Chapter 10

Shifting African Identities: The Boundaries of Ethnicity and Religion in Africa's Experience

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Among the most serious consequences of colonial rule and racial domination are the crises of identity which they generate. The old assurances of long-established traditional identities are suddenly shaken. Established values are questioned and foundations of legitimacy are eroded.

Additional complications arise when the colonial order implants, encourages or even invents whole new identities. In most parts of Africa there was no such thing as a Christian identity before the arrival of the white man and his cultural baggage. Christianisation was not only the propagation of a new religion, it was also the creation of a new identity in sharp contrast to, say, African Muslim identity or traditional religious identity.

The colonial order also created new "tribes", either by splitting a big one into smaller ones (as when the Batoro were separated away from the Banyoro in Uganda), or by uniting groups which had previously been distinct (as in the creation of the concept of Yoruba identity, to encompass previously separate kingdoms).

Many of the ethnic groups of Africa are, in the final analysis, linguistic groupings. What is a Yoruba? One possible answer is: "A person to whom the Yoruba language is the mother tongue." What is a Shona? A similar answer is possible for the Shona, as it is for the Wolof, the Zulu, the Kikuyu, the Amhara, and the Baganda. Language is usually a necessary condition for ethnic difference in Africa, but never a sufficient condition. African "tribes" differ in more than just language, but language is often central to their cosmology and world view.

There was a time when it was widely assumed that the learning of *European* languages would be a detribalising experience for Africans. Westernisation might have eroded many African traditional *practices*, but it has not eroded ethnic *loyalties*. In some cases ethnic rivalries have intensified rather than diminished in response to Westernising influences.

This chapter is in part about those ethnic forces. But ethnicity does not act in isolation. It interacts with such additional social forces as the rural-urban divide, the underlying class struggle, the social dialectic between men and women, and the impact of religion on society.

The two most powerful primordial forces operating in Africa are indeed *ethnicity* and *religion.* Ethnicity defines the basic social order; religion defines the basic sacred order. Ethnicity creates the solidarity of shared identity; religion creates the solidarity of shared beliefs.

In the context of sub-Saharan Africa, the word *ethnicity* is used to replace the old concept of "tribe". In Africa south of the Sahara, there may be 1 500 to 2 000 ethnic groups. Arab Africa is more homogenous outside the Sudan. In Arab Africa north of the Sudan, the smaller ethnic groups include the Nubi, the Berbers, and in a religio-cultural sense, the Copts.

While ethnic *groups* in Africa number in their hundreds, it is arguable that there are only three religious *traditions*—the indigenous, the Islamic and the Christian. The religions of the different ethnic groups are much more similar than their languages. It is therefore possible to conceptualise their sacred beliefs as constituting one single religious tradition—the indigenous legacy.

If there are hundreds of ethnic groups, and only three basic religious traditions in Africa, one is tempted to conclude that ethnicity in Africa is a divisive force while religion is potentially unifying—especially since the other two religious traditions in Africa, Christianity and Islam, are worldwide fraternities. Christianity and Islam are also doctrinally universalist.

This chapter will explore the relationship between ethnicity, religion and the balance between unity and fragmentation in Africa. How do such primordial forces affect contemporary politics and the struggle for national and regional integration? Let us look more closely at the interplay between

primordiality and statecraft, between religion and ethnicity, between domestic forces and international repercussions.

Parochial religion and transnational ethnicity

At one level Christianity and Islam are indeed universalistic religions; and this should therefore have the effect of transnationalising the politics of its adherents in Africa. Muslims of one African country, for example, should find areas of political solidarity with Muslims in another African country.

Ethnicity (in the sense of "tribalism"), on the other hand, appears to be a case of sub-national identity. It should therefore be a parochialising force rather than a transnationalising tendency in Africa.

But there are occasions in Africa's experience when the roles of religion and ethnicity are reversed. In such situations it is ethnicity which becomes a transnational and Pan-African force—while Christianity and Islam become parochialising and fragmenting to the nation.

The most dramatic recent case of transnational ethnicity has been the impact of the Tutsi on the whole area of the Great Lakes in Africa. The Rwanda Tutsi who were in exile in Uganda, formed an army of their own and became the *Rwanda Patriotic Front.*

As exiled Tutsi they staged their own "Bay of Pigs" operation into Rwanda in 1994. This was in the middle of the Hutu genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, following the shooting down of the presidential plane in April 1994.

The Rwanda Patriotic Front from Uganda entered Rwanda not to perpetrate carnage but to pursue conquest. With remarkable discipline they resisted the temptation of committing countergenocide against the Hutu. Instead, they went for the capital city, Kigale, and succeeded in capturing it. To all intents and purposes, their triumphant "Bay of Pigs" Operation established a new Tutsi-led political order in Rwanda.

