Changing Identifications and Alliances in North-East Africa

Volume 1
How Enemies are Made – Towards a Theory of Ethnic and Religious Conflicts
Günther Schlee

Volume 2
Changing Identifications and Alliances in North-East Africa
Vol. I: Ethiopia and Kenya
Edited by Günther Schlee and Elizabeth E. Watson

Volume 3
Changing Identifications and Alliances in North-East Africa
Vol. II: Sudan, Uganda and the Ethiopia-Sudan Borderlands
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Volume II: Sudan, Uganda and the Ethiopia–Sudan Borderlands

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Contents

List of Maps, Plates, Figures and Tables

Maps

Plate

Figures

Tables

Appendices

List of Abbreviations

AK-47	Kalashnikov Automatic Weapon
AMDF	Arba Minch Development Farm
ASO	Anywaa Survival Organization
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DC	District Commissioner
DFG	Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft
DSC	District Security Committee
EECMY	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekana Yesus
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
EPRP	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party
GOSS	Government of South Sudan
GPDUP	Gambela People's Democratic Unity Party
GPLF	Gambela People's Liberation Front
GPLM	Gambela People's Liberation Movement
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Country
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
KPDO	Konso People's Democratic Organization
KY	Kabaka Yekka
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LWF/DWS	Lutheran World Federation/Department for World Service
MEISON	All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NFD	Northern Frontier District
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NIF	National Islamic Front
NRA	National Resistance Army
NSCC	New Sudan Council of Churches
OAGs	Other Armed Groups
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan
OPDO	Oromo People's Democratic Organization
PCOS	Presbyterian Church of Sudan
PRS	Proto-Rendille-Somali
RRA	Rahanweyn Resistance Army
SAD	Sudan Archive, Durham University
SAF	Sudan Armed Forces
SCC	Council of Churches in Sudan
SIM	Sudan Interior Mission

SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region
SPCM	Swedish Philadelphia Church Mission
SPDF	Sudan People's Defence Force
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLM	Sudanese People's Liberation Movement
SSDF	South Sudan Defence Force
SSIM	Southern Sudan Independence Army
SSLM	South Sudan Liberation Movement
SSUA	South Sudan United Army
TPLF	Tigrean People's Liberation Front
TTI	Teacher Training Institute
UDSF	United Democratic Salvation Front
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNLA	Ugandan National Liberation Army
UPC	Ugandan People's Congress
UPDF	Uganda People's Defence Force
WFP	World Food Programme
WV	World Vision

Introduction
Elizabeth E. Watson and Günther Schlee

'Who belongs to whom and why' is an enduring question for social science, and for contemporary policymakers who are faced with – and sometimes attempt to manipulate – the processes of collective identification. Decades of academic argument about whether or not forms of collective identification such as ethnicity will disappear as a result of the march of history and modernization have been replaced by an acceptance that forms of collective identification change over time but are as significant as ever for their influence on politics and individual livelihoods (see Turton 1997, for review), shaping the way resources are claimed and distributed (Bayart 1993). In North-East Africa, identifications are central to the ways in which similarity to and difference from others are understood and constructed, and they are connected to processes of inclusion and exclusion, to degrees of openness or closedness to others, qualities that are sometimes described as cosmopolitanism or parochialism. The boundaries that designate relations of self to other result, at least in part, in tolerance or prejudice, legitimizing peaceful or conflictual relations.

Forms of identification influence perceptions of what is expected and what is possible, and they shape individual subjectivities and experiences. Pre-existing social givens govern these processes, but they are also the products of particular histories and result from interactions between processes at local and regional, national and global scales. At the smallest scale, identifications are enacted through and on the body, in dress, style of walking or patterns of scarification. They are produced and performed creatively in relations within and between different groups, through the telling of oral histories and through rituals, songs, dances, interactions and exchanges. They are also produced through marriage, bond friendship and conflict. At the regional, national and international scale, identifications are shaped by exposure to new technologies, ideas and cultural styles and by the structures of formal and informal policies and politics. These govern who gains access to what and when, who is preferred in networks of support and patronage, who is invested in, who is given aid, who benefits and who is excluded from those benefits. It is the coming together of the personal and physical, bodily and relational, on the one hand, with the regional, national and international politics that distribute resources, on the other, that gives particular force to these forms of identification, and makes them powerful, even, at times, explosive.

