‘Clash of the Denominations’ in Africa?
A Controlled Comparison of Inter-Religious Violence in Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria and Tanzania

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Abstract
Given its religious diversity, sub-Saharan Africa seems prone to a ‘clash of denominations’, particularly between Christians and Muslims. This contribution engages in a controlled comparison of three sub-Saharan countries that are characterized by equal population shares of Christians and Muslims and display a number of further risk factors but at the same time display different levels of inter-religious violence. Looking at the 1990-2010 period, we find that the variance in inter-religious violence is best explained by a combination of religion-specific and non-religious surrounding conditions. The analysis finds that elevated levels of inter-religious violence (Nigeria and Côte d’Ivoire vs. Tanzania) result from conflict-prone religious structures (religious and ethnic identity overlaps, demographic change) in combination with non-religious risks in interethnic and social relations as well as tense political transformation processes. The difference between high and elevated/lower levels of inter-religious violence (Nigeria vs. Côte d’Ivoire) results from sharp social differences between religious communities and the (historical) politicization of religious ideas and organized extremism.

1. Introduction
Sub-Saharan Africa has a unique religious demography. Unlike many other world regions such as Europe, Latin America, North America, or the Middle East there is no single religious world religion that dominates this continent. Ultimately, Africa’s religious demography is characterized by a juxtaposition of Christians and Muslims. Often religious polarization between two denominations is found within one country. Given this conflict-prone demography and numerous other risk factors such as poverty and ethnic tensions, Africa seems to be very prone to what one might call a ‘clash of denominations’ between Christians and Muslims. Indeed, in Nigeria, bloody clashes between Muslims and Christians have claimed hundreds if not thousands of victims in the last years. Renewed violence in the Côte d’Ivoire between (overwhelmingly Muslim) Northerners and (mostly Christian) Southerners

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1 Research for this article was funded by the German Foundation of Peace Research within the research project “Religion and Civil War: On the Ambivalence of Religious Factors in sub-Saharan Africa”.
2 If not indicated otherwise, “Africa” denotes the 48 countries of “Sub-Saharan Africa”.
3 There is a third denomination that has substantial shares of adherents, the so called African Traditional Religions (ATR). However, it is less prominent though still important.
has also religious overtones. Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea have been theatres of Muslim-Christian confrontations, too. These conflicts, however, are only part of the story; in other countries with mixed religious demography such as Tanzania or quite a few West African countries no or little such inter-religious violence occurred.\(^4\) The question thus remains: *Why does inter-religious violence occur in some religiously polarized countries but in others less or not at all?*

This contribution tries to answer this question by engaging in a controlled comparison of three countries – Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria and Tanzania – that have in common the juxtaposition of high population shares of Christians and Muslims as well as a number of other theoretically important similarities for conflict but differ as regards their level of inter-religious violence. Following the methodology of a most-similar systems design, the similarities can be excluded to explain the difference in inter-religious violence thus at least approximately allowing for the isolation of explanatory variables.

We will proceed as follows: First, we review the theoretical and empirical literature pointing to a number of deficiencies. We then elaborate on our methodological approach of a controlled comparison of three country cases. The third section provides some details on the incidence and intensity of inter-religious violence in our country cases. The following section then formulates our central hypotheses regarding the question why inter-religious violence may happen or may not. The core empirical part of the contribution comprises a more detailed account of possible determinants of inter-religious violence in the country cases, followed by a comparative synopsis of our findings. The final section summarizes the findings and draws conclusions for future research.

### 2. How Religion May Impact on Civil Conflict

Over the last decade, there has been growing interest in research on the religion–conflict link (e.g. Huntington 1996; Juergensmeyer 2008). Today, the “ambivalence of religion” has been widely accepted: Religion may not only incite violence but also contribute to peace (Appleby 2000; Philpott 2007).\(^5\) Ambivalence also refers to the scope of impact. Sometimes religion may count more, in other circumstances it may count less. It is plausible that the ambivalence of religion depends on context (Basedau/De Juan 2008). Under certain religious and non-religious conditions, religion spurs conflict or fosters peace – or differs as regards how much religion counts. For the purpose of our paper, it appears useful to consider different religious dimensions. “Religion” is a complex phenomenon and difficult to define precisely (as argued by, for instance, Ter Haar 2005); we do not intend to solve this problem for good; we believe that for analysis in *social sciences* it is useful to distinguish between different dimensions of religion (Basedau 2009; Harpviken/Røislien 2008). There are different ways to conceptualize these dimensions. According to our conceptualization, we distinguish between a) demographic structures of religion, b) religious ideas and c) religious institutions as well as d) the related behavior of religious (and other) actors.\(^6\)

Regarding the religion-conflict link in Africa and elsewhere, theoretical relationships can be easily established. Theoretically, a number of hypotheses connect religious variables to conflict: First, diverse religious identities, similar to ethnic and other social identities, form a group identity and can result in escalating intergroup-dynamics in the socio-psychological sense. Research demonstrates that people often privilege in-group members over out-group members (Seul 1999: 565; Stewart 2009). As a result, violent escalation becomes more likely.

\(^4\) For an overview see Annex, Table A1.
\(^5\) This article focuses on the religion-conflict link. Looking at the peace dimension is certainly commendable beyond the scope of this paper.
\(^6\) We may also distinguish between contemporary and historical religious variables (within/outside the period under investigation).
Second, religious identities are special: They are connected to particular religious ideas. Such religious ideas are shared values and norms legitimized by a transcendental source, and therefore they might be less subject to negotiation and compromise given their (accepted) supernatural origin. This can also entail a higher propensity for violent behavior by religious actors: Non-believers and adherents to different religious traditions might be converted by force; heretics may have to be punished. Conflicts over the role of religion in society or the state are likely to emerge between different religious, especially if the religions in question – such as Islam and Christianity – claim universal validity. Furthermore, militants might be motivated through specific religious rewards for participation in acts of violence (e.g. Anderson 2004; Toft 2007; Svensson 2007).

Third, religion – or more precisely religious factors –, might be understood as a possible mobilization resource for and in conflicts. This idea is by no means incompatible with the former two ideas, but this theoretical branch stresses the role of leaders in the organization of collective action (Fearon/Laitin 2000, De Juan 2009). In order to mobilize followers, leaders can choose from different identities, such as religious, ethnic or other social identities. Under specific conditions, religion may be the most rational choice for them. For instance, politicization of religion might increase the risk of a violent escalation of a conflict, which is principally rooted in political or socio-economic problems (e.g. Keddie 1998; Hasenclever/De Juan 2007: 21–24).