Two years later, the indigenous Tutsi of Zaire (as it was then called) were being harassed by the authorities and the armed forces of Zaire. The local Tutsi were being treated as if they were immigrants from Rwanda, when in fact they were indigenous to Zaire. The Tutsi of Zaire decided to resist—and proceeded to form a fighting force. To their surprise they were

militarily successful against the official security forces of Zaire. The victory whetted the appetite of the resisters—and a wider rebellion against the Mobutu regime in Zaire was born.

As the rebellion gathered momentum, it attracted more and more of the discontented groups of Zaire to join it. More significantly, it attracted Laurent Kabila, originally from Shaba province of Zaire. Kabila captured the leadership of the movement from then on, culminating in the capture of the capital city, Kinshasa, in May-June 1997. Kabila then became President of the renamed *Democratic Republic of Congo*.

Earlier, Yoweri Museveni—and Museveni was a Muhima, Ugandan Tutsi by another name—captured power in Uganda in 1986. Ethnically he was from the Bahima, close ethnic cousins of the Tutsi. The exiled Rwandans in Uganda had helped him capture power. After 1986 it was "pay-back time".

He wanted to help exiled Rwandans find their way back home. Museveni, as a Ugandan "Tutsi", helped to create the *Rwanda Patriotic Front* which then captured power in Rwanda. The new configuration of the Rwanda-Uganda coalition helped the Tutsi of Zaire to start a rebellion which culminated in the overthrow of the 32-year-old dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko in distant Kinshasa.

What this story of the Great Lakes since 1994 has revealed, is that Pan-Tutsiism can be a *transnational* force. It has helped to change the history of Uganda, Rwanda *and* the new Democratic Republic of Congo quite significantly. This is quite apart from the unsettled role of the Tutsi of Burundi, a country which is still profoundly divided against itself.

Ethnicity *within* countries, between the Hutu and the Tutsi continues to be a horrendous and bloody experience. But Pan-Tutsiism, as a solidarity movement, demonstrates that it can also be a region-wide liberalising force. Uganda, Rwanda and Zaire have moved closer to liberalisation than they were before the Tutsi-Hima factors helped to transform them, and when in 1998 Kabila (now assassinated and succeeded by his son) turned for a while against his Tutsi benefactors, conflict in the Congo rapidly ignored borders once again.

Certainly the rebellions against Mobutu Sese Seko and later Kabila, were neither purely national nor indeed exclusively ethnic. The rebellions against Mobutu and Kabila were region-wide and almost pan-African. In addition to help from Rwanda and Uganda, the conflicts also involved other countries for example Angola, though the ethnic configurations here were different.

The conclusion to be drawn from all this is that ethnicity in Africa is not only a fragmenting force within countries; it can also become a transitional or supra-national force linking one country to another.

Paradoxically Christianity and Islam are sometimes *parochialising* forces in Africa. This has certainly been the case in Nigeria (Africa's largest country in terms of population) and Sudan (Africa's largest country in terms of territory).

In Nigeria almost all Hausa are Muslims; almost all Igbo are Christians; and the Yoruba are split between Christians and Muslims. Islam has reinforced Hausa identity and its differentiation from non-Muslim groups; Christianity has reinforced Igbo identity and its differentiation from non-Christian groups.

It seems almost certain therefore that the Hausa would have felt less "different" from their non-Muslim neighbours had the Hausa never been Islamised. And perhaps the Igbo would have felt less culturally "superior" to their neighbours had the Igbo never been Christianised by Europeans.

The conclusion to be drawn, is that Christianity and Islam, although universalist religions in doctrine and proselytising ambition, have had parochialising consequences in certain African situations.

This is certainly also the case in Sudan where the fact that the southern region is basically non-Muslim has sharpened its differentiation from the more Islamised and Arabised north. The fact that the southern political leaders have been disproportionately drawn from the small Christianised minority within the south has contributed further towards deepening the cleavage between north and south. Once again Islam and Christianity—far from creating "universalist bonds" among people—have only resulted in aggravating regional and ethnic sectionalism.

Models of church-state relationships

On the relationship between church and state considered institutionally, the African experience has approximated four models. One model is that of *theocracy*—in which an African country has an established church-state and church institutions have been interlocked. Ethiopia, before the revolution of 1974 was, to all intents and purposes, such a Christian theocracy. The imperial monarchy traced its origins to King Solomon of the Jews and had links with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Nearly half the population of Ethiopia was not Christians at all. This sharpened the distinction between Christian Ethiopia, on one side, and Muslim and traditionalist Ethiopia, on the other.

Sudan, since 1983, has been another kind of theocracy—this time an Islamic theocracy. It began with the Presidency of Ja'afar Numeriry, who attempted to base the Sudan's legal order upon the Shari'a (the Islamic law). Numeriry was overthrown in the wake of popular demonstrations in 1985, and Sudan even experimented briefly with a revived multiparty system with Sadeq el-Mahdi as Prime Minister. But the Islamic laws (the so-called September laws) were not abolished. When the military returned to power under General Umar Hassan Ahmad Al-Bashir, the Sudanese state moved even more deeply into Islamisation. This process also resulted in sharper differentiation between Northern and Southern Sudan.

