

**Islam in Eastern Africa:
Historical Legacy and Contemporary Challenges**

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Introduction

The history of Islam in Eastern Africa is very important in explaining the contemporary place of Islam in this part of Africa.

But Islam in this vast region has different and diverse histories. Islam came to Christian Ethiopia when the Prophet Mohammed was still alive. But it came to Burundi, Rwanda and DR Congo only in the 19th century. I will thus argue in this paper that it is the specificity of the histories in different parts of this region which have shaped the different place and role of contemporary Islam in the countries of the region. For example the place of Islam and therefore its problematic in the Sudan contrasts sharply with the problematic of Islam in Ethiopia/Eritrea, with Somalia and in the rest of the region. I will thus try to relate the different problems facing the Muslim communities in this vast region to the way Islam came to that region.

In this paper Eastern Africa includes Sudan, the Horn of Africa, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique as well as Rwanda, Burundi and DR Congo

PART 1

(a) The Diverse Histories of Islam in the Region

Sudan

From Egypt and from across the Red Sea, migration southward was a long historical process by Egyptians as well as pastoralists from across the Red Sea. This process pre-dated Islam but continued more vigorously after Islam. Christian Nubia had treaty and friendly relations with Muslim Egypt and trade between the two prospered. Nubia was an obstacle for southward penetration of Islam and pastoralists. Thus the Mamluk of Egypt conquered Nubia in the 14th century, and consequently, the push southward was intensified. Early in the 16th century the Funj kingdom arose in southern Nubia and replaced the Christian Kingdom there. The Funj Sultanate pushed northwards became an Empire, Islamised and Arabised. Islamisation in the south and west of the Empire continued through trade links, migration and particularly the migration in the 16th century of Muslim scholars and holy-men from Upper Egypt, North Africa and from Arabia.

In mid-seventeenth century, the Niloti Shilluk of the white Nile advanced northwards into the Funj but were repulsed and made to submit to Funj authority. In the eighteenth century, the Funj expanded westward, where they defeated the Fur Sultanate and an Ethiopian invasion. However by the early 19th century, most of its vassals had ceased to recognize even Funj nominal authority.

In the 19th Century, the Egyptians conquered Sudan and began the process of centralizing the various Muslim Sultanates throughout the Sudan. Then came the Mahdist revolt against the Egyptians and the British. During this struggle, the Mahdi appealed and got the support of the grassroots leaders of the Sufi orders which were widely spread throughout Sudanese society. These important Orders practiced “popular Islam” rather than mysticism. The Mahdist continued what the Egyptians had begun – the building of a centralized state power throughout the Sudan. They were defeated by the Anglo-Egyptian forces towards the end of 19th Century.

During the 20th century, Islam played a major role in the struggle against the British and their Egyptian allies. Islamic movements such as the Mahdist and the pro-Egyptian Khatimiyyah played and still play an important role in Sudanese nationalist movement. Each of these movement had, and still have, a “secular” political party as its wing – one standing for independence of Sudan and the other for unity with Egypt. These two major religious

movements, supported by the local Sufi orders throughout the country, were the only organizations capable of mass mobilization against the British and for independence.

The Sudan under the British had a special policy for the south – cutting it off from north, from political power, and from infrastructural development. The south was marginalized and treated more as a separate entity rather than as a part of the Sudan. Missionaries in collaboration with British government and officials were very active in the south, considering its population as being potential converts to Christianity. In spite of this strong British presence and curtailment of the south from the pre-British process of Islamisation, this latter process continued during and after the British had left.

Since independence southern Sudan has become a major political problem for the Sudanese government. The southern people's political demand varies from regional autonomy, the lifting of the Sharia, to complete secession from Sudan.

Critical issues in the Sudan are (a) Its Islamic identity and reform, (b) unification with Egypt, and (c) integration of north and south Sudan, (d) the demand for control and use of water resources of the Nile by Egypt (Muslim state) in the north, and the states (ruled by Christian elite) in the south.

Ethiopia

The Aksumite State emerged in the highlands of Ethiopia at about the beginning of the Christian era and around AD 330 the Aksumite King was converted to Christianity and immediately afterwards Christianity was made the official state religion. Since then to the present, it has always been difficult to separate Church from State in Ethiopia.

The Aksumite State mainly in the Ethiopian highlands, flourished during the next seven centuries, and underwent prolonged decline from the eighth to the twelfth centuries AD. The long period of Aksumite decline was due to on the one hand internal struggles (between kings and their regional ruling nobility) and on the other hand due to fighting with surrounding Muslim states established from the Red Sea Coast to the foothills of the highlands – east and south. The Muslim states were established on the African side of the Red Sea from the rise of Islam after the death of the Prophet Mohammed (A.D.632) and slowly spread mainly through trade to the foothills of the highlands. The Ethiopian Highlands have been the territory of the Aksumite and all later Ethiopian States.

Despite the spread of Islam by conquest elsewhere, the Islamic state's relations with Aksum were normal and friendly at first. According to Islamic tradition, some members of Muhammad's family and some of his early converts had taken refuge and were protected by the Aksumites Negus - Emperor. This was during the troubled years preceding the Prophet's rise to power. As a result, Aksum was thus exempted from the jihad, or holy war. Also the Arabs considered the Aksumite state to be on a par with the Islamic state, and was one of the world's great kingdoms. Commerce between Aksum and at least some ports on the Red Sea continued, albeit on an increasingly reduced scale.

However, problems soon developed between Aksum and the new Islamic power

Aksum lost its maritime trade routes during and after the mid-seventh century while Islam was expanding rapidly. By the middle of the ninth century, Islam had spread to the southern coast of the Gulf of Aden and the coast of East Africa. East of the central highlands, a Muslim sultanate, Ifat, was established by the beginning of the twelfth century, and some of the surrounding Cushitic peoples were gradually converted to Islam. These conversions of peoples to the south and southeast of the highlands, were generally brought about by the proselytizing efforts of Arab merchants. This population, permanently Islamised, thereafter contended with the Amhara-Tigray peoples for control of the Horn of Africa.

Beginning in the thirteenth century, one of the chief problems confronting the Christian kingdom, then ruled by the Amhara, was the threat of Muslim encirclement. By that time, Islam had firmly established itself east and south of the Ethiopian highlands. Regional

Sultanates had emerged such as that of Adal, Ifat and the City of Harar and the important Muslim pastoral people of Afar and Somali along the lowlands of the Red Sea. Thus despite their tendency toward disunity, the Muslim forces continued to pose intermittent threats to the Christian kingdom.

By the late fourteenth century, the Muslim sultanate of Adal, Ifat and Harar came to control the important trading routes from the highlands to the port of Zeila, thus posing a threat to Ethiopia's commerce and, at the same time, to Christian control of the highlands.

Although the Christian state was unable to impose its rule over the Muslim states to the east, it was strong enough to resist Muslim incursions through the fourteenth century and most of the fifteenth.

Then in 1525 a major Muslim expedition was mounted against the Ethiopian Christian State and over the next few years penetrated the heartland of the Ethiopian state, putting much of what had been the Christian kingdom under the rule of Muslim governors.

It was not until 1543 that the Ethiopian Emperor, joining with a small number of Portuguese soldiers whom Ethiopia had earlier requested, defeated the Muslim forces and killed its leader. The death of the charismatic leader destroyed the unity of the Muslim forces and the Christian armies slowly pushed the Muslims back and regained control of the highlands. The memory of this bitter war against the Muslim army remains vivid even today.