In essence, all three approaches, as already mentioned, are far from mutually exclusive. In fact, they form different parts (or options) of what one might call a “mobilization hypothesis” (Basedau/Vüllers 2010). Religious factors might serve, in one way or the other, as resources for the mobilization of people. However, the functioning of this mobilization mechanism requires at least two components: First, there are opportunities for mobilization which may lie in “mobilizable” structures of religious demography (such as overlapping ethnic and religious identities, polarization etc.) or existing organizations that, for instance, can be used to recruit rank and file for combat. Second, these opportunities escalate into armed conflict only under further circumstances, in particular the politicization of the latter, that is when religious leaders pro-actively draw on religion or religion is already politicized as for instance, by feelings of discrimination or tensions between denominations. Other potentially important conditions for the functioning of the mobilization mechanism are found rather outside the “realm of religion”. Religious mobilization is also possible by political leaders. Non-religious structural and other conditions probably do also count: Motive for inter-religious violence may become more likely when ethnic group identities overlap with religious identities (Stewart 2009) and these groups compete for economic resources or political influence. Opportunity for organized religious (and other) violence will increase if state control of the territory is weak and small arms are easily available. There is a multitude of possibilities. Eventually, the identification of the most, more or less conflict-prone constellation is an empirical question.

**Empirical Findings Thus Far**

Empirically, the coexistence of various religious communities within a given society should increase the likelihood of conflict onset because of the aforementioned socio-psychological in- and out-group dynamics and/or principally incompatible religious values (Huntington 1996; Hasenclever/Rittberger 2003: 109–110). Studies find no empirical evidence for this assumption (e.g. Russet et al. 2000; Tusicisny 2004). Religious diversity as such is not significantly linked to a higher probability of armed conflict. Furthermore, the studies show mixed or non-significant results for other religious demographic structures. The results are consistent neither for a strongly fractionalized religious structure, nor for a so-called polarized structure, in which two more-or-less large religious groups coexist (e.g. Croissant et al. 2009; Montalvo/Reynal-Querol 2005; Fearon/Laitin 2003; Ellingsen 2000). However, some studies
find positive evidence that conflicts that are fought along religious boundaries may display a higher intensity and may endure longer than other conflicts that are not fought along such lines (Horowitz 2009: 167–172; Svensson 2007; Toft 2007; Pearce 2005; Ellingsen 2005). Regarding evidence for the mobilization hypothesis more specifically, few quantitative or otherwise comprehensive studies exist. Given the limited availability of specific data, there is indirect evidence at best. For instance, there is little support for the claim that a higher politicization of religion automatically increases the (internal) conflict risk. Studies found a resurgence of religion in politics in the last few decades worldwide, but a corresponding increase in religious conflicts did not occur (Moghadam 2003; Fox 2007). Moreover, case studies show that religious overtones in armed conflict do not necessarily depend on religious politicization. Rather, elites must convince believers to engage in specific behavior. Furthermore, these studies point out the importance of – and the dependence upon – numerous (non-religious) factors in mobilization processes, such as the organizational structures of religious organizations and their dependence on state regulations (e.g. Wiktorowicz 2004; Fox 1999). These recent approaches underscore the importance of looking not only at interfaith relations, but also at the relationship between the religious groups and the conflict parties.7

Looking at studies that specifically deal with Africa, we find that the majority of studies on religion and conflict in sub-Saharan Africa are single case studies. A number of studies on (inter-)religious conflict in the Côte d’Ivoire (e.g. Basedau 2009; Nordas 2007; Konaté 2005) and especially Nigeria (e.g. Falola 1998, Sani 2007, Paden 2008, Scacco 2008) exist; comprehensive quantitative comparative studies on religion and conflict or inter-religious conflicts are virtually non-existent (Basedau/De Juan 2008: 6). This comes as a surprise since religion has a high social relevance in Africa, and this relevance has apparently increased in recent years (Pew 2010; Ellis/Ter Haar 2007; McCauley/Gyimah-Boadi 2009). Also and as already mentioned, the religious diversity, particularly the coexistence of Christians and Muslims in many African countries and the continent as a whole, is often considered a risk. Previous work found little evidence that religion impacts on conflict in Africa (Collier/Sambanis 2005; Elbadawi/Sambanis 2000; Collier/Hoeffler 2004) but large N-studies have confined testing to simple demographic variables and have tested armed conflict in general rather than violence between religious groups. More qualitative works, such as Haynes (2005), estimate that socio-economic and political factors better explain civil war (onset) than ethnic and religious fragmentation. Recent studies, however, have found that in almost half of the 48 sub-Saharan countries religion and violence are substantially linked in one way or the other (Basedau et al. 2011). Intercommunal clashes overwhelmingly occur between Christians and Muslims; this also holds true for armed conflict in which the warring factions significantly differs by their religious affiliation. Supporting the mobilization hypothesis, Basedau et al. (2011) find that such inter-religious armed conflict is particularly likely when religious and ethnic boundaries run parallel; religious polarization is dangerous when combined with previous tensions and (perceived) discrimination.

Summarizing the state of the art on the religious-conflict link in Africa and elsewhere, at least two observations are striking: First, almost all studies fail to really investigate all or at least the most important variables in the religion-conflict as proposed by a “mobilization hypothesis”: Commonly, studies only measure the influence of religion with demographical constellations. Case studies embark on more in-depth studies but are hardly comparable given different research questions and concepts. Second and closely related, systematic controlled comparison that looks in-depth at the country cases but still strives for nomothetic work are almost completely absent.

7 In addition, religious communities themselves should be taken into consideration because internal power struggles over religious leadership can influence the behaviour of religious groups (e.g. Silberman et al. 2005; Johnston/Figa 1988).
3. Methodology and Case Selection

While we do not deny the qualities of other research strategies, namely quantitative and case studies, this paper embarks on a systematic, but in-depth comparative study of a small N-sample. In this context, it is best to engage in controlled comparison, particularly a small-N comparison that resembles a natural experiment (e.g. Sartori 1994) when one aims at balancing the advantages of individualization and the general scientific goal of generalization.

In order to exploit the full potential of a small-N comparative design, we have tried to select cases according to the principles of a most-similar-systems design (cf. Przeworski/Teune 1970, Sartori 1994). Cases should share as many as possible important similarities, but should differ with regard to the value of the dependent variable “inter-religious violence” in order to be able to better isolate potential causes of the former difference. With these principles in mind, the starting point of the selection process was to identify all polarized countries in Africa in which Christians and Muslims at least comprise 25 percent of the population each (see Table A1). Taking into account the levels of inter-religious violence and other conditions we have created a sample of three African countries comprising Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria, and Tanzania. This sample does, of course, not completely match the strict requirements of a most-similar-systems–design — which is difficult to identify in natural settings generally — but comes fairly close to it.

During our period of investigation, limited to the period from the end of the Cold War until 2010 (1990–2010), the three cases have in common not only approximately similar shares of Christians and Muslims, but also show a high level of religious polarization according to the Montalvo-Querol-Index (> 0.80). Moreover, in all three countries inter-religious violence occurred in history before 1990, particularly in the pre-independence period. The three cases share a number of important further conditions which can be considered risk factors (see Table 1). Religious and ethnic identities run at least partially parallel. All three countries show high ethnic fractionalization, have suffered from general development problems in the late 1980s and had to engage in structural adjustment programs designed according to World Bank and International Monetary Fund schemes. There are further similarities regarding political institutions and processes. In all countries political transitions to democracy started in the early 1990s, resulting in flawed democratization. All three countries use majoritarian institutions at the national level, including a presidential system of government and a simple plurality electoral system.