Another model of the relationship between religion and politics in Africa is based on the concept of a religious *nation* rather than a religious *state.* While Ethiopia before 1974, and Sudan since 1983, were *religious states*, Zambia in the 1990s officially declared itself a religious *nation*. With effect from President Frederick Chiluba's presidency, Zambia is officially a "Christian nation".

Ironically, President Chiluba's predecessor as Head of State, Kenneth Kaunda, was in many ways a more religious figure than Chiluba, and was descended from a more clerical family, but Kenneth Kaunda preferred to stick to the concepts of both a secular nation and a secular state. However, Chiluba's declaration of Zambia as officially a "Christian nation" immediately marginalised the millions of followers of African traditional religions and followers of syncretic movements. It also marginalised the

one million Muslims and the thousands of followers of the religions of South Asia (such as Hinduism). Once again Christianising had the effect of narrow-mindedness and parochialisation.

On the other hand, Chiluba's declaration of Zambia as a "Christian nation" has attracted more Western militant evangelical missionaries—sometimes even at the expense of the older Anglican and Catholic traditions of Zambia. Here too, Christianity proved to be a fragmenting rather than universalising force.

The third model of relationship between religion and politics in Africa is that of the *ecumenical state*. In this case there is neither a state religion, nor is the state completely separate from religious institutions. What distinguishes an ecumenical state is its readiness to accommodate the different religions through official institutions or through official processes, or both.

Outside Africa, Lebanon is the ecumenical state *par excellence.* There the entire constitutional order is based on power-sharing among the different religious denominations. The President is a Maronite Christian; the Prime Minister, a Shiite Muslim; the Speaker of the House has to be a Sunni, and the seats of the legislature are allocated according to the different denominations.

In Uganda in the 1970s President Idi Amin Dada experimented with the ecumenical state, within which the government was supposed to be the arbiter and referee between Catholics, Protestants and Muslims. But Idi Amin's Uganda was, in other respects, too disorderly and tyrannical to accomplish a credible ecumenical state.

A *de facto* ecumenical state is Senegal. Its population is 94% Muslim—a greater percentage than the Muslim population of Egypt. Yet, in the first 20 years of its independence, Muslim Senegal had a Roman Catholic president—Leopold Sedar Senghor. Among African countries Senegal is a relatively open society. President Senghor had many political opponents who called him such names as "lackey of France", "political prostitute", "hypocrite of Negritude". What the critics seldom called him was *kafir*, or infidel. In other words, his religion was almost never held against him. Leopold Senghor had worked out a special relationship with

the *Marabouts* and other religious leaders of Muslim Senegal. The political process was *de facto* ecumenical.

To comprehend the scale of the Senegalese achievement, we need to compare it with the record of the United States. Although the United States has been a secular state for two centuries, it has only once strayed away from the Protestant fraternity in relation to the Presidency. We are not even sure that Catholic John F. Kennedy had indeed won the majority of the popular vote, especially since there was some "hanky-panky" in the balloting in Illinois. But whatever the electoral figures, Kennedy did become the first and only Roman Catholic President of the United States.

American Jews have done extremely well in the country and have penetrated every institution of power to some extent or another. But American Jews have not even tried to capture the White House. They have wisely decided that a Jewish candidate for the Presidency could provoke so much Christian fundamentalism and anti-Semitism that they would lose the gains they have made as a community in terms of influence and power since the end of World War II. The Jews have left the U.S. presidency alone.

Now there are as many Muslims as Jews in the United States. A Muslim President of the United States is still a mind-boggling prospect in this constitutionally secular state. And yet little Senegal had a Christian president in an overwhelmingly Muslim society. Today Senegal does have a Muslim President—Abdou Diouf—new president in Senegal. Yet the First Lady is Roman Catholic. How many Western politicians would make it to the position of Head of Government or Head of State if their spouses were Muslim?

What all this means, is that Senegal has developed a *de facto* ecumenical state long before any Western country approached such a degree of religious broadmindedness.

Malawi seems to have a Christian majority. Yet in 1994, Malawi elected its first Muslim president—another case of African liberalism in sharp contrast to the West. But Malawi cannot really be described as an ecumenical state, since there are no interlocking arrangements between the state and religious leaders as there are in Senegal. However, Malawi could

be described as a more convincingly *secular state* at the level of the presidency than almost all Western countries. No Western state is capable of electing a Muslim president or prime minister in the foreseeable future (except in such Muslim-majority countries as Bosnia, Albania and Turkey).

Tanzania seems to be a half-way house between a secular state and an ecumenical state. Without any constitutional stipulation, the country seems to be leaning towards a system of *religious alternation* of the presidency. It began with a Christian president (Julius K. Nyerere). He was succeeded by a Muslim president (Ali Hassan Mwinyi) who in turn has now been succeeded by another Christian president (Benjamin Mkapa). It seems very likely that the first president of the 21st century will once again be a Muslim. Tanzania's stability will be at risk if that does not happen.