In the mid-sixteenth century, its political and military organization already weakened by the Muslim assault, the Christian kingdom began to be pressured on the south and southeast by movements of the Oromo. These migrations also affected the Sidama, Muslim pastoralists in the lowlands, and Adal. At this time, the Oromo, were settled in far southern Ethiopia. They were an egalitarian pastoral people and militarily well organized. However, unlike the highland Christians or on occasion the lowland Muslims, the Oromo were not concerned with establishing an empire or imposing a religious system. In a series of massive but uncoordinated movements during the second half of the sixteenth century, they penetrated much of the southern and northern highlands as well as the lowlands to the east, affecting Christians and Muslims equally. The Oromo migration thus, resulted in a weakening of both Christian and Muslim power and drove a wedge between the two faiths along the eastern edge of the highlands. The Oromo developed small Muslim kingdoms in the South of the Highlands which became a powerful force in the military of the various kingdoms. They thus became an important political factor in the Christian Ethiopian states. But in spite of the Oromo factor the Ethiopian kingdoms were dominated by the Amhara and Tigray ethnic groups.

After the defeat of the Muslims in the highland in mid 16th century and the re-establishment of the Ethiopian kingdom in the highland, there were serious internal conflicts throughout the highlands which weakened the Ethiopian state further and gave rise to powerful regional lords. The Christian kingdoms was basically confined to the highlands while Islam expanded especially in the south amongst the Oromos. This situation continued until the mid 19th century when the Egyptians, the British, French and Italians all began to be active along the Red Sea ports and showed interest in the Horn of Africa. The Egyptians eventually faded in the background and were confined to Sudan while Italy, the British and France all had territorial ambitions as part of the scramble for Africa. They defined their interests very clearly so as not to conflict with each other – the Italians took Eritrea and southern Somalia, the French took Djibouti and built the railroad from there to Addis Ababa, while British interest lay in the headwaters of the Blue Nile and lake Tana, but also took northern Somaliland.

The Italians, despite their defeat at Adwa, were able to keep Eritrea as a colony. The Ethiopian kingdom was able to defeat a Mahdist invasion from Sudan and to keep the French and British from gaining any colonial territory in Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian kingdom embarked on a program of military conquest that more than doubled the size of its domain. Enjoying superior firepower, Ethiopian forces overran the Kembata and Welamo regions in the southern highlands. Also subdued were the Kefa and other Oromo- and Omotic-speaking peoples, mostly Muslims.

In 1880 the Ethiopian capital was moved to Addis Ababa ("New Flower") in southern Showa and the French were asked to build a railroad, completed in 1917, to link Addis Ababa and Djibouti.

Furthermore the Ethiopian Kingdom, while pursuing its own territorial designs, it joined with France in 1898 to penetrate Sudan at Fashoda and then cooperated with British forces in British Somaliland between 1900 and 1904 to put down a rebellion in the Ogaden by Somali leader Muhammad Abdullah Hassan. By 1900 the Ethiopian state had succeeded in establishing control over much of present-day Ethiopia. By 1908 the colonial powers had recognized Ethiopia's borders except for those with Italian Somaliland.

At the outbreak of the First World War, the uncrowned Emperor of Ethiopia (Lij Iyasu) was opposed by the old nobility. He converted to Islam with the intention of reviving Muslim Oromo predominance. He officially placed Ethiopia as a Muslim country under the Khalifa, the Ottoman Sultan. He also established cordial relations with the Somali leader (Muhammad Abdullah Hassan) who was rebelling against the British in the Ogaden/Somaliland. The Christian nobility opposing him, immediately secured his excommunication and the head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, by a proclamation, deposed him as Emperor. Tefari Mekonen of Harar was declared regent, Lij Iyasu was imprisoned but his father continued the struggle. The succession problem was finally resolved in 1928 when Tefari Mekonen (later named Emperor Haile Sellasie) was crowned as Negus (Emperor). The succession problem came to an end.

By this time all the Muslims were under the rule of the Christian Ethiopian Kingdom. Muslims were not allowed to hold any positions in the government and the military or to own land as nobles. To be a noble one had to be Christian and ownership of land, especially in the south, was given by the Emperor only to favored nobles. The Muslims were therefore pushed into trade and thus became dominant group amongst merchants. In this area they did well, but suffered disproportionately from the bureaucracy and eventually from the nationalization policies of the Marxist Government of Mengistu

From 1930 onwards and under Emperor Haile Sellasie, Ethiopia went through important phases of modernization of the State, reinforcing its military strength, and bringing about economic reform. The Italians invaded Ethiopia and were later kicked out by the British during WWII. Emperor Haile Sellasie returned to rule Ethiopia. He was deposed in 1974 by the military who turned Ethiopia into a Marxist regime and Ethiopia thus became a theater of the cold war struggle between the Americans and Russians. And so did Somalia. During the Marxist regime there were many secessionist movements – the principal ones were the Tigrayan, the Eritrean, the Oromo, the Somali and the Afar. Others such as the Tigrayan wanted to overthrow the government but not to secede. However Western support went mainly to the Eritrean and Tigrayan movements which were led by Christian leaders while the Oromo, Somali and Afar being largely Muslim movements received little sympathy or material support. The Eritrean and Tigrayan succeeded in overthrowing the Marxist regime of Mengistu. Eritrea became independent of Ethiopia, and Ethiopia became landlocked and ruled by the Tigrayans and their allies. The Oromo, Somali and Afar secessionist movements have continued. The position of the Muslims in Ethiopia has marginally improved, under the present government, but the Christian elite – an alliance of Tigrayans, Amhara and Oromo – continue to rule the country and through the state, are trying to capture the economy from Eritreans and Muslims who had earlier dominated the economy.

Somalia

The Somali people moved (some say from Afar in present day Ethiopia, while others say from Tana in present day Kenya) and quickly occupied the peninsula to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. They came into lasting contact with Arab and Persian migrants who had (from the pre-Islamic period) established a series of settlements along the coast. The most significant of these enclaves – which later became a famous entrepot for trade in the whole region – was Zeila.

Though Islam came to the Somali coast as early as the first century of Islam (7th century AD) it is believed that the mass conversion of Somalis to Islam took place in the 11th, 12th and 13 centuries owing to the arrival from Arabia of the legendary Sheikh Ishaq (founder of the Isaaq Clans) and Sheikh Darood Jabarti (founder of the Darood Clans).

For hundreds of years before the fifteenth century, goodwill had existed between the dominant new civilization of Islam and the Christian Neguses (Emperors) of Ethiopia. However from the fifteenth century onward there emerged centralized state systems in Somalia, which until then (and later) was essentially a tribal pastoralists society. The most important of these in medieval times was Adal, whose influence at the height of its power and prosperity in the sixteenth century extended from Zeila, the capital, through the fertile valleys of the Jijiga and the Harar plateau to the Ethiopian highlands.

Muslim-Christian relations soured during the reign of the aggressive Negus Yeshaq (ruled 1414-29). Forces of his rapidly expanding empire descended from the highlands to attack Muslim settlements in the valley east of the ancient city of Harar. Yeshaq compelled the Muslims to offer tribute.