Yet, despite these numerous similarities, the level of internal violent conflict in the three countries since 1990 has differed substantially. Since 1990 armed conflict occurred in both Côte d’Ivoire and Nigeria, but not in Tanzania. As detailed below (4.), inter-religious violence — our variable of main interest — further distinguishes the cases: Nigeria shows by far the most intense levels of religious violence followed by Côte d’Ivoire with a medium level and Tanzania with a low level.

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8 In the case of Nigeria, the government engaged in a “self-imposed” structural adjustment program.
Table 1: Overview of Similarities of the Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Nigeria</th>
<th>Côte d’Ivoire</th>
<th>Tanzania</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approx. similar shares of Christians and Muslims (at least 25% of population)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High religious polarization index (&gt; 0.80)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Partially) overlapping religious and ethnic identity boundaries</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-religious conflict in history before independence</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-religious risk factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development problems/structural adjustment programmes since 1990</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High ethnic fractionalization</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plurality electoral system since 1990</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential system of government</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flawed democratization process since 1990</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High regime stability/ little conflict prior 1990</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-religious violence after 1990*</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: RSSA-Database; * For details on levels of inter-religious violence, see Table 2.

Our cases differ in some more aspects; for instance, Nigeria shows less regime stability and more prior conflict than the other two. It is also more populated – though none of the other cases is anywhere close of being a micro-state. However, we have already conceded that the design is not a perfect most-similar-systems-design. Yet, though we cannot perfectly isolate our hypothesized relationships, all identified similarities can be excluded from explaining the differences in the dependent variable. In fact, we hope to find the explanation for this variance in exactly these dissimilarities.

4. Levels of Inter-religious Violence

Before looking more closely at the country cases and possible explanatory variables, we systematically assess the levels of inter-religious violence. For this purpose, we make use of our database on Religion in Sub-Saharan Africa (RSSA) as well as our experience in the field in all three countries.9

The RSSA database (see for instance, Basedau/Vüllers 2010) systematically counts a number of data and events of religious variables connected to violence in various forms. These variables include whether any armed conflict10 occurred and whether the conflict parties differed by their religious affiliation or had a religious incompatibility. They also contain information on the existence and activity of religious armed groups11 and various forms of religious violence – and respective intensity – which is not necessarily captured through the notion of armed conflict, particularly assaults on religious targets as well as attacks by religious actors on secular targets; clashes between religious communities and/or with state security forces are also included. In sum, these variables comprehensively capture the diverse dimensions and the intensity of religious violence.

9 Field work was conducted between June 2009 and early 2010 in Nigeria (Peter Körner), Tanzania and Côte d’Ivoire (Johannes Vüllers). Matthias Basedau briefly visited Nigeria (May 2010) and Côte d’Ivoire (February 2009). Field work included interviews with actors and experts as well as focus group discussions (FDGs) with Christian and Muslim laypersons as well as clergy.
10 We follow the definition by UCDP/PRIO of armed conflict, which is a “contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths.”
11 We define armed religious groups as groups that pursue self-declared religious and maintain armed units or systematically exert violence. Both conditions are necessary conditions.
Table 2: Dimensions of (Inter-)religious violence in Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria and Tanzania

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Warring factions in armed conflict (UCDP/PRIO) differ by religious affiliation</th>
<th>Armed conflict episodes with religious incompatibility</th>
<th>Activity of armed religious groups</th>
<th>Fatalities in religious violence*</th>
<th>Fatalities in which an inter-religious dimension is at least very likely</th>
<th>Resulting level of inter-religious violence**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Several Muslim militants (e.g. Hisbah groups, “Taliban”, Boko Haram)</td>
<td>7370</td>
<td>5706</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Côte d’Ivoire</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Al Qaeda (embassy bombings 1998)</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: RSSA; * Includes 1) assaults on religious targets, 2) attacks by religious actors on secular targets, 3) clashes between religious groups and 4) security forces and clashes between religious groups. ** RSSA systematically counts until end of 2008 only. Subsequent violence does not change the differences between the cases.

As our paper primarily investigates inter-religious violence we count only those variables that contain an inter-religious aspect: differences in religious affiliation in armed conflict as well as the number of fatalities in inter-religious clashes. Taking these variables into account reveals substantial and clear-cut differences between the three cases though none of the countries is free from inter-religious tensions on the whole – a finding that first came as a surprise but then was consolidated through field research.

Without doubt, however, Nigeria shows the highest number of fatalities in inter-religious clashes by far. These bloody clashes are connected to infamous events in the Middle Belt (e.g. Kaduna, Jos, Bauchi), which have continued, mainly in Jos, throughout 2009 and 2010. The victims in these recent clashes, at least several hundred, are not captured through RSSA. An armed conflict between the (secular or at least religiously diverse) Nigerian state and Islamic militant groups in 2004 and in 2009 resulted in additional deaths. In contrast, Tanzania has experienced fairly little inter-religious violence. In fact, a number of inter-religious incidents occurred, but none of these resulted in fatalities. In contrast, armed conflict and other violence in the Côte d’Ivoire were clearly more intense and also had a clear-cut inter-religious dimension. The armed conflict from 2002 on between Northerners and Southerners also represents a Christian-Muslim divide. Religious violence amounts to 279 deaths which were almost exclusively the result of violence after the 2000 elections. Churches and mosques were burnt; (predominantly) Christian security forces killed Muslim protestors (see HRW 2001). Compared to Nigeria, however, inter-religious violence is obviously much less intense. The resulting levels of inter-religious violence hence are: Nigeria-high, Côte d’Ivoire-medium, and Tanzania-low.

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12 There were fatalities in religious violence in which, however, the interreligious dimension is not obvious (see for further details the section on Tanzania).
13 Even if we look at religious violence in general, not inter-religious violence alone, the differences between the three cases stay the same.
5. Hypotheses

Our main hypotheses are inspired by the idea that religious factors may facilitate the mobilization of conflict (“the mobilization hypothesis”). In particular, we take into account the multidimensionality of religion and its context dependence:

Hypothesis 1: Differences in levels of inter-religious violence result from a combination of religious risk factors connected to
a) Religious demography (overlapping religious and ethnic or social identities, strong demographic change),
b) Religious organizations/institutions (the strength and cohesion of religious organizations, the (non)-existence of inter-religious networks as well as external religious influence),
c) Religious/theological ideas (contested religious ideas at the national or local level, the strength of extremism) and
d) Actual behavior of religious actors (active incitement of violence by religious leaders, already existing inter-religious tensions and feelings of discrimination) as well as
e) The historical role of religion in all these dimensions

Hypothesis 2: In addition to religious factors, the non-religious and broader historical context has a further conditioning influence. Risk factors comprise, for instance, already existing social and ethnic tensions as well as a tense transformation of the political system.

In the following we will put these hypotheses to the test, discussing the pertinent factors and their interplay in sections on the three cases each. We will start with the most violent case.