What all this means is that the fourth model of relationship between religion and politics in Africa, is indeed *the secular state*—but sometimes more complex, and sometimes more genuinely secular—than anything achieved in the western world. The great majority of African states do try to be secular—but combine this with a readiness to accommodate not only *ethnic arithmetic* (a quantified balance between ethnic groups) but also *the sacred calculus* (a compromise with the demographics of religion).

The secular state of Sierra Leone elected its first Muslim president in 1996—President Ahmed Tejan Kabba. His government was overthrown in a military *coup* in May 1997. Muslim-led Nigeria offered to intervene militarily in Sierra Leone to restore the democratically elected government to power. Was the Nigerian government acting on behalf of the Economic Organisation of West African States (ECOWAS) in this military venture?

It seemed strange that a military government like that of Nigeria should seek to defend democracy in another country. Yet Africa has experienced exactly opposite situations before—Western democracies seeking to defend military dictatorships in Africa. If one had a choice, it is better to see a military regime defending democracy (as in the case of Nigeria and Sierra Leone) than to see a democracy defend a military government (as the United States and France had often done in the past in defending Mobutu Sese Seko's military government).

The struggle continues in Africa—to contain ethnicity as a sub-national force, without neutralising its potential as a Pan-African supra-national force.

The triple heritage of religion in Africa is alive and well—indigenous, Islamic and Christian. What is often overlooked is that the indigenous religious forces are the most ecumenical—promoting the spirit of "live and let live" in the spiritual [and political?] domain.

Parochial ethnicity and transnationalising religion

The reverse situation of ethnicity as internally divisive—and religion as transnationally unifying—has also been part and parcel of the African experience. Indeed, Sub-Saharan Africa's worst civil wars have been fundamentally ethnic—including the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970); the war for independence of Eritrea (1962-1992), and the Angolan civil war (1974 into the 1990s).

On the other hand, conflicts in North Africa have tended to be religiously inspired rather than ethnically focused. This includes the civil war in Algeria, which has been going on since the military aborted the 1992 elections to prevent an electoral victory by the Islamists (the Islamic Salvation Front). By the middle of 1997, over 60 000 people had been killed in the dirty and indiscriminate Algerian conflict.

Also religiously focused, is political violence in Egypt—at two levels—the struggle of the Islamists against the pro-Western government of President Husni Mubarak, and in favour of a more Islamically oriented Egypt; and secondly, the tension between Muslims and the minority Coptic Christian Church.

If civil wars in North Africa are mainly religiously inspired and civil wars in sub-Saharan Africa are mainly ethnically inspired, Sudan once again falls in-between, exhibiting features of both ethnicity and sectarianism.

The fundamental divide between Northern Sudan and Southern Sudan is ethnic and cultural—but this ethno-cultural divide has been reinforced by the fact that the North is much more Arabised and Islamised, and the South is partially Christianised. In this and many other respects, the Sudan

illustrates the contradictions of both Arab Africa and Sub-Saharan Black Africa.

The religious aspect of the Sudanese conflict had international consequences. In the first Sudanese civil war (1955-1972), the Southern side successfully presented itself internationally as a victim of an Islamic *Jihad* from the North. Efforts of the Khartoum government to promote and teach the Arabic language in the South were portrayed as efforts at forced conversion to Islam. Government take-over of missionary schools (which has been happening all over Africa regardless of religion) was condemned as a strategy of Islamisation.

In reality the Sudanese government's policy in the South—from 1955—was an attempt at national integration through a *language* policy rather than a religious policy. The idea was to integrate and develop the South through the Arabic language (the most widely spoken language in the country) rather than continuing with the primacy of the English language as a medium of instruction, as most Christian missionary schools had chosen to do.

But the wider world seldom drew any sharp distinction between a language policy of Arabicisation and a religious policy of Islamisation. So the first Sudanese civil war was widely regarded as a religious confrontation between a Muslim government in Khartoum and its armies, and Christian liberation fighters in the South. Fortunately, negotiations in Addis Ababa in 1972 were at last successful in bringing that particular conflict to an end.

It was the second Sudanese civil war which began in 1983, which was more clearly provoked by a new *religious* policy of Islamisation from Khartoum. Beginning with the regime of General Ja'far Numeiry, and later sustained more thoroughly by the Government of General Umar Hassan Ahmad Al-Bashir, as well as the ideological leadership of Hassan Turabi, Sudanese regimes attempted to construct an Islamic state. The religious policy became transnationalised when the Sudan in the 1990s saw itself as an international revolutionary force, and supported liberation movements elsewhere. Sudan's critics saw its Islamic regime as a supporter of international terrorism.