In thinking about identities here, the division that is commonly made between 'primordial' and 'instrumental' approaches has not been drawn on extensively, for two reasons. First, approaches that see identities as either primordial age-old historical artefacts with strong emotional power or instrumental forms of organization that have developed in response to particular conditions and

opportunities often fail to appreciate the way in which identities are formed over time, have porous boundaries and are experienced as highly emotive phenomena. There are grounds for taking elements of each approach (see Spear 1993; Dereje Feyissa, this volume). As Turton writes: 'the analysis of ethnicity must therefore take account of both its "instrumental" or material aspects and its "primordial" or cultural aspects, since its very effectiveness, as a means of advancing group interests, depends on it being seen as "primordial" by those who make claims in its name' (1997: 82). Secondly, approaches to identity and alliance formation that focus on a primordial versus an instrumental approach start and finish with ethnic identity. This analytical lens serves to reinforce ethnicity as the most important form of identity and scale of investigation. Many of the chapters in this volume study aspects of ethnic identity, but they also examine other forms of identity that exist within and across the ethnic.

 Many of the individual chapters take their own approach to identities and alliances, but as editors and for the non-specialist reader we have developed the following general framework. The approach to identities and alliances focuses on the interface between structure and agency. Indigenous structures that define identity include forms of descent, clan and moiety systems, marriage patterns, belief systems, livelihood practices and language. These in turn are shaped by the changing processes and contexts such as economic or environmental opportunities and challenges, new religions, government policies and practices and the arrival of new technologies, including weaponry.

But these endogenous and exogenous structures do not combine on their own to influence identities: they have force and impact because of the way in which they are accepted, appropriated, reacted to or resisted by people. Individuals and groups act creatively and give these structures meaning, in processes through which individuals and groups articulate identities and position themselves (Hall 1990). In the introduction to Volume I, Schlee explores how this articulation can be carried out differently, for example, by defining identities of wider or narrower scope, by switching between different facets and ways of defining identity. In different situations it may be advantageous for a group or individual to define themselves in a particular way.

Individual agency and group interests must be taken into account when considering identity, but we must remain cautious about ascribing selfishness or too much strategy and assuming that all identity-related actions are motivated by the desire to promote personal interests and positions. In addition, individuals and groups are not, by any means, wholly free to switch identities or to change meanings as they wish. Some forms of identity and some alliances are more plausible than others. History matters, in terms of with whom it is possible to form alliances; previous forms of identification have a strong influence on what is deemed acceptable; cultural values attached to war or to peace, to environments and territories, influence the likelihood and nature of conflict and peace.
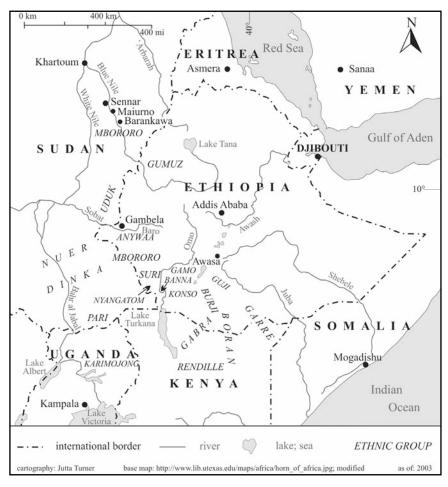
Where war and peace are concerned, the essays in this volume show that there can be no single causal explanation. On the one hand, inter-group conflict can be seen as more likely in situations where the collective identifications have become more salient and more ethno-nationalistic (to use Turton's 1997 phrases). Ethno-nationalism can

be understood here to refer to a strong sense of difference and a lack of tolerance for sharing territory and resources. When a strong sense of identity is combined with competitive and negative stereotyping of others, conflict is more common. In some of the chapters that follow, it is clear that the structures that have emerged in recent decades have encouraged more salient and possibly more rigid forms of group identity to emerge. These structures include the way refugee camps are organized and the impact of national boundaries, state policies and religious institutions. On the other hand, some of these essays and other scholarly accounts have also shown that conflict itself can also be a cultural means for re-emphasizing boundaries between groups and for constructing identities (Fukui and Markakis 1994).

