s). Simultaneously, Wahhabi Islam, propagated by the Saudi Arabian rulers, gained ground in the Islamic world. It was transmitted to Somalia through oil workers, students and other migrants to the Gulf states. In the 1970s, these new and not any more Sufi-oriented forms of Islam fed into the emerging opposition against the military regime under General Mohamed Siyad Barre (1969-1991). The conflict reached its first climax when the regime reacted harshly against clerics who criticized the new family law; and ten of them were executed in 1975.[7]

Reformist groups like Ahda, Nahda and Wahda, mainly aiming to purge Islam of 'impure' indigenous and Sufi practices and beliefs, continued to exist but were forced to stay underground due to the repressive actions of the Somali government. They came to the fore openly from 1991 onward, in the context of civil war, state collapse and international interventions. The first effective political Islamist movement was Al-Ittihat Al-Islamiyya (AIAI), founded already in 1984, which engaged in the civil war. It provided an alternative political order with a 'caliphate' in south-western Somalia—in Luuq (Gedo region).

Besides AIAI, a number of reformist but not necessary militant Islamist movements were active, engaging mainly in humanitarian work and education. Groups close to the Muslim Brotherhood, such as Al-Islah took the lead in this regard. But also Wahhabi oriented groups such as Al-Ictisam appeared that sought social and political transformation in Somalia without resorting to violence. Sufi groups such as Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a kept a more 'traditionalist' profile. Their political career began around 1991 as a partner of the warlord Mohamed Farah Aideed who presented himself as a 'traditionalist'. The full militarization of the Sufis happened when they were threatened by Al-Shabab and the tombs of venerated sheikhs were attacked.[8] Ahalu Sunna Wal Jama'a began to fight

back, assisted by the Ethiopians, from 2009 onward.

Once Somalia became a theatre in the 'war on terror' after the 9/11 attacks on the USA, new and more radical groups developed, diversifying the Islamist scene even further. Al-Shabab emerged around 2003 as small cell in the south, but also supported by activists from the north (where it carried out first attacks). It engaged in the dirty war in Mogadishu in which warlords paid by the USA snatched Islamist suspects (not only those close to the emergent Al Shabab) and delivered them to the Americans. The political Islamists fought back.

In 2006 Al-Shabab joined the Islamic Courts. It was still a rather small nucleus of hardcore Islamists. Only in the fight against the Ethiopian military intervention between December 2006 and January 2009 did Al-Shabab become the most powerful and, in the eyes of many Somalis, *legitimate* military and political actor.[9] Between 2009 and 2011 it was the *de facto* government of the south. Besides, the other strands of Islam continued to exist. Al-Islah mainly kept its distance from militant extremism, and Ahlu Sunna became an active military adversary of Al-Shabab. Al-Ictisam kept distance as well and a low profile.[10]

Failures of the analysis of Islamic movements (in Somalia and beyond)

Recent literature on Islam in Africa (which is relevant for the understanding of Islam in Somalia) stresses that 'there has been a tendency within the realm of African studies in general and African history in particular, to treat the Islamic religion as practiced in the continent as virtually *sui generis*, and by and large, removed from the global community of believers.'[11] African Islam was constructed as peripheral and 'local' by western academics, in contrast to the Arabo-Persian centre, which was seen as having a global outreach. To counter this narrative, Reese emphasises the integration of Muslim communities through economic, social and political exchange beyond continental borders in pre-colonial time. With colonialism, exchange of ideas and contact among people intensified. Moreover, the discursive creation of religious knowledge, which was not limited to the Arabic language, provided a basis upon which believers across time and space could stay in contact and local interpretations of the religious could travel.[12]

The perspective on the interconnected and agile nature of Islam in Africa is directly feeding into Østebø's critique of the misleading construction of 'African Islam' as 'traditional, tolerant, and heterodox', in contrast to 'Arab Islam', perceived to be 'scripturalist, more orthodox' and actually 'foreign' to Africa.[13] This binary distinction not only serves 'to uphold an unwarranted dichotomy between Africa and the outside', but it provides us with 'inaccurate analytical tools'.[14] Particularly in the post-9/11 era, negative influences on 'traditional' (in the Somali case, Sufi-oriented) African Islam originate, in the dominant western perspective, from 'outside'. The dynamics and multifaceted nature of Islamic currents is ignored and categories such as 'fundamentalist', 'Islamist' and 'Wahhabi' are used—without any sense of their religious and ideological content and nuances between them—to define what, in the eyes of

‘counterterrorists’ needs to be kept at bay and cannot be granted any political legitimacy in Africa.