Islam's penetration of the Somali coast, along with Arab migration, inspired a second great population movement from north to south. The first migration was from south to north. This second massive movement, which ultimately took the Somalis to the fertile plains of Harar, in Ethiopia, and to the banks of the Tana River (in Kenya), commenced in the thirteenth century and continued to the nineteenth century. At that point, European colonizers appeared on the East African scene, ending Somali migration onto the East African plateau.

Given the frequency and virulence of the Ethiopian raids on Somalia, it was natural that the first pan-Somali or Greater Somalia effort against colonial occupation, and for unification of all areas populated by Somalis into one country, should have been directed at Ethiopians rather than at the Europeans. The effort was spearheaded by the Somali resistance religious movement – the Salihyah *tariqa* (religious order). The British dismissed the leader of the movement as a religious fanatic, calling him the "Mad Mullah." However from 1899 to 1920, the Salihyah religious movement conducted a war of resistance against the Ethiopians and British, a struggle that devastated the Somali Peninsula and resulted in the death of an estimated one-third of northern Somalia's population. This war of resistance is considered as one of the longest and bloodiest conflicts in the annals of sub-Saharan resistance to alien encroachment. The Salihyah uprising was not quelled until 1920 when the British used the Royal Air Force to bombard and destroy the Salihyah's capital at Taleex in northern Somalia.

By the 18th century, the centralized states (Sultanates) had all disintegrated and the Somali people had remained largely as pastoral tribal society which has maintained a strong Muslim identity. They were and still are a single cultural and linguistic nation but had not formed a centralized political entity since the medieval state of Adal.

The Somalis are followers of the main Sufi brotherhoods – the Qadiriya, Ahmadiya and Salihyah. The Sufi orders played and still play an important role in Somali tribal society – they served as teachers and judges administering Muslim laws. They also acted as mediators and arbitrators. The religious leaders were bridges between otherwise competing tribes and allowed some degree of unification across clan and tribal lines.

The Somalis were colonized by the British in the north and by the Italians in the south. Later they came under one British rule after 1945. At independence the Somali government

wanted to unify all the Somalis who were in Djibouti (under France), in Ogaden (under Ethiopia) and in NFD (under Kenya) to be under one Somali government. This issue played a critical role in the post independence development of Somalia.

After independence the Somali government pursued a policy of trying to incorporate Somali community outside its borders into a greater Somalia. It attacked the Ogaden region of Ethiopia but was militarily defeated. After the defeat civil war broke out in Somalia and the government disintegrated. Somalia is now effectively divided between the north which has an effective Somaliland government, and the south with a weak provisional government being continually challenged by warlords some of whom are supported by the Ethiopian government.

Critical issues in Somalia today are (a) the role Islamic orders and movements play to counter the disintegrative role of warlords given the absence of an effective state, especially in southern Somalia; will Somalia become an Islamic or secular state? (b) the unification of the formerly European colonized Somalia – particularly the issue of northern Somaliland, and c) their relations with Ethiopia which has incorporated a large segment of the Somali/Afar population.

(b) Islam in the East African Coast and the Hinterland.

Archaeological evidence found in Shanga, on Pate Island (Lamu archipelago, Kenya coast) indicate that Muslim settlements on the East African coast started as early as the 8th century. However, after 1100 A.D., the Muslim presence along the coast increased considerably, stimulated by the expansion of trade in the Indian Ocean. These settlers came from Oman and Iran and after the 13th century, most of the migrants came from Yemen and Hadhramaut. The migrants settled mostly on islands and spread along the entire coast – from the Somali coast, the Lamu archipelago, Mombasa, Zanzibar, Kilwa, the Comoro Islands, and all the way south to Sofala in present day Mozambique. The Swahili people and Swahili culture emerged from these island city-states through the interactions and inter-marriage of Africans (island natives and settlers from the hinterland) and Arabs, Iranians and some Indians settlers (from across the Ocean). This process took place over several centuries and with successive waves of migrations. Islam was at the core of Swahili culture of these city-states which were actively involved in the international trade of the Indian Ocean. At the time the World Economy was centered on the Indian Ocean. While these city-states traded internationally, they also had extensive trade amongst themselves – along the entire coast line. Despite having one culture, language and religion and intensive communication and trade links, there was no overall unifying political entity over these city states. They were independent of each other politically. And relations with the interior were very limited. The Muslim Swahili coastal communities were prosperous from their linkage with international trade of the Indian Ocean and maintaining peaceful coexistence with each other. This situation was rudely shaken by the arrival of the Portuguese in 1498. In 1505 the Portuguese took over Kilwa (after destroying it), sacked Mombasa and by 1530 they controlled the entire coast, basing themselves in Zanzibar and Pemba. Of all the European nations, the Portuguese were the most anti-Muslim and one of their objective for coming to the Indian Ocean, apart from trade, was to destroy Islam. Thus during their occupation of the coastal city-states, the Portuguese pursued a very strong anti-Muslim policy. They tried hard to convert the Muslims to Christianity and to massacre many of those who refused. Indeed in 1542, the Portuguese went all the way to the Ethiopian highland plateau in the interior (through the Red Sea) to defend the Ethiopian Christian Kingdom which was under threat from Muslim expansion at the time. They succeeded in defeating the Muslims but also tried to convert Orthodox Christian Ethiopians to Catholicism. The Omani Arabs however began to expel the Portuguese from the Arabian Sea region in 1650, from Pemba and Zanzibar in 1652 and finally they took Mombasa in 1696. This Omani presence in the East African coast opened up new wave of migration from Oman and

Hadhramaut and considerably increased trade between the East African coast, Oman and India. However, the political authority of Oman was short-lived. Many coastal towns became independent during the 18th century and only Zanzibar remained under Omani authority. In the 19th century Omani influence in East Africa was revived and its political influence extended again to Kilwa, Mombasa, Lamu and Pate. However in 1856 Zanzibar became independent of Oman and in turn the other city-states loosened their political ties with Zanzibar.

The Swahili Coast has, over centuries, developed cultural unity and Islam and the Swahili language were and still are at the core of this culture. Over the centuries, the city states had considerable economic, social (inter-marriage) and cultural interactions between them. Islam in these areas has deep roots. Traditionally the coastal people are Sunni Muslims and follow the Shafii School even though Oman, which follows Ibadi School, was a dominant power along the East African coast. This is because of the strong links between the East African religious leadership with Hadhramout in Yemen. The coast has produced its own distinguished religious scholars recognised throughout the Islamic World. And the main centres of religious learning and scholarship have been Lamu, Mombasa, Zanzibar and the Comoro islands. Today Lamu in Kenya is the most widely accepted Islamic centre along the whole coast and indeed the interior of East Africa. This year (2002) saw a delegation of 40 scholars and religious leaders from Hadhramout attending the Annual Maulid in Lamu. Islam has therefore not only cemented cultural unity amongst the Coastal people but has also retained strong links with Hadhramout in Yemen – a region well known for exporting religious scholars throughout East Africa, South and East Asia.

And despite the fragmentation of the coast into -Italian (Brava – Somalia), British and German (Kenya, Zanzibar and Tanganyika), French (the Comoro Islands) and Portuguese (Mozambique) – the cultural unity and therefore cultural and Islamic identity of these communities as one people, is still very strong. Recent events in Somalia (Brava), Mombasa, Zanzibar, Dar es Salaam, and the Comoro Islands, have shown that there is considerable cultural and kinship solidarity amongst these communities, over and above their Islamic solidarity. This is despite the fact that they are under different national governments. And this raises the issue of identity and marginalisation, which we will discuss below.