These theoretical issues are set out more extensively in the theoretical introduction by Schlee at the beginning of Volume I. The chapters in this volume explore these processes through case studies from Sudan, Uganda and the Ethiopia-Sudan borderlands (see Map I.1). Volume I covers case studies from Ethiopia and northern Kenya. The region shown in Map I.1 is vast and varying, but forms of collective identification and alliance construction have been strong and have had lasting consequences for lives and livelihoods. They are prominent forms of organization through which individuals and groups understand and organize their worlds and mobilize and engage others in social lives and political agendas.

In southern Sudan and northern Uganda, processes of identification and alliance are dominated by experiences of conflict and raiding. Southern Sudan was the crucible of theories of segmentary lineages put forward by E.E. Evans-Pritchard to explain shifting patterns of alliance and conflict. In recent years, the reasons for and nature of the conflict and associated experiences may have changed, but raiding and violence are still commonplace and the shifting patterns of collective identifications are kaleidoscopic. The chapters presented in this volume show that Evans-Pritchard's ideas are by no means redundant. The connection between the local and the international is also particularly apparent here, as local alliances and conflicts are influenced, at least in part, by shifts in international geopolitics and/or by the international trade in small arms or by the actions of multinational oil companies.

Direct experiences of conflict may dominate many people's lives, but more personalized and everyday matters are still significant to individuals and also play a role in creating group alliances and divisions. Even the seemingly trivial matters that make up forms of popular culture are significant to senses of self, to orientation, to a sense of place in the world and to possible options and outcomes. The areas further to the north of Sudan have been much less the subject of classic anthropological texts, but the processes related to identifications there are no less interesting. The chapters that explore this region highlight the role of structures such as marriage and international boundaries and the development of new technologies in constructing and changing identifications and alliance patterns. Also included in this volume are chapters on groups living in and around Gambela town on the Ethiopian side of the border. These areas have been influenced as much by the politics of southern Sudan and the Sudanese state as they have by the politics of the Ethiopian state; the chapters show the way the fates, histories and impacts of the different political entities in the region are intertwined.

Map I.1 The Horn of Africa and the approximate location of the people who feature in these volumes

The chapters demonstrate that explanations for the shifting patterns of identifications are to be found in historically informed studies that take into account the roles of charismatic leaders as much as those of their followers, and the roles of women as much those of men, and that studies need to explore equally economic, political, cultural, emotional and personal motivations. Collective identifications persist as the product of the interrelations between culture, history, politics, biology, technology and perceived interests. They are also shaped by the geopolitical context: identifications shift according to the impact of conflicts at national and international levels or to the impact of international and other boundaries, and identifications change when people move or are moved into the liminal spaces between them. Understanding the intersections of these different processes is the task here, where

each place and group of people(s) must be understood in terms of their local as well as their national and international context.

Many other studies of this region construct general overviews of the political and economic processes that unfold. Journalistic accounts focus on the 'problems' of these areas: they cover the conflicts or food shortages, but they tend to rely on simplistic and stereotyped explanations and reveal little about how and why those conflicts and food shortages arise or how they are experienced. The chapters here provide more in-depth information on this area, and they show how the nature of local experiences and reasons for conflicts are often related to the politics of identifications. These chapters also explore how those identifications are experienced and viewed emically. Some of the chapters here look at conflict and the consequence of conflict, but they also explore other, more mundane processes, putting the 'problems' of the region in their wider context. The chapters focus on the consequences of these processes for different groups and individuals on the ground. Although the understanding of particular contexts is shown to be vital, wider theoretical insights can also be derived that bring critical insights into the complex processes of identification and alliance formation.