There are at least three concrete consequences of the flawed and divisive analysis of contemporary Islam in Africa in general and in Somalia, in particular.[15] First, Islam in Somalia is ‘othered’ as ‘traditional’ (versus ‘modern’ brands of Islam elsewhere). This helps to identify ‘foreign’ influences in ‘local’ Islam that need to be ‘eradicated’ (e.g., by international military interventions). This is used to justify counterterrorism with all its negative consequences (e.g., provoking more radical reactions by political Islamic movements).

Secondly, in the related debate about ‘good’ (local, traditional) and ‘bad’ (global, jihadist) Muslims the agency of Somali agents is getting lost. This inhibits constructive ‘bottom up’ engagement independent of foreign agendas and interventions.

Finally, Western Islamophobic discourses are localized and inform politics in the Horn of Africa, for instance the Ethiopian engagement in Somalia, against the ‘foreign’ Islamists of Al-Shabaab and in favour of ‘traditional’ Sufi groups like Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama’a. This prolongs civil war in Somalia and legitimates the meddling of neighbouring countries in Somali affairs which is hardly in the best interest of most Somalis.

Gaps in policy making

To understand the current Somali situation, one has to move beyond the politically and analytically inhibiting framework of counterterrorism. One has to overcome the ‘traditional/African’ versus ‘reformist/foreign’-divide, or, to put it differently: the ‘Sufi-Salafi/Wahabi’-divide that is mentioned in reports dealing with the situation in Somalia in recent years. Rather, one can locate various Islamic groups along a spectrum from least to most tolerant toward alternative readings of Islamic sources (and other religions or world views), and from least to most inclined to use violence. In a more constructive perspective, the massive transformations of Islam in Somalia since the mid-20th century ought to be recognized.

Furthermore, the global situatedness of Islam in Somalia and the local-global connections when it comes to various Islamic movements in the country need to be acknowledged and analysed.

Islam in Somalia is a deeply entrenched historical and cultural phenomenon which, at the same time, is very dynamic and part of the contemporary world system. It can be used for producing political legitimacy and influences dynamics of conflict, peacebuilding and social order in Somalia and beyond. Its reformative power (in social, political and economic regards) should not be underestimated. It constitutes an alternative ideology that is still very attractive to most Somalis and therefore will shape the future of the country regardless of western unease about it.

Finally, despite the differences of interpretations and ritualistic practices between different Somali Islamist groups (Ahlu Sunna, Al-Islah, Al-Ictisam, Al-Shabaab), there are

still many similarities between them regarding politics and the analysis of the current Somali problems.[16] They all agree, in principle, on Shari'a as the basis of life in Somalia and see the need for 'moral' reform among Somalis. They also all realize that foreign interventions in the country worsen the situation and that the dependence of Somalis from foreign powers needs to be reduced. The prevalent narrative of a moderate-extremist binary division, on the other hand, does not take these factors into account, leading to flawed analyses informing counterproductive policies that aggravate the conflict rather than addressing it in a constructive manner and providing space for negotiations among Somalis.

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[2] The adjective 'jihadi' is related to 'jihadism', which again is 'a neologism derived from the Arabic jihad (to struggle, to strive) that is frequently used in the press to denote the most violent strands of Islamism' (Euben, Roxanne L. and Zaman, Qasim 2009: Introduction, in: R.L. Euben and Q. Zaman (eds.): *Princeton readings in Islamist thought: texts and contexts from al-Banna to Bin Laden*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp.1-46, p. 3.)

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[8] Baadiyow, *The Islamic Movement in Somalia*.

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[10] Marchal, Roland: *The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in a Country at War: Harakat Al-Shabaab Al Mujaheddin in Somalia*. Paris 2011. Online: http://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/sites/sciencespo.fr.ceri/files/art_RM2.pdf ; Marchal, Roland and Zakariya M. Sheikh. 2013. 'Ahlu Sunna wa l-Jama'a in Somalia'. In: Patrick Desplat and Terje Østebø (eds.), *Muslim Ethiopia. The Christian legacy, identity politics and Islamic reformism*. New York: Palgrave: 215-239.

[11] Reese, Scott S. 2014: Islam in Africa/Africans and Islam. *Journal of African History* Vol. 55, Issue 1: 17-26, p. 17.

[12] Reese, Islam in Africa, pp. 18-24.