Islam in the hinterland of this coast has, however, a more recent history – basically from the 19th century. During this period Zanzibar became a thriving centre of East African trade between the coast and the interior. The trade routes went southward into Malawi and Mozambique, and Westward onto the eastern part of the DR Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Buganda. And Islam spread into these countries essentially through trade and settlement of Swahili people and Arab traders along the trade routes. And their settlements were mainly in the villages and encampment, which developed into urban centres – large and small towns. Hence in the hinterland of the East African coast, Islam is not only recent, but it is identified with Swahili culture and is based mainly in the villages and towns along the trade routes. But it is mainland Tanganyika, through which the trade caravans traversed before reaching their destination further inland to the Great lakes, which had the largest number of trade route encampments and settlements of Swahili and Arab settlers. Hence Swahili language, culture and Islam spread much earlier and more extensively in mainland Tanganyika than most of the interior regions of the neighbouring countries. It was the main agent of so called “detrribalisation” of the people of mainland Tanganyika as well as those in the urban centres in the Great Lakes region further inland. Also during their brief rule of Tanganyika, the Germans used Swahili as an administrative language and favoured Muslims in the administrations because of its international alliance with Ottoman Turkey. During this period Swahili language, culture and Islam expanded and became entrenched in mainland Tanganyika.

In contrast, the interior of Kenya did not have trade routes until late in the 19th century when the British wanted to establish themselves both in Kenya and Uganda and so built the

railroad from Mombasa to Uganda. Hence Islam in the interior of Kenya spread much later and was the result of a different phenomenon than in mainland Tanganyika. It was spread mainly by soldiers of the KAR (Kings African Rifle), the mostly Muslim porters or carriers for the military, and the early domestic servants of the British settlers and officials. These people were mostly Muslims from the coast or of Somali origin – especially in the KAR. On the other hand, Islam in Uganda came through the early trade from Zanzibar through mainland Tanganyika to the kingdom of Buganda in Uganda, and the first converts were members of a branch of the Royal Clan. Islam also came to Uganda through the settlement of Nubian soldiers who came down even earlier, with one of the Egyptian expedition. Islam, through the Royal Clan and also the Nubians who were mainly in the military, had a more prestigious status in Uganda than in the interior of Kenya or of the Great Lakes countries. The coming of the European not only brought about Colonial rule, administration and economic exploitation, but Church missionaries came in force. Their main mission was to convert Africans to Christianity and this was done through their capture of the educational system throughout the region. Through Church activities and education, and later through the colonial education and media, both Church, Colonial Administration and the European settler communities, propagated very strong anti-Arab and anti Islamic mis-information and propaganda. Hence Swahili/Arab political influence essentially came to a halt in the emerging countries of Tanganyika, Kenya, Uganda and Mozambique. But despite the European civilising mission under the auspices of the Colonial powers, the spread of Swahili culture and Islam as a religion (often the two went together) continued and intensified during the colonial period as well as after independence. This process which was taking place at grassroots level inevitably came into conflict with the Christian and colonial ideology of the ruling group and the African educated class coming from Christian missionary and colonial government schools. And the line of the struggle which emerged, was on the one hand the forces of the Colonial Government/Church alliance supported largely by a Christianised and anti-Arab/Muslim elite, and on the other hand the force of Swahili Culture and Islam which spread and gained converts mainly amongst the urban poor and some section of the rural population – throughout the region.

The Comoro Islands

Apart from Mayotte Island, which is still under French rule, the population of the other three Comoro islands are entirely Muslims. Traditionally religious leaders were very strong and powerful in society. Their power continues to the present. Although the Comoro population originally came from several sources – from mainland Mozambique, Madagascar and settlers from Arabia and the other city states of the East Coast - they never developed a racially stratified society as in Zanzibar. And Islam is more of a unifying framework here than race. As a result, politics here are more concerned with (a) intra-elite struggle for power, the wealthy secularists versus the religious sections of the elite, and (b) inter-island rivalries; and France still plays an important role behind the scene, manipulating the various groups in order to retain its influence on the islands. And European white mercenaries have been used so many times and for so long than any other part of Africa, for purposes of maintaining French influence on the island. Thus unlike Zanzibar, racial stratification and racial struggle for power did not develop in the Comoro islands. An important character of the Comoro is its very poor economy and its dependence on remittances from its large migrant population in France, Gulf States and East Africa. It is said that there are more Comorians outside than in Comoro itself. Religiously the Comoro have very strong links with Lamu in Kenya and Hadhramaut in Yemen.

c) DR Congo, Burundi and Rwanda

DR Congo

In these three countries Islam is strongly associated with Swahili culture.

Islam is widespread in Eastern Congo where Swahili is widely spoken and a larger number of people in both urban and rural areas are Muslims. The Muslims in Eastern Congo have never had any political power and presently are not involved in any of the several conflicts between armed groups in the Congo. Generally the Muslims are considered more “detrribalized” and are believed to have weaker loyalty to their ethnic origin, than the non-Muslim Congolese. They are also mostly in urban areas and tend to be involved in trade – both formal and informal. 10% of DRC population are Muslim while 70% are Christians, overwhelmingly Catholics. However the Muslim do not belong to any one specific ethnic group and are disbursed over parts of Kivu, Katanga and Kasai – concentrating mainly in urban areas. The main problem of the Muslims in the Congo is their lack of political representation, lack of recognition by the State (in the past and today) of Muslim laws and holidays etc.

Burundi

The Muslims in Burundi have similar characteristics as those in DRC except that they are mainly concentrated in the urban area of Bujumbura and other small towns. They make up 10% of the Burundi population while the Christians (mainly Catholic) make up 67%. The Muslims are made up mainly of urban poor and traders and generally speak Swahili as their first language. Although the majority of the Muslims originally came from the two ethnic groups – Hutu and Tutsi – they nevertheless have not been involved in the continuous conflict and killings, which have been taken place in Burundi between the two ethnic groups. This is because of religion rather than intermarriage. Hutus and Tutsi intermarry extensively and are overwhelmingly Roman Catholics. Yet these two factors did not prevent inter-ethnic massacres and genocide.

Rwanda

Rwanda’s Muslims make up 1% of the country’s total population compared to 74% Christians, mainly Roman Catholic. Again they are mainly in the urban areas. And it is significant that the 1% Muslim, like the 1% Twa, were not involved with the genocide, except to help victims whenever they could. While in the past Swahili in Rwanda was associated with Muslims, this is no longer the case. Since the take over of the Government by the RPF and the return of many refugees who were based in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, Swahili has become a more common language in Rwanda especially amongst the English speaking returnees most of whom are Christians. Like in Burundi, politics in Rwanda is dominated by the Tutsi/Hutu struggle, and the Muslim community, like the Twa, is not recognised at all and does not feature in any of the political discourse.