6. Nigeria

With 158 million inhabitants (2010\(^\text{14}\)), Nigeria has the largest population with almost evenly split shares of Muslims and Christians worldwide. Coincidentally, the country figures in the global premier league of violence termed religious. In the 1990-2010 period, sectarian killings caused more than 5,000 fatalities\(^\text{15}\). Inter-religious violence largely occurred in only five of 36 Nigerian states located at the interface of the multi-ethnic, religiously blent Middle Belt and the predominantly Muslim Hausa-Fulani far north of the country (Padden 2005, 2008).

Religious Factors

Religious demography: Nigeria is ridden by a precarious religious demography. A roughly calculated average of major available estimates allots 49 percent to Muslims, 45 percent to Christians and most of the remainder to African traditional religion\(^\text{16}\). In the states of Kano, Kaduna, Plateau, Bauchi and Borno, in particular, Muslims and Christians encounter each other in large numbers along critical religious “fault lines” (Danan/Hunt 2007). Although Muslims prevail in northern Nigeria, more than 25 percent of the regional population may be Christians, facing the majorities in close neighborhoods (Bergstresser 2010).

Religious and ethnic boundaries run largely parallel, with the remarkable exception of the Yoruba (Ukiwo 2003). The ethnic affiliation of Nigerians is estimated at 28 percent Hausa-Fulani (mainly north), 21 percent Igbo (southeast), 19 percent Yoruba (southwest) and 32 percent “other” with more than 250 minority groups (Pew 2006). About three-quarters of Muslims are Hausa-Fulani, whereas the remainder is made up mostly of Yoruba and (northeastern) Kanuri in a two-to-one relation. Among Christians, Igbo are the largest group, while the partly Muslim Yoruba follow second. About one half of all Christians belong to

\(^{14}\) According to the UN Population Division (2010 forecast).

\(^{15}\) Compiled from RSSA-Database and updated for the years 2009 and 2010.

minority ethnic groups. In a survey, 76 percent of Christians and 91 percent of Muslims maintained that religion is more important to them than their identity as Africans, Nigerians or members of an ethnic group (Okpanachi 2009). Non-Muslim Middle Belt ethnic groups developed an embracing Christian identity to counterbalance the supremacy of the Hausa-Fulani, whose identity is based on the combination of ethnicity and Islam (Miles 2003). Nigeria’s religious demography is tension-prone, as congruent ethnic and religious affiliations often also run parallel to social boundaries, with religious minorities emerging from migrant populations who at times are better off than the people self-styling themselves as indigenous (ICG 2010; Harnischfeger 2004). In some locations of the Middle Belt countryside, there is a bitter contest for scarce land between mainly Christian farmers and Muslim shepherds, while in cities like Kaduna migrant Christian shop-keepers and white-collar workers are confronting frustrated Muslim poor.

Religious institutions: Both Nigerian Christianity and Islam are highly heterogeneous, with great intra- and inter-religious differences in terms of numbers, organizational structures, hierarchies and external influence. Fragmentation often leads to intra- and inter-religious dissent, giving room to feelings of both inferiority or superiority that may misguide religious fundamentalists to defensively or offensively pursue their goals.

In Islam, sub-groups including Sufi brotherhoods, Wahhabi-inspired factions (esp. Izala) etc. are only loosely organized, with vaguely defined hierarchies. The best organized groups include militant Sunni Muslims like Taliban or Boko Haram as well as the Shiites minority (Chalk 2004; McCormack 2005). Most Muslim groups are essentially Nigeriannized forms of Islam, sometimes imitating international prototypes (like the Taliban), with Saudi Arabia and Iran influencing groups like the Izala and the Shiites respectively. The Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI) and the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) are umbrella organizations that have not been able to unite Muslims so far.

Christians are divided into many denominations, too. However, they are organized in five groupings constituting the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). CAN comprises a) the Vatican-controlled Nigerian branch of the Roman Catholic Church, b) heterogeneous, partly externally related Protestants grouped in the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), c) “Orthodox” Christians in the indigenous church family of the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA), d) African churches grouped in the Organization of African Independent Churches (OAIC) and e) Pentecostal churches, inspired by US communities, in the Pentecostal Fellowship Network (PFN) (Nwafor 2002; Obiorah/Harneit-Sievers 2006).

While neither Christian nor Muslim umbrella bodies are deliberately contributing to conflict their unbalanced religious rhetoric may foment tension. Moreover, they are weak if it comes to reconciliatory action, which is also true with the Nigeria Inter-religious Council (NIREC), a body co-presided by a Muslim and a Christian, outspoken but toothless against violence. By contrast, there are initiatives like the Kaduna-based Inter-Faith Mediation Centre (IMC) that at the local level conduces to contain inter-religious tension (MacGarvey 2009). Yet those initiatives have not been successful in preventing inter-religious trouble countrywide so far.

Religious ideas: Both Christians and Muslims are highly religious (Hock 2009), prone to clash along religion-based dissent. Both complain about mutual “ignorance” as well as misinterpretations of the Bible and the Quran, including quarrels about the supremacy of either Islam or Christianity. Some believers maintain that lack of adherence to the scriptures of religious teaching regarding non-violence is a factor related to the militancy of followers of both faiths. They also point to a bias in teachings from Christian and Muslim clerics. Adherents of both faiths claim that their respective religion is basically committed to non-

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17 "Organization for the Victory of Islam".
violence, with some of them holding that clashes sometimes result from “self-defense” against assaults on their religion\textsuperscript{18}.

In the northern Nigerian setting, the most tension-filled constellation is the antagonism of fundamentalist Christian groups, mainly Pentecostals, and militancy-prone fundamentalist Muslim factions (Obadare 2006). While fundamentalist Christianity is mostly a verbally antagonizing affair (Ojo 2007), extremist Muslim groups like the Nigerian \textit{Taliban} or \textit{Boko Haram} sometimes openly propagate or even execute violence (Hill 2010). Although an organizational link of Nigerian extremists to Al Qaeda has not been proven so far, there is evidence that individuals may feel inclined to adhere to the Al Qaeda network.

\textbf{Behavior of religious actors:} Apart from extremist groups that are confined to small constituencies, there is only weak evidence of religious or political leaders openly and directly inciting violence by respective calls based on religion. However, politicians often try to capitalize on religious divides, addressing their constituencies by highlighting common religious identities at the national or local levels. In the 1999/2000 Sharia dispute, the most strident advocates of Islamic law could be found among elected northern politicians (Suberu 2005; Sanusi 2007). In case of violent eruptions politicians are the ones who are blamed most, while many religious leaders of both faiths are credited with calming their respective communities rather than heightening tension. However, there are clerics of both faiths who instrumentalize religion in order to strengthen religious identities of their followers by devaluing faith and people of the respective out-group.\textsuperscript{19}

Both Christians and Muslims at times give voice to a tension-prone mutual feeling of being discriminated against (ICG 2010). Christians interpreted Nigeria’s accession to the \textit{Organization of the Islamic Conference} (OIC) (in 1986) and the introduction of the Sharia (from 2000) as attempts to Islamize the country, leaving themselves aggrieved and oppressed. Contrastingly, Muslims tend to perceive Nigeria’s secular constitution of the state as essentially influenced by Western and Christian forces at the expense of Islam and its followers, in defiance of the fact that Muslims are influential in Nigerian politics at both national and regional levels.