[13] Østebø, Terje. 2013. 'Islam and state relations in Ethiopia: From containment to the production of a "governmental Islam".' *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* Vol. 81, No. 4: 1029-1060, p. 1032.

[14] Østebø, Islam and state, p. 1033.

[15] These flaws in general have been indicated by Østebø, Islam and state, p. 1043.

[16] Much of this is outlined in in a recent report by LPI, see LPI: 2013. *Alternatives for conflict transformation in Somalia: A snapshot and analysis of key political actors' views and strategies*. Online: http://www.life-peace.org/wp-content/uploads/The-ACTS-Report.pdf.

Dynamics of religious resurgence in the Horn

By Terje Østebø

Over the last few decades there has been a resurgence of religion as a socio-political force across the Horn of Africa. This includes some violent and highly visible incidents, like the recent attack on the Garissa University killing 148 people, which in turn has raised concern about future regional stability. While religious violence certainly needs to be taken seriously, a one-sided focus on this aspect risks overlooking more subtle—and nonviolent—expressions of religious resurgence; expressions that have far-reaching consequences for the socio-religious landscape of the Horn.

While religion has gained an increased social, political and economic role in countries in the Horn of Africa, our knowledge about ongoing discourses remain sketchy and fragmented. The aim of this article is to give an overview of the main religious developments in the region, to provide some suggestions on how to best understand these changes, and to point to areas in need of further investigations.

With a focus on the Horn's two main religious traditions, Islam and Christianity, a major objective is to point to the rich diversity found within these communities. Ongoing rapid changes, related, for example, to different forms of Salafism in Islam and a plethora of Pentecostal ministries in Christianity will also be discussed. A common denominator here is the many attempts to alter existing religious practices and orientations, and to induce new ways of being religious; Muslim or Christian. Although sometimes violent, religious resurgence occurs for the most part through peaceful means, seeking to produce change through preaching and teaching. Religious resurgence might in some instances be tied directly to a political agenda, but even if not, it does have socio-political implications—in turn making it crucial to understand this as something integral to broader societal and political developments.

It would be misleading to fit different religious expressions into a chart ranging from moderate to extremist, assuming a movement from the former to the latter. Rather, we need nuanced approaches that recognize ideological differences and local particularities, and perspectives that allow for multiple trajectories.

Forms of resurgence: a regional overview

Violent expressions of religious resurgence in the Horn are obviously most evident in Somalia, where the absence of effective political structures and decades of instability have created space for a range of religious insurgency groups. Groups such as the Al-Ittihad al-Islamiyya (AIAI), the Union of Islamic Courts, and Al-Shabab have all viewed themselves as salvaging the situation of insecurity and as implementing a political order based upon transformative Islamic values. The latter is crucial in the sense that these groups see control over the state as necessary for realizing their programme for change; becoming the very tool for what I have called the *politicization of purity*—the enforcement of a determined way of being a true believer.[1]

The terror attack on the Westgate Mall in 2013, the killings of Christians in Northern Kenya in late 2014, and the recent assault in Garissa could serve as indicators of an expanding battleground, There are claims that Al-Shabab increasingly is recruiting Kenyans—linked to its affiliate Al-Hijra (formerly the Muslim Youth Center) and to figures such as Sheikh Aboud Rogo of Mombasa (killed in 2012).[2] The regional implications of the Somali *jihadi* narratives are still uncertain, and there should be room for caution. The ethno-national aspect of these narratives and the internal debates within Al-Shabab over the "global" nature of the struggle could be factors constraining such expansions. There is also a tendency among many Muslims in the Horn to view this as a "Somali issue". The need to closely monitor this situation is obvious, as is the need for more substantive research on possible ideological and logistical linkages between likeminded groups across the region.

The linkage between religious resurgence and politics has also been obvious in the case of Sudan. The coming to power of the National Islamic Front (NIF), under the ideological auspices of Hassan al-Turabi in 1989, provided the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood with the opportunity to embark on an encompassing programme of Islamization, which included the enforced implementation of *Shari'a* laws—in turn intensifying the civil war with the south. The growing rift between President Omar al-Bashir and Turabi in the late 1990s and the latter's gradual marginalization from Sudanese politics have eased the state-enforced Islamization process, led Khartoum to engage in counterterrorism, as well as to the peace accord with the south in 2005. The decline of Turabi's influence provided, at the same time, more space for Salafi groups, most notably the Ansar al-Sunna. While these groups do not represent any major political force, and have opted to stay away from formal politics, they have struck an accord with the regime: recognizing the regime's legitimacy as long as it maintains Sudan as an Islamic state—and in return being granted operational freedom by Bashir.[3]