PART 2

The Global Framework

Islamic and Western Globalisation

We have so far followed the compressed and encapsulated story of the spread and penetration of Islam in the Horn and Eastern Africa. The story is complex and this is as it should be. It covers fifteen centuries and a large area with some of the most ancient societies. But inspite of this complexity, we need to draw out the persistent issues from this complex past, issues which today pose important problems in their respective areas. And we also need to draw out issues which have emerged as a by product of other historical processes but which directly affect Muslim communities and pose problems for them in the region. We must therefore place Islam – past and present – within a global context or global framework. For

globalization is not a new phenomenon of the computer age as it is commonly, but mistakenly, believed.

Globalisation in relation to Islam has several epochal phases.

Phase I: Islamic Driven Globalisation.

Islamic power, culture and civilization was the driving force of globalization from the 6th to the 15th centuries AD. During this period Islamic civilization spread worldwide in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, different parts of Asia - central, south and east as far as China and the Philippines. Only the as yet undiscovered New World did not feel the impact of Islamic civilization. And it was during this period that the story of Islam unfolded in Eastern Africa – as we have compressed the history in part one. During this epoch, Islamic Civilization and culture was as powerful as American/European civilization is today. And the struggle of the Ethiopian kingdom to survive and continue its existence, clearly indicate the power of Islamic civilization at the time. The hostile environment of the Ethiopian highlands and the Portuguese played an important part in the survival of the Christian kingdom/s of Ethiopia during this epoch, given the power of Islam at the time.

Phase II: Christian European Driven Globalisation

But Islam having spread to most of the known world, and brought civilisation to a large part of Europe, began to lose its dynamism, from the 15th century onwards and slowly disintegrated into smaller weaker Sultanates, despite the efforts of the Ottoman Turks. The new civilisation, which was emerging, changed the focus of the World economy, discovered and exploited the riches of the new World and slowly dominated the Oceans and trade routes world wide. European advances in military and naval technology gave it enormous advantage and enabled it to defeat all other armies and navies and resistance movements. And this eventually led to major advances in technology of mass production and industrialisation – in Europe and North America.

Portugal and Spain were part of Islamic Europe and therefore were vengeful of Islam and wanted to defeat it not only in Europe but wherever they could find it in other parts of the world. Thus in the 16th century, the Portuguese, at that time an important European power, displayed its religious zeal in the way it played havoc with North and West African Muslim kingdoms. And when they found their way around the Cape of Good Hope, they found Muslims Sultanates and weak city states flourishing all along the East African coast. So the Portuguese systematically destroyed these kingdoms with missionary ruthlessness and single minded jihad. And it is within this context that the Portuguese answered the call of the Ethiopians to defeat the Muslims in the Ethiopian highlands. For more than 160 years the Portuguese ruthlessly occupied and oppressed the Muslims all along the Indian Ocean rim – particularly the East African coastal city states which did not have the political and military organisation nor the guns to fight the Portuguese. Towards the end of the 17th century, the Portuguese were eventually driven out of the coastal city states, by the Islamic state of Oman. Portugal however remained along the Mozambique coast where they continued their colonization up to the 1970s. The 18th and 19th century, saw not only continuous decline of Islamic kingdoms and sultanates throughout Africa, but also the aggressive interventions of European powers along the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea, as well as in the interior of these coasts. The physical and political subjugation of previously independent Muslim states and communities by European Christian states was completed during this second half of the 19th century.

Phase III: Global Colonialism and the Entrenchment of Western/Christian Civilization

The phase of direct colonialism in Eastern Africa (including the Horn of Africa) started in the second half of the 19th century. Apart from the objective of economic

exploitation of these new territories, there was a fundamental objective of “civilizing” the people in these regions. And civilizing means both converting the people to Christianity and educating them into Western culture. Wherever there was Islam, it proved to be an obstacle to this mission. It therefore had to be overcome by various means. What strategies and policies did European colonialism develop and what was their impact in the different parts of the region?

(a) Colonialism in Muslim Countries of Eastern Africa

The presence of Islam and Muslim communities in the East African region was thus a major obstacle which had to be overcome. This was a serious problem in areas where the Muslims were the majority of the population such as in Somalia, Sudan, Zanzibar and the Comoros. In these countries a double strategy was followed. Firstly through the educational system, great effort was made to produce a secularized, non-religious, Western educated elite and a similar but larger middle class. It was hoped that such an elite or middle class will undermine the power of Islam in their own countries and will prevent the emergence of an Islamic state. Secondly, where there was a section of the population which was not Muslim, then no effort would be spared to convert these people into Christians (Protestant under British and Catholics under French and Italian). Western conversion would essentially mean a process of creating educated, anti-Muslim and anti-Arab elite. And for this purpose the Church and Colonial Government schools, using all their resources and power, became the major instruments to accomplish this task. A third strategy was to propagate racial division and hatred by using slavery as an emotive issue of creating good and bad guys. Good guys being the Europeans and bad guys, the Arabs and Muslims. All these strategies were used with varying emphases in different countries – Sudan, Somalia, Zanzibar and the Comoros. And over a period of between 70 to 100 years, the implementation of these strategies into various types of policies, produced results - namely conflicts of various types. In Sudan the conflict is first between the Muslims/Arabs and Christians, while followers of indigenous religions being pulled by both sides. Secondly a conflict between so-called Islamists and Secularists or Modernists. In Sudan both these conflicts are major problems, as we will see below. In Somalia the fierce struggle was and still is between Islamists and Secularist, a struggle which led to Siad Barre committing major political mistakes and crimes, and which eventually led to his overthrow. And from then on the conflict spilled over into a struggle between Clans, which degenerated into a conflict between leaders fighting for the spoils of power and wealth by using unemployed youth of lineages and clans. In Zanzibar it was a conflict between the “races”, Africans, Afro-Shirazi and Arabs. In the Comoro conflict along racial line did not take place, but it took the form of a struggle between secularists, and Islamists, and between the three Islands.

(b) Colonialism in Non-Muslim Eastern African Countries

In areas where new countries were carved out and the Muslim communities became a minority, the strategies followed were similar but with variation. In these countries (Tanganyika and Kenya), the colonial powers found Islam already well established and the Muslim communities had a highly developed culture with a lingua franca (Swahili) which was wide spread in some areas which soon came under colonial rule. More importantly, the Muslim communities were divided into two categories (a) those along the coast of the Indian Ocean and who were linked to the earlier and dying Indian Ocean economy, and (b) those in the hinterland and who were linked to the more recent long distance trade between the coast and the interior. The first category of Muslim communities was small in numbers and their economies were stagnating and deteriorating. They became fragmented and absorbed into the new colonially created countries of Kenya, Tanganyika and Mozambique. Only the Comoro Islands remained unabsorbed and independent. The second categories of Muslim communities, the majority were in Tanganyika, while others were spread in smaller numbers in Mozambique, Uganda and the Great lake countries - DR Congo and Burundi Rwanda (see Annex 1)

The colonial strategy throughout these countries was as follows:-

First and foremost to convert as many Africans as possible to Christianity – through missionary activities – which were interconnected into religious, welfare and educational programmes etc. Colonial government educational system complimented the Church in their mission.

Secondly, create a Christianised and Westernised educated elite who would help the colonial administration and eventually take over the running of independent countries. The process of Christianization and Westernization contained a strong element of anti-Islamic and anti-Arab propaganda.

Thirdly undermine the traditional power and influence of the Muslim communities by dispossessing them with whatever remnant of political influence they may have had.