With recurrent sectarian killings, the inter-religious relationship is strained although violence mostly occurs at some trouble spots, while many regions of the country are far less tense. Many clerics and followers of both faiths contribute to a non-violent perspective by reconciliatory attitudes. However, their peace work is challenged by hardliners who refer to the Bible or the Quran in order to mobilize religious feelings against the respective out-group.

\textbf{Non-religious context}

\textit{Ethnicity:} The Biafran war revealed that a major risk of violent confrontation in Nigeria is caused by polarizing ethnicity, with rivaling ethnic elites battling for economic resources and political power in the country (Osaghae/Suberu 2005). Ethnic antagonisms that emerged under British colonialism are still virulent in postcolonial Nigeria. They have been reinforced by the policies of state and local government creation which was meant to appease minorities and calm down tension but effectively instigated new conflict at both local and national levels. There is a lot of ethnic strife in the country, occasionally taking the form of intra- or intercommunal clashes, sometimes overlapped by the religion factor (ICG 2010).

\textit{Social Polarization:} Social polarization is identified as a major cause of inter-religious violence by many religious laypersons and clerics.\textsuperscript{20} According to them, this violence is tied to poverty, unemployment and disillusionment of the people as well as the (self-)privileging of military and civilian elites. One scholar chose to term inter-religious violence a manifestation of a “social explosion”, with societal conflicts taking a religious expression.\textsuperscript{21}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Interviews and FGDs, Kaduna, June 2009.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Interviews and FGDs, Kaduna, June 2009.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
People participating in violent action are mostly young, male and poor, with violence preferentially occurring in their neighborhoods (Sani 2007). Social polarization in Nigeria has been fostered by structural adjustment policies applied from 1986 to cope with the effects of deepening economic crisis after the oil booms of the 1970s (Jega 2000). Once these policies were introduced, impoverishment of the people went on in the 1990s and 2000s, independent of economic ups or downs. The ordinary people had to take the burden of adjustments, while they were deprived of the gains of economic revivals (ICG 2010). This mechanism was introduced and reproduced by corrupt elites of the country who exploited politico-religious antagonisms to instigate people of different faith against each other, fogging their own politico-economic goals.

Political Transformation: According to empirical evidence, the most violent eruptions of inter-religious violence in the center-north of Nigeria occurred when the country went through transitions (ICG 2010). The waves of violence in the early 1990s coincided with the failed transition to the Third Republic, forestalled by a military coup in 1993. The waves of violence in the early 2000s were evoked by the return to civilian rule in 1999. As northern politicians perceived the Obasanjo presidency as a shift to the Christian south at the expense of the Muslim north, they forced through the introduction of the Sharia in northern states from 2000. More inter-religious violence emerged in 2004, the year following Obasanjo’s re-election, and from 2008 to 2010, the years of weak leadership under the late president Yar’Adua (moderate Muslim), a disputed presidency of his successor Jonathan (Christian) and the spluttering preparation for the 2011 election.

7. Côte d’Ivoire
As detailed above, inter-religious violence in Côte d’Ivoire resulted in more than 250 deaths between 1990 and 2010. Thus the country displays a medium level in comparison to Nigeria and Tanzania. The violence occurred in times of tense political situation before and during the civil war outbreak in 2002. After the disputed elections in October 2000, a mass grave with 57 Muslims was discovered in Yopougon (Abidjan) and mosques as well as churches were targets of violence until the end of the year. In 2002, the main political parties Front Populair Ivoirien (FPI) and Rassemblement des Républicains (RDR) clashed once again in late June. Moreover, during the onset of the civil war in September 2002, reports indicated religious violence all over the country (see RSSA, HRW 2001).

Religious factors
Religious demography: The religious demographic structure in Côte d’Ivoire is disputed. The last official data from 1998 indicate 39 percent Muslims, 30 percent Christians and 12 percent ATR out of 15.4 million Ivorians (Basset 2003: 18; Langer 2004: 11). Religious, social and ethnic boundaries run mostly parallel. Most of the merchants in Côte d’Ivoire, for example, are traditionally Muslims. In the North, the Mandé and Gour ethnic groups, so-called Dioula, are overwhelmingly Muslims (Launay/Miran 2000); the majority of the Southern Akan ethnic groups, including the Baoule and Agni people, are Christians (Skogseth 2006; Toungara 2001). In the last decades, the religious boundaries have become permeable in regard to their parallelism to ethnic and social boundaries. Moreover, the religious values and practices are traditionally syncretic.

The Ivorian conflict is often portrayed as a confrontation between a Muslim north and a Christian south. In regard to the present religious demographic structure, this conflict description does not hold true. It is correct that the overwhelming majority of the Northerners are Muslims (56 percent). Yet there is a (however slight) majority of Muslims in the south as well (35 percent) (Basset 2003: 19). In the last decades a strong religious demographic change

20 Interviews and FGDs, Kaduna, June 2009.
21 Interview, Kaduna, June 2009.
in the south resulted in a fragmented religious demography so that today, Muslims outnumber Christians in most administrative southern regions. This change can predominantly be explained by migrants from Burkina Faso and Mali living in these regions who are also Muslims (Miran 2006a: 85; Basedau 2009; Basset 2003: 20-21). At the same time, a migration wave from north into south due to economical reasons has contributed to the shift in percentages regarding religious demographic structures. In 1998, the *Ivoiran Conseil Économique et Social* stated in public that they fear the growing number of Muslim immigrants and its effects on the religious demographic constellation in the country (Nordas 2007: 18). Statements like these demonstrate how religious demographics have become a disputed term in the political identity debate since 1993.

**Religious institutions:** The Christian and Muslim organizations in Côte d’Ivoire are institutionally strong. The Christian community is dominated by a strong, historically and politically influential Catholic Church (Konaté 2005). The evangelical churches are often short-living and profit-oriented organizations. Moreover, in the last years all attempts, such as the effort by the first lady Simone Gbagbo, to unify the evangelical institutions failed (Miran 2006a: 82). Since 1993, the institutional structure of the Muslim community is characterized by two organizations. The *Conseil Supérieur Islamique de Côte d’Ivoire* (CSI), established in 1979, was strongly connected to the then dominant political party *Parti Démocratique de la Côte d’Ivoire* (Launay/Miran 2000). In contrast to the close political relations of the CSI and in respect to their own reformist agenda, the numerous Islamic NGOs and the majority of Islamic religious teachers founded the *Conseil National Islamique de Côte d’Ivoire* (CNI) in 1993. Since the mid 1990s, the CNI covers the majority of Islamic social and religious organizations in Côte d’Ivoire. Moreover, the CNI raises the Muslim demands in numerous social and political areas such as the non-recognition of Islamic schools by the state (LeBlanc 1999: 507-508; Miran 2006b). Nevertheless, the tense relations between CNI and CSI weakened the social and political voice of the Islamic community in the public debate in the 1990s. Ever since, the CNI has been dominant and the relations between the two Muslim organizations have become less controversial in the aftermath of the civil war onset in 2002.