In other parts of the region we see religious communities actively using politics as a venue for expressing complaints about discrimination and unequal treatment, something clearly noticeable among Muslims in Kenya and Tanzania. Christians' involvement in politics has been less visible, yet nonetheless important. Kenyan churches were in the early 1990s vocal in addressing corruption, before gradually becoming more passive.[4] The Kenyan political elite has also used association with Pentecostalism as a means to gain legitimacy for their authority, and which reciprocally opened up space for Pentecostal churches to propagate a certain public morality underpinned by religious idioms.[5]

The situation in Tanzania is somewhat different where political actors since the time of the *Ujamaa* (under President Julius Nyerere) period have sought to refrain from attaching themselves to any religious movement.

The vast majority of religious reformist movements in the region—whether Christian or Muslim—are, however, not directly targeting the political sphere. The main focus is rather on changing existing religious practices for more "correct" ones, on the production of the pious self, and on inducing a stronger devotional attachment to one's

religious tradition. Salafism, making broad inroads across the region’s Muslim populations, is a relevant case in point here, as is Pentecostalism in its various forms. Politics is for many of these a “dirty game” that would defile their religious identity. Certain Salafi groups, such as the Ansar al-Sunna in Sudan, are actively advocating the need to stay aloof from political engagement, basing this on theological considerations.[6] It thus becomes inaccurate to treat Salafism as a monolithic movement that provides the ideological framework for violent activism.[7]

On the other hand, it is clear that such “quietist” reform has socio-political implications. The Salafi movements might be intent on building an Islamic state through a bottom-up approach of *da’wa*—or invitation to the ‘correct’ path—and Islamic teachings. Pentecostals, on their side, forward narratives that emphasize spiritual salvation, promises of healing and prosperity, while at the same time making this dependent on compliance with a public ethical behaviour aimed at enhancing societal morals. Another aspect is how exclusivist perceptions of the “other” and the re-demarcation of religious boundaries have produced polemic religious discourses, exacerbated intra- and inter-religious tensions, and, in some instances, led to the eruption of communal violence.

Enabling factors

Explanations of the resurgence of religion often underscore crisis as the key factor. References are usually made to deteriorating socio-economic conditions with enduring poverty, unemployment, and precarious futures—or civil war, in Somalia’s case. Processes of modernization and rapid social change are along similar lines said to have shattered communal cohesion and destroyed traditional structures of authority. Local feelings of inequality and marginalization are also seen as a cause of religious resurgence in the Horn.

However, a too narrow focus on religious resurgence as a response to a sense of crisis risks reducing the phenomenon to an instrument for something else. This ignores important ideological dimensions. The very fact that we are dealing with groups, organizations, churches, and ministries that are addressing questions of a religious nature, that are driven by what they see as divinely ordained imperatives, and that they have an explicit agenda for enhancing the role of religion in people’s lives—all make it important to recognize the ideological aspect. Taking ideology seriously also means applying a high degree of accuracy when we are analyzing the various movements. Muslim reformists should not be lumped together under nebulous labels such as “fundamentalist” or “Islamist”, and it would be wrong to equate Al-Shabaab with any form of Salafism. Pentecostalism is similarly an ambiguous category, covering a range of different ideological positions.

An emphasis on ideology should not prevent us from considering structural factors that have enabled the resurgence of religion. Particularly important here is the political developments over the last decades. While the most obvious case is NIF’s state-enforced Islamization in Sudan, the political instability in Somalia produced a fertile breeding-ground for religiously-motivated violence, while also leading to a situation where many

found refuge in religion.[8] In other parts of the region processes of political liberalization commencing in the 1990s, wherein both Tanzania and Kenya transitioned from a one-party state to a multiparty democracy in 1992, opened up space for religious activism. The ousting of the Marxist Derg regime in Ethiopia in 1991 by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Front marked a deliberate shift from former restrictive policies and introduced a new political climate underscoring religious freedom, immediately boosting religious activism. This was seen through the emergence of several Islamic reform movements, by the rapid growth in (Pentecostal) Protestant Christianity, and by the surfacing of a strong revivalist movement within the Orthodox Church. A similar process of liberalization emerged in Eritrea, but was, as I will discuss later, soon replaced by increasing authoritarianism.