Fourthly undertake serious and long-term attack of Muslims and Arabs and portray them as the sole perpetrators of the slave trade and the cause of all suffering of the African people. And conversely portray the Western powers – the colonial governments, the Church and the European settler communities in the region – as the saviors of the African people, bringing to the African people progress and modernity i.e. Civilization. The means of implementing this strategy, (by both the colonial government and the Church) was through the use of the educational system, the production of historical and other books and literature to support the colonial theses, and the use of the mass media (radio, newspaper etc. both local and international). All the colonial governments implemented these strategies, be they British, French, Portuguese or Italians.

There were however some important differences in the details as can be seen in the contrast between Tanganyika and Kenya. In Tanganyika, Islam was widespread in the interior before colonialism. And Swahili language and culture, which are associated with Islam, provided the basis for the process of de-ethnicisation, a driving force in the anti-colonial movement and a cultural framework for post independent national unification. Furthermore, during the brief German rule of Tanganyika, Germany, because of its international alliance with Ottoman Turkey, favored the Muslims in the Administration and made Swahili the official administrative language throughout Tanganyika. However the Churches, as in any other colony, worked hard to collaborate with the colonial authority to implement the grand colonial strategy of Christianisation and Westernisation. This process continued under the British which reversed the favored position of the Muslims with favoring Christians. And as we will see later, this policy was intensified after independence.

Kenya had a different pre-colonial and colonial path. There was no long distance trade from the coast to the interior and Islam did not spread in the interior until after the establishment of colonialism. And by necessity rather than by choice, the first people the British hired in the army, administration and as domestic servants were mainly Muslims. This process was stopped as soon as non-Muslim were found to replace them. But this first phase of colonial entrenchment in Kenya had the unforeseen effect of spreading both Islam and the Swahili language in the interior – during the colonial period. More importantly, the importation of British and European settlers in the Kenya highlands, and the concomitant large scale establishment of Churches throughout the country where they started serious anti-Muslim/Arab propaganda with the coastal tribes (in order to undermine Muslim influence at the coast) soon made Christianity the dominant religion in Kenya and Western culture the dominant emulative culture through the school system and the life style of colonial officials and settler community. The large Somali Muslim population in NE District Kenya was isolated and cut-off from the rest of Kenya and treated as if the area is foreign territory and not part of Kenya¹. Thus having undermined the coastal Muslim community and isolated the Somali Muslim, the rest of Kenya essentially came under the monopoly of the Church and the colonial educational system, with little competition from Islam and Muslims. And although Swahili was at first the language of instructions (at the Primary School level) throughout Kenya, this was stopped in 1949 at the behest of the Churches – presumably because Swahili

¹ A special permit was needed to visit the NE or to leave the District. Population movement into and out of the NE District was strictly controlled.

as a language was too closely associated with Islam. From 1949 onwards until the 1970s, vernacular and English were used as the language of instruction. This process of Christianizing and Westernizing Kenya was perhaps more successful than in Tanganyika. But more importantly this process was intensified after independence in both countries, to a point that President Moi could talk of Kenya as a Christian country without any serious protest!

c) Ethiopian Exceptionalism

Ethiopia is, however, an exception. Over the centuries, Christians / Muslims relations have seen periods of antagonism and hostility and prolonged periods of peaceful relations during which long distance trade was carried out between the highland and the Red Sea/Gulf of Aden coastal cities. Only in late 19th century, during the unification and expansion of Ethiopia, there was forced suppression of Islam and forced conversion of Muslims to Christianity particularly in Wallo. In Wallo, the Christians were the conquering rulers and the Muslims were subject under duress or what today might be called internal colonialism.

Thus since 1850 Ethiopian unification and expansion has led to the emergence of modern Ethiopia. This process involved the incorporation of large Muslim population (in addition to Wallo who were previously under various independent Muslim sultanates. And since then to the present, the Christians have been the rulers and the Muslims the subject with no political power and generally segregated from strategic military and administrative sectors as well as from the important landed aristocracy. And this is despite the fact that they constitute roughly half, if not more, of the population of Ethiopia. Muslims therefore were forced to gravitate to commerce and trade, occupations relatively untainted by religious discrimination. This situation has continued to the present despite the constitutional equality Islam has enjoyed since 1935 to the present.

Eritrea, the northern part of Ethiopia, was colonized by the Italian after all their attempts at colonizing the rest of Ethiopia were defeated. In Eritrea, the Italians found that Islam and Orthodox Christianity widespread amongst the population. Although the Portuguese had introduced Catholicism in Ethiopia in the 16th century, it never spread widely. The Italians also tried to convert first the Christians and then the Muslims, but they also were unsuccessful. The Muslim/Christian divide remained the traditional one – between Orthodox Christian and Muslims. This divide is the same as in the rest of Ethiopia, which was never colonized, except for a brief Italian occupation (four years?) and the British who kicked out the Italians (two years).

Muslims live throughout Ethiopia, but large concentrations can be found in Bale, Eritrea, Harare, and Wallo. Muslims also belong to many ethnic groups. Yet the dominant ruling Christian elite continue to perpetuate Ethiopian historical fears of "Islamic encirclement." Such historically rooted religious fear has succeeded in creating a serious social and political barrier between Christians and Muslims.

During the Mengistu (1974-1990) period, religion was downplayed. The new Government since 1990 has gone further and began the process of recognizing Muslims as an important political force whose position has improved marginally during the last decade. But this has raised the fundamentally very serious issue of the identity of Ethiopia as to whether it is a Christian country, as it is normally portrayed, or it is a country, most likely with a Muslim majority. The crisis of identity has yet to be recognized by the dominant Christian political elite!

Phase IV: Globalization, Western/Christian Triumphalism and September Eleven.

Since 1945 Globalisation has been marked by two fundamental processes, which have had major impact on the whole world. The growth of Capitalism through MNCs underpinned by unprecedented technological advances as spillover from advances in sophisticated weapons for the military. Secondly, a global struggle for dominating the world (the Cold War) between

two ideologies advocating their respective social systems. The impact of these two processes was to turn the world first into two armed, hostile and confrontational camps (1945-1990), and subsequently into “a global village”. The two processes also seriously impacted on the Eastern African region and the Muslims in this region. From the perspective of the Eastern Africa region, the progress of this fourth phase of Globalisation between 1945 and the present, had three distinct stages:-

(i) 1945- 1990: The Cold War and Independence;

During this period the countries of the region went through important stages of development, which in detail, varied from one country to another. There was first the phase of the nationalist struggle against colonial powers during which the Muslim played an important role in the struggle for independence. In Sudan and Somalia, it was the religious movements which played the most significant role in the anti-colonial struggle. On the other hand in the Islands of Zanzibar and the Comoros, it was the secularist middle class which played the critical role in the independence movement. In mainland Tanganyika the Muslims, because of their numbers, strategic spread in the country (mainly in the urban centers) and their unifying culture (Swahili as lingua franca), they were at the core of the Tanganyika nationalist movement. Similarly in Mozambique, the Muslim played an important role in the anti-Portuguese struggle, because of their unusual and long oppression by the Portuguese. Indeed in almost all these countries, the Sufi Orders (Quadiriyya, Shadhiliyya, Tijaniyya, Salihyya, Mirghaniyyah and Ansar) provided the mass support to the political struggle of the various movements. This is because these Orders had strong loyalty from their members, which cut across ethnic lines – both in rural and urban areas. But in Kenya, the Muslims were a small minority concentrated mainly in the coastal cities and the Somalis were isolated and cut off from the rest of Kenya.