External influences on the religious institutions have not been detected. Due to the restricted policy to external influence under the long-term presidency of Félix Houphouët-Boigny, no Islamic country has strong ties to Côte d’Ivoire (Miran 2006a: 90). External links of some evangelical communities to their partner churches in the US and other African countries however do exist (Basedau 2009).

The medium level of religious violence is mere value to explaining of the existence of a working inter-religious network. In 1996, based on an initiative of a local NGO and in a reaction to the first political violent confrontations in Côte d’Ivoire, the main religious institutions started to cooperate (Miran 2006a: 87). Since 1998, the *Forum National des Confessions Religieuses pour la Reconciliation et la Paix* (Forum) build the organizational body. The main goal of the Forum is to work for peace in the society and to hamper a religious charging of the political conflict. The radical evangelical churches refuse every contact to Muslims and therefore do not participate in the Forum. Nevertheless, the moderate evangelicals as well as the main Christian churches and African traditional groups are active members in the Forum. On the side of the Muslims, the CNI is active since the founding of the Forum. Since the civil war onset, the CSI supports the activities as a non-member of the Forum. The political influence of the Forum has been high on the social and political level during the political crisis in the 2000s. The religious representatives are welcomed mediators in the political field and also active on the societal level.

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23 Interview, CNI representative, 24.03.2010.
Religious ideas: The violent confrontations are in no way connected to theological ideas. Instead, the Islamic reform movement has never claimed an Islamic state. Furthermore, they supported ecumencial relations, human rights and political secular ideas. In their self-perception, the majority of Muslims regard Islam as a religion of peace and harmony (Miran 2006a: 108). Moreover, the Muslims did not actively push to join the OIC or other international Islamic organizations. Instead, under President Gbagbo the Côte d’Ivoire became a member of various Islamic organizations due to his pragmatic search for new foreign donors (Miran 2006a: 91). The same holds true for the main Christian denominations. The peaceful and harmonious oriented religious discourse is reflected in the absence of religious extremism. Despite some attempts by political leaders of all parties to frame the conflict in religious terms, these statements have had no influence on the theological discourses in the religious denominations.

Behavior of religious actors: The main religious leaders called for peace and non-violence throughout the last decades and tried to become not to closely involved into the political conflict on either side. Only during the crisis in 2000, some religious leaders have been involved in the political conflict. In 2000, the Ivorians voted over a new constitution which the Forum has criticized in a resolution. But controversy opinions have been articulated over the interference of religious leaders in the political conflict. For example, Cardinal Bernard Agré (Catholic Church) called on every candidate, who could cause trouble, to step down. This was seen by some Muslims as a demand on Ouattara. Furthermore, Imam Aboubacar Fofana (CNI) declared that Muslims should support Ouattara as one of their own (Basedau 2009). Beside these two controversial political statements of religious leaders, no religious leader called for violence or war. During the ongoing conflict, the major denominations were united and condemned every act of violence (Basset 2003: 24; Poamé 2005).

In the period under investigation, especially Muslims felt discriminated. Since the days of Houphouët-Boigny, Muslims have felt that they are underrepresented in the political and social institutions and ignored by the political elites. In the 1990s, these feelings were strengthened by the growing discrimination of ethnic Northerners and lead to the foundation of the CNI (LeBlanc 1999). Studies indicate that there objectively exists an ethnic, social and political discrimination in Côte d’Ivoire (see Langer 2004). On the other side, every Ivorian president tried so far to support the Muslim community in funding of mosques or other religious constructions (Miran 2006b). But these feelings of Muslims could not affect the overall good inter-religious relations in the country despite some minor intra-religious conflicts within every religious community. Moreover, the daily religious life is characterized by peaceful relations.

Non-religious context
The non-religious contextual risks are relevant for explaining the violence as such. The religious violence, as noted above, has only occurred around the disputed elections in 2000 and 2002 as well as during the civil war onset. The political struggle concentrated on the concept of Ivoirité which refers to the nationality of Ivorians. The most contested identity as non-Ivorian was the Northerners identity which was heavily related to the Muslim identity in

25 This is in line with the founding of numerous interviews in Abidjan, Man and Guiglo with Muslims and two focus group discussions with only Muslim participants in Abidjan (February – May 2010).
26 Interviews in Abidjan, Man and Guiglo with Christians and two focus group discussions with only Christian participants in Abidjan (February – May 2010).
27 President Gbagbo and his wife viewed their own role as legitimated by Jesus and the Bible (Raynal 2005; Miran 2006a: 88), and their fight against the rebels as part of the war on terror against Islamists (Miran 2006: 108f.; Konaté 2005: 40); as well as the newly elected President Alassane Ouattara often stressed his Muslim identity as reason behind his political exclusion in the last decades (Konaté 2005: 42).
28 Interview, Abidjan, 24.03.2010.
the public debate. The concept caused trouble due to the high migration rate, the open policy under Houphouët-Boigny and the clear ethnic dimension of the concept (Akindès 2004). The main political goal was the exclusion of Ouattara from the political competition because of his disputed Ivorian origin. The social and political tensions as such charged the religious identities and in some incidences have cumulated in religious violence (Cutolo 2010; Miran 2006a; Crook 1997).

8. Tanzania
Tanzania is characterized by a low level of religious violence. The following events led to the number of deaths: In 1994, a Christian school was set afire killing almost more than 40 persons. But in this case it is unclear whether there is an inter-religious dimension. In 1998 in Dar es Salaam, the Mwembechai-riots between Muslims and state authorities caused 6 deaths. The conflict between Muslims and the state authorities in Zanzibar claimed up to 26 deaths in the 2000s. And in 1998, the terrorist bombings by Al Qaeda led up to 12 deaths (RSSA 2011). None of these events, however, has a pronounced and/or proven inter-religious dimension.

Religious factors
Religious demography: The demographic risks are comparable with those which were present in the other two countries. Tanzania has a polarized religious demographic structure but the religious boundaries run only partly parallel to ethnic and social boundaries. As some studies show, the electoral support for one party is not terminated by religious cleavages due to the cross-cutting ethnic and social cleavages (Bakari 2007: 27-28; Heilman/Kaiser 2002). No ethnic or religious identity has had a higher importance over the other due to the existence of these cross-cutting identities. Nevertheless, the religious resurgence in the last decades led to a growing influence of religion in Tanzania (Heilman/Kaiser 2002: 694). For example, the relative strength of the different religious communities is heavily disputed (Loimeier 2007: 148-149; Luanda 1996: 171). Geographically, whereas the mainland is dominated by Christians, the coastal regions have a majority of Muslims (Wijen 2002: 236). Despite the 98 percent Muslims in Zanzibar, the religious demography in Tanzania is rather mixed. The religious resurgence supported the missionary activities of Islamic sects and Pentecostals, which again resulted in their growing number (Ludwig 1996). Regardless of this trend, no significant change in the religious demography occurred in the period under investigation.