More purely ethnic conflicts elsewhere in Africa were also tempted sometimes to use the religious card, either to win support for themselves or to demonise their enemy. The population of Eritrea is a mixture of Christians and Muslims. But sometimes in the course of Eritrea's war for independence, the Islamic card was used to win support from the Arabs in Eritrea's struggle—first against the Christian theocracy of Haile Selassie, and later against the Marxist-Leninist atheism of Mangistu Haile-Mariam in Addis Ababa.

In their struggle to create the separate state of Biafra, the Igbo of eastern Nigeria often used the religious card to win sympathy for themselves as "Christians" and to demonise the Federal Government of Nigeria as "Muslim-dominated". The Biafran propagandists often tried to portray the North-South divide in Nigeria as a Muslim-Christian divide. Such a characterisation of the North-South divide was a distortion—but it was a good propaganda ploy in the competition for support in the western world.

When Idi Amin (a Muslim) was in power in Uganda (1971 to 1979), the ethnic strife in the country was often externally portrayed as Muslim *versus* Christian struggles. In reality, those conflicts were fundamentally "tribalistic"—Kakwa versus Acholi; Nubi versus Langi; Nilotics versus Bantu; the Baganda against their rivals.

On the other hand Idi Amin's expulsion of Israelis from Uganda in 1972 did win him many friends in the Arab world. Indeed, Amin's break of diplomatic relations with Israel a year before the 1973 October war in the Middle East made him a path-breaker in the new Afro-Arab solidarity against Zionism. Idi Amin set a precedent for Africa's break with Israel in 1972—which was followed by almost every other African state the following year, in the wake of the October war.

A pro-Arab orientation in Idi Amin's foreign policy from 1972 onwards was one of the few consistent aspects of his regime. The Arab world was not ungrateful. Libyan troops briefly tried to save him when the Tanzanian army invaded Uganda in 1979—and then the Libyans decided to go neutral after a while. Tripoli and later Riyadh gave Idi Amin comfortable political asylum with his entourage after he was ousted from

power by Tanzanian troops in 1979. Idi Amin is still a guest of the Royal Saudi House.

Domestically the convulsions within Amin's Uganda were indeed mainly ethnic, regional and "tribalistic". The religious divide was third or fourth in importance. But in foreign policy, the Islamic factor was more important than it was domestically. From 1972 onwards, Idi Amin's foreign policy was increasingly influenced by Pan-Islamic considerations.

The nature of the civil conflicts within Africa may in turn be categorised as either politically primary or politically secondary. A politically primary civil war, for example, is one which seeks to redefine the boundaries of the political community. Civil wars which are secessionist or fundamentally separatist, are politically primary in this sense. The Nigerian Civil War (in which the Igbo tried to create an independent Biafra) was therefore politically primary. It sought to redefine the boundaries of the political community. This is also true of the 30-year war for the independence of Eritrea (1962-1992).

On the other hand, the 1997 conflict in Zaire (now Congo) led by the late Laurent Kabila was basically *secondary*. The ideals and goals of the Kabila movement were not separatist. The goal was to capture power in Kinshasa and create a better political order.

The civil war in Mozambique—while it lasted—was also basically secondary, since it entailed no major secessionist or separatist tendencies. It was at best a clash of ideologies and personalities. A *secondary civil war* is concerned not with changing the *boundaries* of the political community, but with redefining the *goals* of the political community, or enlisting new *leadership*.

Sudan has had two such phases. The first Sudanese civil war, with the Anya Nya in the South (1955-1972), was fundamentally secessionist and was therefore primary. It concerned the boundaries of the political community. The second Sudanese civil war (from 1983 onwards), was led by the rebellion of John Garang in the South. Garang was not after the separatist ideal of a new country of the South. He was after helping to democratise and secularise Sudan as a whole. The second Sudanese civil

war has been, on the whole, *secondary* in nature since 1983 (in spite of the presence of a few individual secessionists both North and South).

South Africa: The racial war that never was

There was a time when South Africa seemed destined to experience one of the bloodiest examples of *primary* civil wars—an actual racial war appeared inevitable. After all, everywhere else in Africa where there had been a large white minority, there had been severe bloodshed before full majority rule was realised. Kenya experienced the Mau Mau war (1952-1960); Algeria experienced its war of independence (1954-1962); and Rhodesia and Angola had their equivalent conflicts. Since South Africa had the largest white minority of them all, how could South Africa possibly avert the same bloodstained fate?

One particular difference turned out to be more relevant than many people imagined. The Whites of South Africa identified themselves with Africa, but not with the Africans. The Afrikaners especially were passionately loyal to the African soil (the land) but not loyal to the African blood (the indigenous people).

In contrast, the Whites of colonial Algeria were loyal neither to Africa nor to the Africans. Their loyalty was to France. They owed no special allegiance to the soil of Africa except as a means of livelihood. They certainly owed no loyalty to the blood of the indigenous peoples. They attempted to turn Africa into an extension of France.

Similarly, the Whites of Angola attempted to turn their part of Africa into an extension of Portugal. This is in contrast to those Whites in South Africa who identified themselves with the African soil so much that they called themselves Afrikaners, and even attempted to monopolise the name "*Africans*" for themselves.