Another enabling factor has been enhanced mobility and trans-local interaction, producing a situation of increased availability of a range of alternatives for religious orientation. People in the Horn were obviously never isolated from broader religious currents, but improved means of communication over the last decades have enabled the movement of people and ideas on an unprecedented pace and scale. The blurring of local boundaries and increased trans-local interactions have produced a situation of augmented pluralism, leaving individuals with opportunities to choose from a variety of competing religious narratives.

Among Muslims, we see how a growing number have sought religious education abroad, before returning home to disseminate reformist ideas that challenge existing ways of adhering to Islam. Christians in the Horn, initially connected to Western mission societies, have established a higher degree of independence from these founding missions, while also connecting themselves with a growing number of American Pentecostal missionaries, consequently leading to the establishment of a plethora of separate churches.[9] Adding to this is the expansion of global broadcasting and the Internet, rapidly accelerating the flow of alternative ideas and producing a highly complex and eclectic ideological picture.[10]

Ideology in context

It is important to note that ideologies never occur in vacuum; they are always interlocked with local contexts. Religious reforms are complex dialectical processes involving trans-local and local contexts, actors, and currents where broader discourses are negotiated and appropriated into the particular local context. As the Horn of Africa is home to a wide spectrum of political, socio-economic, and ethnic varieties, it becomes pivotal to pay due attention to local particularities.

A common denominator for religious resurgence in the Horn—and elsewhere—is the tendency to attract the younger generation. The name Al-Shabab, which means "youth", is a case in point, and across the region we see that both Christian and Muslim reformists, in the form of Pentecostal churches or Salafi movements largely consist of members of the younger generation. Youth, arguably, constitutes a social category which has "less to lose" in terms of family obligations, employment, or social responsibility and

which hence are more prone to display agency and to position themselves. They want to act, want to test the world around them, thus finding themselves at the forefront of developments affecting their immediate realities and being active in responding to the array of currents made available to them.

In certain parts of the region we see that religious reform is closely attached to ethnic identity. Ethnicity remains a strong marker of difference, and coupled with religious resurgence, we see how these two dimensions can reciprocally reinforce each other in strengthening boundaries. Groups like IAIA and Al-Shabab in Somalia tried to override clan divisions, and promoted a rhetoric that combined pan-Somaliness with the idea of an Islamic state, a rhetoric that also was directed towards neighbouring powers that were depicted as adversaries both in ethnic and religious terms. Ethnic or clan identity proved, however, to be a constraining factor for these groups, forcing them to recognize the enduring role of clanism within Somalia. Ethnicity has to a certain extent segmented Muslim reform movements in Ethiopia, wherein they have been important means for certain ethnic groups to gain relevance and to compete with the traditionally dominating Muslims from the northern parts.[11]

Ethnic belonging is usually closely related to geographical location, and again we see how religious resurgence might be appropriated in processes delineating local identities. Although there is a dearth of knowledge here, it seems that religious reformism has become an added dimension to Muslim lowlanders' identity in Eritrea, fuelling discontent towards the perceived dominance of Christian highlanders in post-independent Eritrea.

The connection between religion and regional identity is clearly at play in Zanzibar and coastal Kenya. In the former case we see how Salafi reformers, embodied in the Uamsho (revival) movement, are explicitly utilizing a religious rhetoric in advocating for greater Zanzibari autonomy from the mainland, highlighting an Islamic Zanzibari identity against Christian migrants who are seen as representing both the ethnically/regionally and religiously "other".[12] Regional identity coupled with religion is also at play in coastal Kenya, where Muslims see themselves as marginalized and unfairly treated as a religious group. The Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) is said to embody such an identity, also accused of being allied with Al-Shabab. However, MRC's mixed-faith membership, the fact that it has not forwarded a similar religious agenda and that it is more focused on land issues, are indications of a far more complicated situation.[13]

State responses

Religious resurgence in combination with violence has obviously caused much concern for state-actors, resulting in policies of securitizing religion. The most evident responses have been military interventions into Somalia—by Ethiopia in 2006 and 2011 and by Kenya in 2011. Subsequent violent incidents on Kenyan soil in 2013 and 2014 spurred security operations like the Usalama Watch initiated in April 2014, through which the infamous Anti-Terrorist Police Unit (ATPU) profiled and harassed ethnic Somalis. There are also claims that the ATPU was involved in assassinations of Muslim leaders in the

coastal areas. This has caused serious resentment among Kenya's Muslims, and enhanced Al-Shabab's recruitment opportunities.[14]

Several states in the Horn have also passed anti-terror legislation; Tanzania in 2002, Ethiopia in 2009, and Kenya in 2009, and with Sudan establishing Anti-Terror Special Courts in 2008. Terror activities are defined rather broadly, and regimes are often using such laws to clamp down on opposition movements. Ethiopia has, for example, listed ethnically-based groups such as the Oromo Liberation Front and the Ogaden National Liberation Front on its list of terrorist organizations. In Kenya, claims by the opposition that the anti-terror law violated civil rights have recently resulted in the High Court annulling several of its clauses.