These chapters are authored by a diverse group of scholars, in terms of age, nationality and discipline, each of whom has carried out significant fieldwork among the people discussed. Their chapters were written in response to a call to examine the shifting identifications and alliances in the region. Their choice to focus on a particular aspect of identification was driven partly by the empirical situation and partly by their own interests and disciplinary orientations. Empirical knowledge and theoretical insights can be drawn from the individual chapters, but it is also hoped that the chapters will intersect with each other to produce a portrait of a region and an understanding of the way processes shape identifications, in the past, present and further in the future.

Later in this introduction we give a brief summary of the chapters that follow and the themes they address. The chapters in Volume II are arranged partly by geographical region and partly by theme. Most of them relate to people in Sudan, and one relates to people in Uganda. Several discuss people in the south-west areas of Ethiopia, around Gambela town, but they are included in this volume because many of the people discussed are Sudanese refugees or their lives have been heavily influenced by the unstable processes taking place in Sudan. One chapter is set in Kenya, in Kakuma refugee camp: this also explores the experience of a group of people from Sudan, in this case the Pari.

As in Volume I, we first provide a short summary of key events in the political histories of Sudan and Uganda, with the aim of making this collection accessible to the non-regional specialist reader, and to prevent each chapter from having to repeat the same background information. Anyone wishing for basic information on the events and histories of Kenya and Ethiopia should turn to the Introduction in Volume I, where these countries' histories are examined more fully. Anyone already familiar with the general history of Sudan and Uganda may wish to go straight to the chapter summaries, and from there to the chapters themselves.

Political Histories

Sudan

Most of the chapters in this volume relate to people who are situated in what is present-day Sudan. A short summary of the history of Sudan, derived from sources such as de Waal (1997), Holt and Daly (2000) and Johnson (2003), reveals astonishing levels of instability and political factionalism. A constant theme is the tension and conflict between north and south, core and periphery, and the different levels of investment and entitlement between them. The core, with its centralized kingdoms, centres of colonial power and theocratic state, has continued to dominate the more acephalous periphery, which served mainly in earlier years as a source of slaves and ivory. The governments of the core have been characterized by interpersonal political rivalries that have played out in support of different factions in the periphery or in support of 'tribal militias' who have been encouraged to wage war. Instability, violence and famine in the periphery have fed back into further factional struggles at the core. Competition for oil has now fed into these cycles of violence and instability, as has the impact of international alliances and resource flows, which have also changed dramatically as a result of fallout from 11 September 2001.

The chapters in this volume that relate to the northern part of Sudan, the Nile and Blue Nile regions, discuss people who are often described as Arabicized or Islamicized. The literature describes these areas and many others, including Darfur, as once being the home to African kingdoms and royal clans who rivalled each other for power, territory and subjects, from whom they collected tribute. Chief among these, and mentioned in several of this volume's chapters, is the Funj kingdom, thought to have been established early in the sixteenth century and based at Sennar on the Blue Nile. The Funj territory was extensive. It relied on local notables to manage trade, to protect its subjects and to collect tribute. The rise of the Funj kingdom was accompanied by its conversion to Islam, as a result of the influence of Arab immigrants from the north.

The Funj kingdom, or sultanate, was on the wane before the Egyptians under the rule of Muhammed ᶜAli Pasha turned their attentions to the south. In the early nineteenth century, Egypt was under the rule of the Ottoman empire, although Muhammed ᶜAli Pasha had extensive autonomy. He executed a harsh and brutal conquest of the Sudanese territories, driven by the need to control what he saw as a political threat and encouraged by the possibility of access to reserves of slaves and gold. The Egyptians' superior weaponry enabled them to overpower local kingdoms and to tax their subjects. Those who refused or were unable to pay had their children, slaves or cattle seized.

By the mid-nineteenth century the Egyptians had begun to penetrate further into the south, in search of more resources. The trade in ivory was highly lucrative, and many European traders and other adventurous entrepreneurs were involved in travelling to the south to obtain it, sometimes by force, from local people. Slaves were traded or captured, either instead of ivory that could not be found or to be used to transport the ivory. These traders were based in fortified settlements, or *zaraa'ib* (singular: *zariiba*; colloquially: *zariibaat*; often transcribed *zariba*), described by Johnson in his chapter.