White Rhodesians were simply too British, many of them enjoying dual citizenship right through Ian Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). Of all the Whites of Africa, perhaps only the Afrikaners had evolved a mystical relationship to the African land. The Afrikaners mixed their sweat mystically with the African soil, but did not mix their blood spiritually with the African people.

How did South Africa avert a racial war in the twentieth century? One reason was indeed cultural—this was the simple fact that the Afrikaners were half-way towards Africanisation through a marriage between the Afrikaner *soul* and the African *soil*.

A second reason why South Africa has averted a racial war in the twentieth century is essentially a division of labour between black political power and white economic privilege. The white man said to the black man: "You take the crown, and I will keep the jewels!" The black man was to acquire the political crown, while the white man retained the economic jewels. In many ways, while political apartheid was ending, economic apartheid is still intact. The best land, the best mines, the best jobs, the best shops and commercial opportunities, are still overwhelmingly in white hands or under white control. The challenge for the post-Mandela South Africa is how to dismantle economic apartheid without causing widespread economic and social havoc.

While most people are convinced that South Africa has indeed averted a primary civil war in the twentieth century (White versus Black), can we be complacent about averting it in the 21st century if economic apartheid remains intact? The 21st century may not have the moral leadership of the rank of Nelson Mandela. It may still have the valuable resource of the marriage between the Afrikaner soul and the African soil.

But this brings us to the third reason why South Africa has averted a racial war in the 20th century. This concerns Africa's short memory of hate. Cultures vary considerably in their hate retention. The Irish have high retention of memories of atrocities perpetrated by the English. The Armenians have long memories about atrocities committed against them by the Turks in the Ottoman Empire. The Jews have long memories about their martyrdom in history.

On the other hand Jomo Kenyatta proceeded to forgive his British tormentors very soon after being released from unjust imprisonment. He even published a book entitled *Suffering without bitterness*. Where but in Africa could somebody like Ian Smith, who had unleashed a war which killed many thousands of black people, remain free after black majority

rule—to torment his black successors in power whose policies had killed far fewer people than Ian Smith's policies had done?

Nelson Mandela lost 27 of the best years of his life. Yet on being released he was not only in favour of reconciliation between Blacks and Whites. He went to beg white terrorists who were fasting unto death, not to do so. He went out of his way to go and pay his respects to Mrs Verwoerd, the widow of the architect of apartheid. Is Africa's short memory of hate sometimes "too short"?

What saved South Africa from a primary civil war in the 20th century? It was a convergence of those three forces: The mystical relationship between the Afrikaner soul and the African soil, the Black African's short memory of hate, and the historic bargain which conceded the political crown to Blacks and kept the economic jewels for Whites in at least the 20th century.

Political violence: Primary and secondary

The distinction between primary conflict (boundaries of a political community) and secondary (goals of a political community), is not necessarily a measure of the violence generated by either. Yes, we do start from the premise that a civil war which is a battle about breaking up a country (like the American civil war of the 1860s) is more fundamental than a civil war about which ideology prevails or which leaders triumph (like the Spanish civil war of the 1930s). And yet it is possible for a secondary civil war about ideology and "*who rules*", to generate much more violence than the dispute over whether a country survives as one entity.

The worst case of genocide in Africa occurred in Rwanda in 1994. And yet the Hutu-Tutsi confrontation in Rwanda and Burundi has almost never been about secession—it has much more often been about who rules. The genocide of Rwanda in 1994 was, in our terms, a case of *secondary* political violence, however horrendous we may deem its scale.

The civil war of the 1990s in Algeria is "secondary" in our sense, since it is neither secessionist nor separatist in any sense. But the Algerian war has been internationalised in a big way. The violence in Algeria has

spilt over into France, partly because the Government in Paris has been perceived as being supportive of the anti-Islamist regime in Algiers. And because the borders of the European Union are now more fluid and open to nationals of its member countries, violence involving Algerians in France has become a matter of concern to France's European neighbours as well.

Algeria's own Arab neighbours fear a different kind of spill-over effect—not the spread of direct Algerian violence (as has happened in Paris) but the spread of politicised Islam among Moroccans, Tunisians and other North Africans. Morocco and Tunisia especially fear the "contagion effect" of militant Islam in their own populations.

Just as the Algerian war of independence (1954-1962) had a greater impact on Europe than any other African anti-colonial war, so Algeria's confrontation between militant Islam and militarised secularism may be pregnant with implications for France and Europe as a whole.

The Algerian war of independence changed the course of French history in a number of decisive ways. It put so much stress on the French political system between 1954 and 1958, that France itself hovered on the brink of a civil war in 1958. Only one man could save the situation—Charles de Gaulle, who was persuaded to emerge from retirement in a new hour of crisis. The Algerian war—and Charles de Gaulle between them—convinced France at long last that the Fourth Republic was not working. The Fifth Republic was born after a referendum. Because the Algerian war had helped to give birth to the Fifth French Republic, it ironically helped to give French governments greater stability under the new Constitution. Because the Algerian crisis had helped to bring Charles de Gaulle back into power, the impact on European and world history was wide ranging.