State policies have more broadly affected the ongoing religious dynamics of the region. While political liberalization was, as noted, important in providing space for religious actors, such liberalization has in many cases proved to be rather tenuous. This is most obvious in Eritrea, which has moved in the direction of becoming a totalitarian state, and which has banned certain religious groups (both Muslim and Christian). The implementation of a lasting democracy in Ethiopia has also proven to be a slow process. The dominant role of the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi party (the revolutionary party, in Kiswahili) in Tanzania has been encumbered by real multi-party competition, whereas post-election violence have demonstrated how brittle Kenyan democracy is.

This has also led to more restrictive policies where mechanisms of control of religious movements are evident. Particularly important here is co-option of different Islamic councils and the Mufti institutions in Eritrea and Zanzibar. While these bodies are said to be representative bodies for the countries' Muslim communities, their close links to the political authorities have severely dented their popular legitimacy.

Added to this are policies of asserting secularism, seeking to purge the public sphere from religious expressions, often having the form of restricting the use of *hijab* and *niqab* in public spaces. We should not forget that politicization of religion can be a result of invasive state-policies, in which religious actors react to limitations on their religious freedoms. This was clearly the case in Ethiopia where Muslims took to the streets protesting the government's attempt to have the Lebanese Al-Ahbash movement teach Muslims to adhere to a "moderate" form of Islam.

State driven securitization of religion in the Horn tend to be driven by an extremist-moderate dichotomy, where extremism is portrayed as a foreign force; arriving from Somalia or imported from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States and imposed on "moderate" Muslims in the Horn. Kenya's recent plan of erecting a wall along the border with Somalia is a clear manifestation of this view.[15] Rapid expansions of religious institutions, for example the mushrooming of mosques in Ethiopia, and the increasingly visible character of Islam in the form of dress-codes in general, are often forwarded as proofs of religious expansion financed by foreign powers. At the same time, the lack of concern over a similar growth in the number of Pentecostal churches reveals a clear and inherent bias.

The foreign/extremist-local/moderate dichotomy is not only overtly simplistic and flawed, but it also has some serious implications. First of all, to reduce religious resurgence to a foreign phenomenon imposed upon largely passive Africans deprives local actors of agency and reproduces a colonial subject-object relationship, in which Africans are located at the subaltern end of a power pendulum. There is ample evidence showing that people in the Horn were the main agents for introducing religious change in the region.

Secondly, interpreting this as something foreign becomes a convenient solution for regimes not willing to address immediate domestic issues. Only after the recent attack in Garissa did the Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta recognize that the assailants were integrated in the Kenyan society. He rejected, however, the claim that Muslims in Kenya constituted a marginalized group.[16] The important point is that merely blaming outside forces and refusing to deal with local grievances have serious implications: leaving them unresolved can easily become contributing factors for further radicalization.

Endnote

This overview is unavoidably sketchy, and demonstrates the need for deeper and more systematic knowledge about ongoing religious dynamics in the Horn. There is a need to reduce politically driven and alarmist approaches, and instead, to apply more sober approaches that recognize actual facts on the ground. In order to understand the complexity of religious resurgence in the Horn, we also need an analytical framework that is nuanced and flexible. Religious resurgence has many faces, and to uncritically equate one representation in one locality with another in other parts produces an inaccurate picture. Moreover, as religious movements are "moving targets", we need approaches that allow us to recognize several possible trajectories, and not be locked in a linear moderate-extremist scale.

Whereas religious resurgence involves a range of diverse actors, the state remains a major player. Too often we have seen policies bent on security that have failed to address the critical issues at hand, and that often runs the risk of making things worse. The Horn is a highly diverse region, and there is an urgent need for policies that actually recognize this diversity and that would accommodate difference. This entails taking religion seriously as a strong force in people's lives, finding ways to accommodate secularist principles in contexts that are inherently religious, and to reduce feelings of injustice and inequality based on religion. Failure to do so can easily run the risk of allowing developments that becomes self-fulfilling prophesies of further radicalization.

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