Hence the anti-colonial movement was mainly based in the central province where the Churches were strongest. And consequently this factor shaped the character of the independent government.

In Eritrea which was under Italian colonialism, the Muslims who were mostly in the lowland, were the most active anti-colonialist and later anti-Emperor Haile Selassie. However the Muslims movements was later joined by the Christians from the highlands, and when their movement became a nationalist movement, its leadership was taken over by the Christian Eritreans. Again this fact shaped the character of the independent Eritrean government which has had serious conflict and hostility with Muslim Sudan and Djibouti.

After independence, from the early 1960s to 1990, the historical processes identified above (both pre and colonial), played out in full their internal dynamics.

In Sudan the three areas of conflicts developed into major and deeply divisive crises which have yet to be resolved. The Secularist-Islamists conflict over the identity of the Sudan still continues. And the conflict between the Muslim north and non-Muslim South has yet to reach its climax. The third area of conflict - unification with Egypt or independent Sudan – is on the back burner. It will assume importance in the near future as the many claims over the use of the Nile water assume significance. Neighbouring Christian dominated countries - Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, are making these claims.

Religious movements – under the umbrella and leadership of the Salihyya Order, largely carried out Somalia’s struggle for independence from both the British and Italians and also against Ethiopia over the Ogaden. The unification of northern and southern Somalia at independence left out the Ogaden and the North Eastern part of Kenya. Claiming these two parts became a central issue in the politics of Somalia. More importantly, the struggle between the Secularists and Islamists over the control of government was fundamental in the Somali nation. Both these issues touched at the heart of the identity of the Somali nation.

The Secularists under the leadership of Siad Barre used Clan politics in order to crush the Islamists and their religious movements and Sufi Orders. This was accomplished with the

help of the Soviets who provided both the ideological and the military support Siad Barre needed. More importantly, Siad Barre used the military support received from the Soviet Union to try and regain the Ogaden from Ethiopia. Siad Barre's involvement in the cold war ended in a disaster. He was abandoned by the Soviet Union which organized Somalia's defeat over the Ogaden by Ethiopia and its allies – Cuba, Socialist South Yemen and the Soviet Union itself. The once powerful Somali army disintegrated in defeat and turned Somalia into a field for Warlordism.

With no Central Government, the Sufi Orders are once again playing an important role in a country where the gun trotting youth under Warlords terrorize the Somali people. The Islamists are actively operating at grassroots level and will thus become a major actor in any future Somali government.

Of the remaining countries (excluding Ethiopia and Comoro), Islam plays a more crucial role in Tanganyika (now Tanzania) than in the other countries – Kenya, Mozambique, Uganda and the Great Lake countries. And it is in Tanzania that the Christian/Muslim conflict has been very sharp, open and serious. The Muslims believe that the first president of Tanzania, President Nyerere, dramatically strengthened Christian influence in Tanzania by his personal and his Government's covert support of Christian Churches and undermining the historical influence of the Muslims. Firstly Nyerere (with the support of the Americans and British) engineered the union between mainland Tanganyika and Zanzibar in order to avoid having an independent Muslim country in Zanzibar (and Pemba) which could have significant influence over the Muslim population on the mainland, the coast of Kenya, the Mozambique coast and the Comoro island. Thus Zanzibar was kept under very tight leash by having its nationalist government overthrown and replaced by a government under the control of the mainland ruling party. Secondly, during his rule (1962-1995), the Muslims were systematically oppressed and marginalized in the Administration, ruling Party, the military and the educational system. At the same time, the Churches mainly organized, managed and funded mainly by European and American "mother" Churches, were given freehand to carry out their missionary work of building up a powerful Christian/Westernized elite and middle class which ruled the country under Nyerere's leadership. Hence a serious "imbalance" was created in Tanzanian society through overt and covert discrimination by the government in which the Muslims find themselves at the bottom of this "imbalance".

Since the change to multiparty system, the Christian/Muslim divide and tension has moved openly to the political arena where the strongest and most serious opposition party – the Civic United Front (CUF) is largely a Muslim party. There are several reasons for this. Firstly because of Zanzibar – an important Muslim country and a major center of Islam in East Africa – became part of Tanzania just after independence. As a result of this unity, it became possible for a Muslim to be a president of Tanzania – something that is not possible in the other countries such as Kenya and Mozambique etc. Secondly, as pointed out earlier, the Muslim population in mainland Tanzania is widespread, had played an important part in the nationalist movement and that Swahili culture is at the core of the national identity of post-independent Tanzania. Thirdly, the Muslim population in Tanzania is substantial. Although officially the Muslims are only 35% of the population, they however believe that this is a gross and deliberate underestimation of their numbers and that in reality they constitute the majority of the Tanzanian population. This is a serious problem in Tanzania and is at the heart of Muslims complaint. But the Muslim population in Tanzania argues that there are other critical issues, which constitute deliberate policies of oppression by the government.

In 1999 the Supreme Muslim council of Tanzania submitted a letter to President Mkapa of Tanzania in which they addressed Muslim complaints to him. In addition to the question of "imbalance" referred to above and which apparently President Mkapa admitted its existence (in Mkapa's response to the Muslims letter), the Muslims listed in their letter other issues over which they were complaining. These are:-

1. the Mwembechaia killings – this refers to the killing of Muslim demonstrators by the Security Forces yet no action was taken by the Government on this matter;
2. the question of the Islamic Courts to be presided by the Kadhi (Muslim judge)
3. Tanzania's membership of the Organisation of Islamic Countries and good relations with Muslim countries. (This issue is very contentious in Tanzania and Nigeria, because of Christian oppositions; on the other hand Uganda (16% Muslim population and Gabon, with 1% Muslim population, are both members of the OIC!)

It is important to note that Tanzania had a powerful one party state and that the government was omnipotent and omnipresent through its extensive institutions and through the extensive one and only party machinery. Thus the elite which controlled the government and the party was able to discriminate at will at categories of people in society without any accountability. In Tanzania, both the Government and the Party were controlled by the Christianized elite, headed by the most influential person in the country - President Nyerere. And this situation prevailed in all the non-Muslim countries – Kenya, Mozambique, Uganda and the Great Lake countries. In this sense, Ethiopia (including Eritrea) can be placed in the same category as these countries.

In Kenya the complaints are similar to those of Tanzania (the imbalance, the numbers of Muslims etc) but with added emphases on (a) Muslims at the coast with mixed Arab origin being treated as foreigners despite the fact they have been in that part of Kenya longer than some African tribes who came to Kenya much later; this is expressed in extreme difficulties Muslim encounter in trying to get basic documents such as ID, or Passport or getting a job; (b) the strong anti-Muslim and anti-Arab media attacks by both the international and local press (complaints published in 1995! – long before September 11) (c) the open hostility encountered by all citizens of Arab countries coming to Kenya (including investors) – starting with the process of getting a visa, the treatment at the airport and often the harassment by the security forces in hotels and public places (since September 11, this situation has dramatically intensified and is focused on Yemen – affecting both state to state relations as well as Yemeni citizens and those Kenyans of recent Yemeni origin). These kinds of harassment do not apply to Indians, Pakistanis, and certainly not to Europeans or Americans who are treated with the utmost humility and friendliness.