Under De Gaulle, France pulled out of the military wing of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO); France kept Great Britain out of the European Economic Community for the rest of the 1960s; France more vigorously pursued an independent nuclear military policy; and France gave political independence to almost all its African colonies within two or three years of De Gaulle's assumption of power. Algeria itself became independent in 1962.

If the Algerian war of independence was so multifaceted in its impact on Europe and the world, will the Algerian civil war of the 1990s also turn out to be pivotal internationally? The war is certainly being watched closely in a wide array of capitals of the world.

While the big universalising issue of the war of independence was the dilemma between Algerian self-determination and French sovereignty, the big universalising issue of the civil war in the 1990s is the dilemma between the dream of an Islamic democracy (aborted in 1992 by the military), and the rival dream of a liberal secular democracy (preferred by the secular political parties of Algeria).

With regard to the two religious struggles in Egypt in the 1990s, one is clearly secondary and the other is semi-primary. The struggle of the Islamists to replace Husni Mubarak with an Islamic constitutional order is secondary in our sense, since no separatist or secessionist issues are involved. However, the tension between Islamic militants and the Copts has features that are semi-primary since the tensions often imply profound unhappiness about Copts and Muslims being citizens of the same country. Of course most Egyptians are religiously tolerant and would "live and let live". But there are extremists among both Muslims and Copts who regard it as a tragedy that they share the same country. It is in that sense that this particular religious tension in Egypt is semi-primary, and culturally "separatist".

Of the two Egyptian struggles, the secondary one against Husni Mubarak, has had wider international ramifications. While the Algerian Islamist struggle has spilled over into France, the Egyptian Islamist struggle has spilled over into the United States. Rightly or wrongly, some have even seen a direct connection between Islamist threats to Nobel Laureate Neguib Mahfuz in Egypt, on one side, and the blowing up of the World Trade Center in the United States, on the other. Political violence in Egypt evolves into political terrorism in the United States, according to this view.

Once again it is hard to draw a sharp line, separating religion as a divisive force domestically, from religion as an international force in world affairs.

The seven pillars of the African Renaissance

In 1994 I was invited to a conference at the Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio. There was one big condition imposed on paper-writers for this conference. No papers which were pessimistic about the African condition would be allowed.

This was a conference for *Afro-optimists*—not for Afro-pessimists! I accepted the condition. I wrote a paper entitled "AFRENAISSANCE" (one word), prefixing the letters "Af" before the word "renaissance".

If I had known that the term "African Renaissance" was going to be so popular in Southern Africa a few years later, I would have insisted on the immediate publication of my paper. Unfortunately I gave the English language rights of my paper to Central State University who have been in negotiation with Stanford University Press about publishing the whole proceedings. They are taking their time.

Until August 1998, the only published proof in existence that I had even written such a paper, was in *German*. My paper was translated and published in 1996 in the German journal *International Politik* (Bonn), Volume 51, No. 9. In August 1998 there was further proof that such a paper existed. The German version became an entry in the bibliography, *The Mazruiana Collection,* compiled by Abdul S. Bemath (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers; and Johannesburg: Foundation for Global Dialogue, 1998).

The Renaissance in the history of Europe was a return to the Greco-Roman Classics that followed the Middle Ages. The European Renaissance was partly a liberation from the heavy hand of Christianity (imported from the Middle East) and an attempt to recover the spontaneity of ancient Greece at its best.

Afrenaissance—or the Renaissance in Africa—must also be, in part, a "return" to the classics. And what is a return to the African classics? It must involve a partial return to African culture and civilisation. The African Renaissance must in part involve the *re-Africanisation* of Africa—based on seven principles.

If both ethnicity and religion are primordial forces, how do they relate to the African Renaissance? What is *primordial,* is in many respects a

compact with the past. What constitutes a *renaissance,* implies a new life altogether, rather than mere revivalism or revitalisation. A renaissance is more than a resurrection of the old life—it is a re-birth of a new life.

Yet the European Renaissance—while it lasted—was, as we indicated, a return to the classics of Greece and Rome and a retreat from the dogmatic world of medieval Christianity. Similarly, the African Renaissance has to be, in part, a reaching back to the authenticity of the ancestors.

Africa has a triple heritage of religion—indigenous, Islamic and Christian. Without the African Renaissance, the most disadvantaged religious tradition in Africa was likely to remain the indigenous one. Most members of the African *elítes* regarded African traditional religion with condescension, often dismissing it as "superstition".