The Egyptian regime suffered problems at home towards the end of the nineteenth century. Khedive Ismail, then ruler of Egypt, overextended his regime in struggles in Syria and Palestine. He incurred massive debts, which gave foreign powers stronger influence over Egyptian affairs. By then the 'Turkish' (Egyptian) military had already incorporated many European officers, among them Gordon Pasha (Charles G. Gordon), Emin Pasha (Eduard Schnitzer), Salatiin Pasha (Rudolf von Slatin), Romolo Gessi and many others, and the difference between the Egyptian rule and the rule of European colonial powers established elsewhere in the same period became blurred. At the same time, Khedive Ismail was a more cosmopolitan ruler than his predecessors, and he had declared that he was against the slave trade. He was not able, therefore, to make use of one of the main resources of Sudan as his predecessors had done, and this may have meant that his interest in the region was less strong. The Egyptians' control over the large territories of Sudan became increasingly tenuous, and a series of revolts took place.

The revolts resulted in the establishment of the Mahdist (or Ansar) state (1881–98). It controlled and administered large swathes of current-day Sudan, extending even into what is now western Ethiopia. The Mahdist state was a theocracy founded by Muhammed Ahmad ᶜAbdallah, heralded as the 'Expected Mahdi'. His coming was thought to presage the beginning of a just and equal society brought about through the good practice of Islam and the Mahdi's guidance, and he claimed to gain his authority and judgement directly from God. His strong religious ideology and his charisma brought him the commitment of many followers, although many were also attracted by the way the Mahdists had routed the foreign rulers.

The Mahdists instigated a system of taxation of their own, and continued to wage war against other groups in an attempt to bring all under their holy suzerainty. They fought with the troops of Emperor Yohannes in Ethiopia, and occupied the territories around Assosa and sacked Gondar. When the Mahdi died, his successor's rule lost some of the religious and nationalist fervour that had given the Mahdists momentum and support. The Mahdists continued to wage holy war, but the regime was subject to internal rivalries between different factions.

The Mahdist period was ended by the British campaign under Sir Herbert Kitchener. British interest in Sudan had been triggered by the 'scramble for Africa', the competition for control over territory, resources, labour and markets in the continent. The British in Egypt were also concerned to neutralize a threat they perceived from what Lord Cromer in 1908 referred to as 'the Dervish hordes at Omdurman'. In 1899, the Egyptians and British agreed to exercise joint control over Sudan, described as the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium. In practice, the British had great autonomy, although their new subjects discriminated little between the nationalities of their rulers, and referred to them all as 'Turks'.

As elsewhere, the British set up a system of indirect rule, organized by 'tribe', to facilitate their administration of the extensive territories. Boddy's chapter in this volume describes the way in which indirect rule ushered in a period in which there was a great attempt to identify and reinvigorate the different 'tribes' and their 'native authorities'. 'Modern education' was seen as a dangerous force that removed people from their cohesive tribal communities. Yet some of the paradoxes of the British rule

are evident here as the British simultaneously encouraged missionaries to go the south and to engage in educational activities. At this time the British also encouraged West Africans to settle, partly to fill a labour gap that had been left by the end of slavery. The demand for agricultural labour also multiplied after the introduction of dams across the Blue Nile and the establishment of huge irrigation schemes; the largest among them was the Gezira Scheme.

The period that followed independence in 1956 was characterized by uneasy political coalitions that fell victim to military coups. All the regimes, such as that following the 1958 bloodless coup, led by Major General Ibrahim Abboud, were dominated by northerners. In 1963, a southern guerrilla movement emerged called Anyanya, which became a rallying point for southern frustrations, and had numerous highly visible and symbolic military successes (see Johnson and Hutchinson, this volume).

The success of the Anyanya led, by some direct and some indirect means, to the fall of the Abboud regime in 1964. The transitional government that followed attempted to include many of the different political interest groups, from members of the Communist Party to the Muslim Brotherhood (led by Dr Hasan al Turabi). Despite some optimism at the inclusion of southerners in government and a period of relative free speech and political organization, the transitional government also suffered from political rivalries, from the continued military successes of the Anyanya and from economic problems.