Religious institutions: More than 155 religious organizations are active in Tanzania (Lange et al. 2000: 7), yet the Christian and Muslim communities have strong institutions. The Catholic Church is organized hierarchically with a central authority, own financial resources and media services (Bakari/Ndumbaro 2006: 339). The indirect influence of the Vatican is based on more general theological discussions.30 The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) and the Anglican Church are the other two dominant and nationally organized Christian churches. Especially the ELCT has a lot of contacts with the world wide Lutheran network. In this network, the churches only exchange over ideas and projects. Furthermore, this has no impact on the organization itself or theological internal discourses (see also Fischer 2007).31

The Muslims are less organized. Historically, three organizations have been disputing over their influence and who legitimately represents the Tanzanian Muslims. The National Muslim Council of Tanzania (BAKWATA) is recognized by the state and has a nationwide structure like the long ruling party Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM). In the opinion of many Muslims, BAKWATA is controlled by the state which is heavily denied by BAKWATA itself (Tambila 2006; Lodhi/Westerlund 1999). BAKWATA appoints, for example, the Mufti for the mainland who is accepted by the state but actually rejected by the majority of Muslims

30 Interview Dar es Salaam, Representative Catholic Church, 19.10.2009.
31 Interview Dar es Salaam, September-November 2009.
In the recent decades, BAKWATA has tried to get a clear profile in the public as independent Muslim organization (Lodhi 1994: 103). This was one reaction of BAKWATA to the intra-Muslim disputes over an adequate representation of Muslims interests by the Tanzania Quranic Council (BALUKTA) since the late 1980s. BALUKTA, founded in 1987, argued for a more pronounced and public representation of Muslim interests, for example in the education system (Ludwig 1996: 227). In 1993, BALUKTA was banned after it has been involved in assaults on pork butcheries in Dar es Salaam but it is still active in the underground. The presently second Muslim organization besides BAKWATA is BARAZA KUU (Supreme Council of Islamic Organizations and Institutions of Tanzania), founded in 1991 by Muslims intellectuals and entrepreneurs. According to their self-assessment they represent the majority of Muslims (Tripp 1999: 57). Today, the organization has only a loose structure, is not accepted by BAKWATA and has problems with an adequate leadership. Despite some rumors by external donors, the Muslim organizations have very few transnational contacts (Lodhi/Westerlund 1999: 108; Bakari/Ndumbaro 2006: 346). The situation in the Christian community is, however, different. Many organizations have a financial link to an external transnational social organization. But nothing indicates an external influence on the direct institutional resources, structures or theological discourses.

Regardless the institutional strength on Christian side and the predominant two Muslim organizations, an institutionalized inter-religious network has never existed for a long time. After the religious violence in 1998, the main Christian churches and BAKWATA founded an inter-religious forum due to demands by the state (Mhina 2007: 12). In fact, the religious exchange only takes place at the highest leadership level and every attempt to institutionalize a network with a wide range of religious groups has collapsed. One reason for this can be found in the fact that the major religious groups do not see any need to represent the wide range of various groups in an inter-religious institution and BAKWATA still rejects any involvement of BARAZA KUU.

Religious ideas: The various religious organizations disputed the influence and the discrimination of the Christian or Muslim believers in Tanzania but not religious ideas. Moreover, whereas the intra-Christian struggles are power conflicts, the intra-Muslims disputes are more ideological in nature (Bakari 2007: 26-27). Despite these local mainland controversies, in 2001 the Mufti law in Zanzibar led to theological dispute in the Muslim community of Zanzibar. The state sponsored Mufti controls with the new law the main aspects of the religious practices, like registrations of mosques and Islamic organizations. Due to this new law, the secular government of Zanzibar holds control over the Muslim community. But a majority of the Muslims characterized the law as interference by the state in intra-Muslim affairs. Furthermore, the dispute escalated from time to time with regard to the theological question of the termination of Eid-al Haj and the non-Islamic tourist bars and discotheques on the island (Bakari 2007: 25). Notwithstanding this more theological conflict, no religious extremist organization exists in Tanzania. Moreover, the Al Qaeda bombings are commonly seen as a singular act planned from outside the country (Mfumbusa 1999: 17).

Behavior of religious actors: The behavior of religious elites in Tanzania can be characterized as politically active but not violence-prone. Especially the Christian bishop conference published many statements on political issues which were seen by Muslims as interference in politics for the benefit of Christians. But also some Muslim contributions, like the books of

32 Interviews with members and former representatives of BARAZA KUU, Dar es Salaam, October-November 2010.
33 Interviews with representatives of Christian organizations and experts, Dar es Salaam, October-November 2010.
34 Interviews with religious representatives of various religious institutions, Dar es Salaam, September – November 2010.
Said or Njozi (2000), contributed to tense political controversies on religion. These books are the memorandums of the Muslims on their feeling of discrimination in Tanzania in regard to education and recognition of Muslim interests in politics, for example the introduction of Islamic courts and the temporary joining membership of Zanzibar in the OIC (Loimeier 2007; Bakari/Ndumbaro 2006; Campbell 1999). These political differences stand against probably good and ‘tolerant’ inter-religious relations which are characterized by increasing religious mixed marriages and families (Bondarenko 2004; Fischer 2007: 270; Tambila 2000).

Non-religious context
Overall, some non-religious context factors further contribute to the minor level of religious violence in Tanzania. The social and ethnic tensions are not multiplied by parallel religious boundaries. Moreover, they are somehow balanced by the long-time ruling party CCM. The political parties have no interest in mobilizing their followers according to religious affiliations because they need support from every single group. This does not imply that some political individuals tried to play the ‘religious card’.35 The social tensions are balanced by a peaceful political transformation in which the common national Ujamaa ideology and the image of the ‘only peaceful African country’ supported the peace within society (Ludwig 1996; Rukyaa 2007).36 Despite the resurgence of religion in the public in the late 1980s through public preaching’s and new religious movements, the peaceful transformation period in Tanzania hampered an outbreak of religious violence. Until the 1990s, religion has been a political factor in Tanzania but not a major cause of violence. Instead, the relations between the state and the Muslims seen more problematic then the inter-religious relations (Bakari 2007).

9. Comparative Synopsis
Do our hypotheses and the therein included variables explain the diverging levels of inter-religious violence in our three cases? As summarized in Table 3, none of the single variables is able to explain the variance in the dependent variable. A number of variables do not have any explanatory value at all and some of them are similarities that were not part of the original case selection37. For example, actual behavior of religious actors such as calls for violence by religious leaders and feelings of discrimination can be found in all cases. Moreover, the strength and cohesion of religious organizations fails to meaningfully distinguish the cases either. One variable, the existence and level of institutionalization of inter-religious networks, shows an unexpected result: The two more violent cases show higher levels than relatively peaceful Tanzania. Since levels are higher in Côte d’Ivoire than in Nigeria, in essence, this variable offers little explanatory value.38 However, a number of variables may explain why Tanzania has experienced much less inter-religious violence than the other two. These variables are mainly found in religious structures and the non-religious context: Tanzania has witnessed less severe demographic change and shows less pronounced overlaps between religion and ethnicity.39 Moreover, both social and