The African Renaissance would therefore hopefully restore parity of esteem among Africa's three religious traditions—thus raising indigenous beliefs to the same level as Christianity and Islam. On the other hand, Christianity and Islam—in the era of the African Renaissance—have to allow themselves to be significantly Africanised if they are to survive vibrantly in the new Africa. (This is the *religious imperative.)*

Another force in Afrenaissance, is language. The African Renaissance requires a new recognition of, and respect for indigenous African languages. South Africa has made a start in recognising 11 official languages, though the country has yet to spell out what that recognition means in practice. We know that the new policy has put Afrikaans on the defensive. Should it continue to be ranked alongside English as a national language? Or should Afrikaans be ranked alongside Zulu and Xhosa as one more African "vernacular" in the broad South African configuration?

In relation to identity, language does pose agonising dilemmas. Will promoting multiple African languages activate ethnicity? Or will it consolidate a sense of Africanity?

All over Africa, new language policies are needed which pay greater attention to indigenous languages in schools and other societal institutions, while cautioning against the negative aspects of ethnicity. The African Renaissance should include university degrees in African languages

continent-wide, and newspapers in African languages from Maputo to Maiduguri. In time, law making itself will have to be in African languages. (This is the *language imperative*.)

A third force in Afrenaissance is the role of oral and indigenous history. We need to confront some of the perennial prejudices which have in the past reduced Africans to the status of a people without a history. Afrenaissance demands a review of African history and of the methods of studying it. Change is needed in the direction of restoring Africa to its rightful place in global history. (This is the *history imperative*, often deeply related to issues of identity.)

But in the contemporary world, Africa has been left behind partly because its own skills and talents have been denied opportunities for growth and development. The colonial educational system has been culturally alien and often ineffective in bringing out the best in young Africans. The graduates of these colonial institutions have constituted *elítes* of leisure, rather than *elítes* of labour, exemplars of western tastes, rather than of western skills. The African Renaissance needs to overhaul not only educational institutions, but also systems of inducements and rewards, not least in relations between men and women. African talents lie among both genders, and they all need to be given a new lease on life—the African genius needs to be re-awakened. (This is the *talent imperative*.)

Once this talent has been reactivated, Africans may be able to give new meaning to self-development and self-reliance in a real partnership between men and women. Instead of stagnant economies and marginal technologies, the continent may be able to look forward to a new millennium of self-sustaining achievement. (This is the *imperative of self-development.)*

But man does not live by yam or corn alone. Afrenaissance should aim not just for prosperity but also for humane governance and clean self-rule. Would humane governance require some kind of "democracy"? Does "clean self-rule" imply an individualism and a multiparty system? How much female empowerment is the absolute minimum Africa can tolerate? Afrenaissance will let each African country evolve its own optimum

institutions of humane political order. (This is the imperative of *humane self-governance*.)

The seventh pillar of the African Renaissance moves from the local to the global level. This seventh pillar combines the old struggle for human dignity with the new realities of globalisation. The forces of globalisation should not be allowed to undermine recognition of Africanity as a dignified face of humanity. Afrenaissance is, in part, a creative African response to globalisation and related historic trends. (This is the imperative of *humane globalisation*.)

Conclusion

We have sought to explore in this chapter, the complex relationship between Africa's two most powerful primordial forces—religion and ethnicity—and how they have affected the political process. Of particular interest to this discussion has been the balance between integration and fragmentation, and between domestic forces and international repercussions.

Most Africanist scholarship has examined politicised ethnicity in Africa as a problem for national integration. This chapter has raised the question of whether ethnicity is sometimes unifying—region-wide.

On the other hand, there are assumptions in the popular mind about the universalism of either Christianity or Islam, or both. This chapter has raised the question as to whether Christianity and Islam can sometimes be parochialising forces. If so, under what circumstances?

Over-simplifying observers tend to divide the world into countries that are secular and countries that have an established church. This chapter has discussed the third category of the *ecumenical* state in Africa—sometimes displaying greater religious liberalism (as in Senegal) than the West has as yet achieved. Senegal is a Muslim country which accepted a Roman Catholic President for 20 years (1960-1980).

This chapter has also distinguished primary civil wars (disputing the *boundaries* of the political community) from secondary civil wars (disputing the *goals* or *leadership* of the political community). Countries that are torn by a primary civil war are probably at a lower level of

national integration than countries that are quarrelling about *goals* or "who rules".

However the scale of violence is not necessarily commensurate with the distinction between primary and secondary. In the single year of 1994 more people died in small Rwanda (a secondary civil war) than died in three years of civil war (1967-1970) in Nigeria, which had nearly 15 times the population of Rwanda. Yet the Nigerian civil war (with a lower casualty rate) was secessionist and therefore primary.

The complexities of Africa's social and political experience continue to unfold. An African miracle of ending political apartheid in South Africa has arrived. Primordial forces of race, ethnicity and religion intersect with processes of new identity-formation and enlargement of political scale. Out of such tumult and anguish, out of tension and tribulation, a new face of Africa is bound to emerge—bruised, but hopefully unbowed.

An African Renaissance is feasible, provided it is built on the seven pillars of sustainability. Has the process of Afrenaissance begun?