(ii) 1990-2001: The Post Cold War Euphoria and the New World Order

Western Triumphalism started after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990 and the defeat of Iraq in the Gulf in the same year. Between 1990 and September 11, the process of consolidating asymmetrical Globalization intensified – in fact the very term Globalisation assumed its wider and popular currency since around that time. At the core of this Globalisation is the overwhelming Western economic domination of the global market, financial institutions and market, information technology and media, scientific and technological resources and military power based on its advanced technology, and production of all kinds of weapons including those of mass destruction. But in addition to dominance in these areas, Globalisation has recently included the forceful imposition of Western political values and systems, as well as American culture of consumerism, egoism and hedonism. The instruments for this process of consolidation are the WTO, the WB/IMF, the UN Security Council and the UN System as a whole, selective military interventions, Aid and the NGO system, the mass media and the information technology. With Globalisation, Western countries have become richer and the poor countries poorer. And Africa in particular has suffered the most – with rampant internal conflicts (small arms are produced and sold by Western countries), HIV/AIDS pandemic, economic decline, increasing poverty and the re-emergence of mass-killing diseases.

During the 1980s, the US built a powerful anti-Soviet force in Afghanistan particularly through Osama Bin Laden and his Arab and Muslim recruits and supporters. They fought a major Jihad with tenacity and conviction for a Muslim country (Afghanistan) against the Soviet Union – an anti-Muslim Marxist country. The Americans supplied the weapons, finance, intelligence etc to these Mujahideen with Osama Bin Laden. The American also built a powerful alliance of Arab countries against Iraq. By 1990, the Soviet had been defeated in Afghanistan and had withdrawn and Iraq had been forced to withdraw from Kuwait, defeated militarily and humiliated.

However, by the mid-1990s, the former friends, America and Osama Bin Laden and his Al-Qaida had become enemies and were fighting each other. We do not know why the Americans and Osama/Al-Qaida fell out with each other and started fighting. What we know however is that this war between the Americans and Osama Bin Laden and his Al-Qaida, had no specific territory over which the war was being fought (Afghanistan is apparently only one base for Bin Laden and his Al-Qaida). The war, it appears is about causes and American policies in the Middle East and towards the Muslim countries in general. And Al-Qaida's first major expression of its anger at the Americans was the simultaneous bombing of the two American Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. But the fighting came to a spectacular head on the September 11 attack on the NY Trade Center twin towers and the Pentagon. The Americans then formally declared their "war on terrorism" not only on Al-Qaida, the Taliban, the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people over Jewish colonialism, on Iraq, Iran and perhaps soon on Saudi Arabia. As perceived by many Muslims, the war is essentially a war against all Muslim and Islam itself.

(iii) September 11 and After: American Supremacy and Triumphalism

Thus the September 11 attack was simply a more adventurous and spectacular fighting act by Osama and his Al-Qaida in the continuing war against the American government – a war which had started in the early 1990s. The Americans have built a coalition – principally made up of the Christian European countries, Canada, Australia and New Zealand – to wage a "war" – or a crusade in the famous expression of President Bush. Osama and Al-Qaida on the other hand draw their "coalition" and support, from amongst the oppressed Muslims in Africa, the Middle East, Pakistan and Central and South Asia. While the US and its core Christian allies pressurize Governments outside NATO to support them in this "war", Osama/Al-Qaida relies on the angry and oppressed Muslims to support them with strong commitment. The war on terrorism looks more like a global struggle between the rich northern Christian nations driving the global system against angry oppressed and impoverished Muslim masses. And since the American's declaration of war on terrorism, the Muslim middle-classes have suddenly found themselves caught up in the middle of the war. Their nominal Western friends have suddenly turned around and now view them with suspicion and hostility. As part of the war, the Muslim middle classes are now subjected to all kinds of harassment and humiliations – in their own countries and especially when they try to visit their friends in the North. And if they do not sympathize with Osama ideologically, they may, ironically, be driven by their experience with the war on terrorism, to sympathize with him and some to perhaps actively support him as the war expands its hostile activities to cover all groups the Americans suspect. And since the war aims at wiping out anyone or group the Americans defines and labels as terrorists, it is likely to be long, bloody and to affect a massive number of innocent people. Thus the classic colonial/imperial trap is now in the making on a global scale – the more people are defined and treated as terrorists, the more are eliminated or subjected to suffering and humiliation, the more will sympathize and some join the ranks of the "terrorists".

The war on terrorism is being conducted globally and Eastern Africa is one of the theater of this war. The East African coast is being heavily patrolled by American, British and German navies. The traditional sailing dhows and other smaller ships not owned by major

American and European Companies are constantly being, stopped, searched and generally harassed in international waters. International law has been suspended with regards to these traditional dhows trading in the Indian Oceans and most of which are owned by Muslims. There are Kenyan/American joint military exercises in the northern coast of Kenya which is heavily populated by Muslims. The whole of Somalia is under effective military and financial quarantine by the Americans who crisscross the country at will in search of what they say are Al-Qaida basis. And at the behest of the Americans, all Eastern African governments have passed draconian anti-terrorist legislations which by any standards would be considered the as normal instruments of nasty dictators. While these anti-terrorist legislation can be used against anyone the governments labels terrorist, they are more often used against Muslims (and sometimes non-Muslims) with or without American request and collaboration. It is claimed that the Kenya police frequently arrests Muslims in Mombasa and other coastal towns as suspect terrorists but release them after payment of substantial sums. The police often say they are following orders from the Nairobi, implicitly being assumed that the orders came from the FBI officers in Nairobi. No one knows for sure as to whether the Americans request such arrests or not. However this lack of transparency, accountability, secretiveness and lack of respect for human rights, is the kind of climate generated by this war. In Ethiopia and at the request of the Americans, the Government closed the only effective and functioning Somali money transfer institutions during the month of Ramadhan. A large number of elderly men and women as well as children depending on remittances from relatives working abroad, suffered severely and are still suffering. The alternative financial institution for this purpose is of course Western Union, which is not only very expensive but is ineffective in delivering funds to illiterate people living in squatter locations. In Tanzania, the Government declared a day of national mourning for the victims of September 11. However the government did not express any such sentiments at the genocide of 800,000 Rwandans or the hundreds of Muslims its own security forces had recently massacred in Zanzibar and Pemba. And the list of such examples is long.

The important point raised by these examples is that governments, especially those with Christian dominated elite, feel that they have now been given *cart blanche* by the Americans to terrorize with impunity their Muslim population, using these recently anti-terrorist legislations/laws.

Professor Mazrui has recently warned that American pressure on African governments to be involved in the war against terrorism and government acquiescence to this pressure, is likely to lead to serious tension and hostility between Muslims and Christians in African countries. The signs of such tensions are already appearing in Tanzania, Kenya, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan.

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Annex 1.

Muslim Population in Eastern African Countries

Country	Muslim %	Christian %	Indigenous %	Total Population in Millions
Sudan	70	5	25	35
Ethiopia	45-50	35-40	12	65
Uganda	16	66	18	23
Mozambique	20	30	50	20
Tanzania	35	45	20	35
Zanzibar	99	1	-	0.5
Kenya	7	66	26	30
Rwanda	1	74	25	7.2
Burundi	10	67	23	6
Zaire – DRC	10	70	20	52

Figures compiled from: <http://www.islamic-world.net/countries/>