36 Interviews and FGD in Dar es Salaam, September-November 2010.
37 Similarities in demographic structures (e.g. polarization) which were part of the case selection are not listed in the table because these variables were necessarily expected to not produce any explanatory value.
38 We tried to avoid endogeneity problems of this variable – inter-religious networks might be a result of inter-religious violence – by probing for the existence and degree of institutionalization before inter-religious bloodshed. Nevertheless, endogeneity problems may persist. Such networks might be established as a reaction to already existing tensions below the threshold of actual violence (or violence before the period of investigation) but, at the same time, being too weak to prevent violent escalation.
39 A principal overlap of ethnicity and religion was a similarity in the case selection. We refer to differences in this variable beyond that principal overlap.
ethnic relations are comparatively less trouble-ridden; the political transformation, although far from having been perfectly democratic, was hardly tense. A further cluster of variables offers an explanation why Nigeria is much more ridden with inter-religious violence than Côte d’Ivoire (and Tanzania): One is found in the non-religious context, as the social differences between Christians and Muslims are particularly more pronounced in Nigeria than in the two other countries. As a result, at least probably, inter-religious relations are also much worse in Nigeria. More importantly, however, the main difference lies in the role of religious ideas and its influence on institutions. Only in Nigeria we find nationwide quarrels over religious ideas and organized extremism which has probably been additionally fed by external influence (from Iran and Saudi-Arabia). In addition, the post-independence history of inter-religious relations is much more problematic than in the other countries.

Between the two extremes of Nigeria and Tanzania, Côte d’Ivoire displays a medium risk profile (which is also true for the number of risks: 6 vs. 12 in Nigeria and 0 in Tanzania). It shows a higher risk only with demographic change. Indeed, the influx of migrants has been at the heart of conflict in the country; Côte d’Ivoire shares the overlap of religious and ethnic identities, social and ethnic tensions, as well as a tense political transformation with Nigeria, all of which are closely related to the “demographic question” and the escalation in the country (see Basedau 2009; Nordas 2007); otherwise Côte d’Ivoire shows no risks, particularly not as regards the role of religious extremism, theological disputes and related external influence.

Table 3: Determinants of Inter-religious Violence in Nigeria, Côte d’Ivoire and Tanzania 1990-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of inter-religious violence</th>
<th>Nigeria</th>
<th>Côte d’Ivoire</th>
<th>Tanzania</th>
<th>Explanatory value of variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religio Demography</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How strongly are religious and</td>
<td>Mostly</td>
<td>Mostly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Explains lowest vs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethnic boundaries parallel?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>two most violent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How strongly are religious and</td>
<td>Mostly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Explains highest vs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social boundaries parallel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>other two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of demographic religious change</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Explains lowest vs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>other two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength and cohesion of religious institutions</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalisation of inter-</td>
<td>Medium/Medium</td>
<td>High/High</td>
<td>Low/Medium</td>
<td>Reverse, explains highest vs. other two (endogeneity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious networks (if any, before first clashes/after)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External influence on religious institutions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Explains highest vs. other two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationwide religious incompatibilities?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No (Zanzibar only)</td>
<td>Explains highest vs. other two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized extremism?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Explains highest vs. other two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior by religious actors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calls for war/incitement</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling of religious discrimination?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of inter-religious relations</td>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Explains highest vs. other two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical religious factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe (inter)religious conflict after independence</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Explains highest vs. other two</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In sum, elevated levels of inter-religious violence result from conflict prone religious structures (religious and ethnic identity overlap, demographic change) in combination with non-religious risks in interethnic and social relations as well as tense political processes of change. The difference between elevated levels of inter-religious violence and high levels results from sharp social differences between religious communities and the (historical) politicization of religious ideas and organized extremism.

10. Conclusion

Given its religious diversity, sub-Saharan Africa seems prone to a ‘clash of denominations’, particularly between Christians and Muslims. This contribution has engaged in a controlled comparison of three sub-Saharan countries that show about equal numbers of Christians and Muslims and share a number of further risk factors but at the same time display different levels of inter-religious violence. Looking at the 1990-2010 period we find that the variance in inter-religious violence is best explained by a combination of religion-specific and non-religious contextual conditions. There are two major findings: First, elevated levels of inter-religious violence (Nigeria and Côte d’Ivoire vs. Tanzania) result from conflict-prone religious structures (religious and ethnic identity overlaps, demographic change) in combination with non-religious risks in interethnic and social relations as well as tense political processes of change. Second, the difference between high and medium/low levels of inter-religious violence (Nigeria vs. the other two cases) results from sharp social differences between religious communities and the (historical) politicization of religious ideas and organized extremism.

We believe that our findings advance our understanding of how religious factors become mobilized for conflict and, in particular how different religious factors and non-religious context interact and result in inter-religious violence – or not. Apparently, within a rather complex causal mechanism, religious demography and religious ideas in conjunction with non-religious contextual risks make the difference, while the strength of religious institutions or the behavior of religious elites seem less important. The latter finding comes perhaps as a surprise, but our ample evidence from the case studies suggests that it is rather political than religious leaders that exploit religious mobilization resources.

Generally, our findings certainly call for future research: whether our multidimensional model of explaining inter-religious violence really holds true should be tested by studying other cases in Africa (such as Ethiopia or Eritrea) or elsewhere (e.g. Bosnia). Though our paper has demonstrated the utility of a controlled comparison of few cases, it would be also worthwhile to integrate some of our variables, if possible, in quantitative studies or other methodologies aiming at generalization.

In any case, it seems useful and even necessary to continue to advance the study of inter-religious violence. It seems evident that a “clash of denominations” in Africa and elsewhere is
not inevitable but occurs under certain conditions only. Any effort to prevent these clashes from happening must be anchored in knowing these conditions.

References


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Njozi, Hamza Mustafa (2000), Mwembechai Killings and the Political Future of Tanzania, Ottawa: Globalink Communications.


Wijsen, Frans (2002), When two Elephants fight, the Grass gets Hurt, Muslim-Christian Relationships in Upcountry Tanzania, in: Church and Theology in Context, 40, 1, 235-248.
## Annex

### Table A1: Religiously polarized African countries and inter-religious violence 1990-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Polarization-Index</th>
<th>Groups &gt; 25%</th>
<th>Armed conflict in which conflict parties differ by religious affiliation?</th>
<th>Fatalities in (inter)religious Violence?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(WCD/Montalvo/Reynal-Querol 2005)</td>
<td>RSSA (WCD)</td>
<td>RSSA (UCDP/PRIO)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>ATR-Christians</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>ATR-Christians</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>Muslims-ATR</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>Muslims-Christians</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Côte d’Ivoire</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>ATR-Christians-Muslims</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>279*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>Christians-Muslims</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0 (31**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>Christians-Muslims</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>61 (11**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>Muslims-ATR</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea-Bissau</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>ATR-Muslims</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>ATR-Christians</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>Christians-ATR</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>Hindus-Christians</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>ATR-Christians</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>Christians-Muslims</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5760</td>
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<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>Muslims-ATR</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>Christians-Muslims</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0 (75**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Togo</td>
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<td>Christians-ATR</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>Christians-ATR</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Assaults on religious targets with clear inter-religious dimension. ** Assaults in which inter-religious dimension is not proven.