In 1969, Jaafar Nimeiri came to power in a bloodless coup. Over the next sixteen years Nimeiri aligned himself with factions from many different sides of the political spectrum. Starting out as a socialist, he later formed a close alliance with Hasan al Turabi, and, in 1983, Nimeiri announced that principles of shariah law would be enshrined in the penal code: theft, adultery and murder would be judged according to the Koran; alcohol consumption and gambling were prohibited. This 'Islamization' of the state has been a constant cause of tension and conflict with the more Christian south. At the same time, Nimeiri was becoming closer to the US, which saw Sudan as an important ally in the cold war. In the 1980s, Sudan became the largest recipient of foreign aid in sub-Saharan Africa, and de Waal (1997) describes how the US went to great lengths to ensure that the aid was continued, despite Sudan's constant defaulting on commitments and evidence of economic mismanagement.

In the early part of Nimeiri's rule, the fighting with the south continued and the Anyanya gained in military and political strength. In 1972, a conference in Addis Ababa succeeded in brokering peace and the three southern provinces became part of a self-governing region. The peace did not last long, however, as there was resentment at perceived Dinka dominance in the southern government; ex-Anyanya troops incorporated into the armed forces also caused problems. A new group of fighters emerged in the south, known as the Anyanya II, followed by the formation of the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), whose armed wing, the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), was headed by John Garang. The SPLA troops soon took over large sections of territory in the south.

Nimeiri was overthrown in 1985. Following a short period under a transitional government, a coalition government was formed with Sadiq al Siddiq (also known as

Sadiq al-Mahdi) as Prime Minister. The new government began to arm tribal militias to counter the southern rebels, a military strategy that sadly was to become more familiar in the regimes that followed. Tribal militias in western Sudan, armed by the government, made devastating attacks on the peoples of Bahr el Ghazal and Equatoria (Holt and Daly 2000). This period was also characterized by severe famine; food failed to get to the needy because the grass-roots administrative structures had been undermined; the international community failed to respond adequately to calls for assistance; and food and famine were used as a weapon by both the SPLA and the government (de Waal 1997).

A coup in 1989 brought ꞓUmar Hasan Ahmad Al Bashir to power, and began a regime supported by the National Islamic Front (NIF) and the Muslim Brotherhood. The regime has been accused of unprecedented repression of its people and exercise of state power. Up until the mid-1990s, the SPLA gained territory and strength, but then certain developments occurred that weakened its position: in 1991, the Derg government in Ethiopia, led by Mengistu Haile Mariam, was overthrown, and the SPLA lost one of its main sources of support and arms. The new government expelled SPLA forces and other Sudanese living in Ethiopia, particularly around Gambela. In August 1991, three SPLA leaders, Riek Machar, Gordon Kong and Lam Akol Ajawin, attempted to overthrow John Garang, and, after failing, became leaders of a splinter faction known as SPLA-United. The SPLA-United faction is sometimes referred to as the Nassir faction, named after the place where Machar, Kong and Ajawin were based. Johnson and Hutchinson's chapters in this volume explore the nature of the conflict that followed between these groups of southerners.

Conflict continued throughout the 1990s, and the Bashir government has retained power, despite many problems. When the Bashir government supported Iraq in its invasion of Kuwait, it lost one of its most valuable economic resources, the remittances from Sudanese workers in the Gulf states. To the west, Darfurian rebels have been active since the early 2000s. The government has been accused of supporting another tribal militia, the *janjawiid*, and encouraging them to rout the rebels. As in other conflicts, there has not been any distinction made between rebel fighters and civilians, however, and the fighting has been characterized by extreme violence and brutality and by multiple atrocities. Darfur residents have fled to refugee camps and across the border into Chad, where their presence has caused political instability. The African Union has sent troops to act as peacekeepers, but their numbers and resources are inadequate. At the time of writing, the United Nations continues to hold discussions on intervention to halt what the US government has described as 'genocide' and the UN is speaking of 'the greatest humanitarian disaster today'.

Although there is no contribution by a specialist on Darfur in this collection, it is worth pausing for a moment to examine some of the literature and to see how this recent conflict is connected to other conflicts, including the conflicts described in this collection, and to discuss whether any common patterns can be identified. The examination presented is based on studies by Kurt Beck and Alex de Waal (Beck 2004; de Waal 2004, 2005) and, for the earlier history, on the almost encyclopaedic volume by Ulrich Braukämper (1992).

In the popular media the conflict in Darfur is described as one between 'Muslim Arabs' and 'black Africans'. The implication is that the black Africans are much more recently and less profoundly Muslim, if at all. Since political decision-makers draw most of their knowledge from these popular media (and then re-feed this knowledge to the media with the effect of a positive feedback), this dichotomy, whether wrong or right, has developed into a political truth in the minds of many of the relevant actors.

Examining the history of the religious and racial categories implicated in the dichotomy, it becomes clear that it is far too simplistic. Islam spread from northern Africa southwards much earlier in Western Africa than it did in the east of the continent. Sub-Saharan Africa was largely Islamic in its Western reaches at a time when Islam was still far from prevalent further east. For example, in West Africa, Takrur (in present Senegambia, eleventh century) and the empires that had their centres in the bend of the Niger (modern Mali), namely Ghana (ninth and tenth centuries) and Songhai (fifteenth to sixteenth century), were early Islamic empires that had accumulated legendary wealth and reached a high level of Islamic scholarship. At the same time, regions on the same latitude in the Nile-Sudan were still Christian, such as the Nubian kingdoms and, further east, the heartland of Ethiopia, which is still basically Christian today. Vast areas in between were characterized by African beliefs and rituals. The old routes of the haj avoided eastern Sudan. They passed through the Sahara to the Fezzan (in modern Libya) and then along the Mediterranean coast and the Red Sea to Mecca. Gradually, Islamization expanded along the Islamic belt in all directions, but especially from west to east. The assumption is often that this process must have taken effect in the opposite direction due to the greater proximity of Eastern Africa to the Arabian Peninsula, but this assumption is not supported by history. Over the course of the shifting of the haj route to the south – over Sennar and Sinja to the Red Sea – Darfur became an important stage in the pilgrimage route. There is no reason, therefore, to assume that Islam in Darfur is in any way inferior in age or importance to that of the Nile-Sudan, or to attribute it to the Arab factor. Certain Arab tribes, centred in Kordofan, such as the Kababish (Asad 1970: 13) and the Kawahla (Beck 1988: 31), both Baggara or cattle-herding Arabs, have expanded recently to the west. How strong their faith is and what role Islam plays in their tribal policies (apart from legitimizing certain arguments and alliances) are questionable. Other Baggara Arabs, like the Humr, appear to have moved westwards from areas now located in Chad. Their movements were motivated by the desire to avoid demanding sultans and to move away from their centres of power or into the domains of less demanding rulers (Cunnison 1966: 3f.). However, in the kingdoms of the Sudanic belt, comprising Darfur, there is no evidence that the Arabs were more Islamized than the non-Arabs. In fact the Arabs were typically under the rule of more educated political elites with a higher standard of Islamic learning who were non-Arabs. At no point in recent or earlier history could it be said that the front line in Darfur is between Muslim Arabs and (implicitly non-Muslim or newly Muslim) black Africans. Rather than Darfur being on the receiving end of the expansion of 'Arabic-Islamic civilization' coming from the Nile,

it is the Nile-Sudan that owes many elements of its Islamic tradition to 'Africans' from the west and to Darfur's influence.

The popular dichotomy also implies a racial component. The 'Arabs' are imagined to have a lighter skin than the 'black Africans'. But on a closer look this does not hold true either. In the Nile valley one finds 'Arabs' of many different shades of pigmentation, including people who are much darker than most 'Africans'. Among the Baggara of Kordofan and the Arab nomads of Darfur, however, the lighter shades of pigmentation can be found much more rarely. This racializing dichotomy therefore has no correlate at all in the observable reality. The Arab militias (*janjawiid*) and the many oppositional militias cannot be distinguished on grounds of pigmentation. There may have been Arabs who at the time of their arrival in Kordofan and Darfur had lighter skins compared with the speakers of Nilo-Saharan and Niger-Kordofanian languages in the region, but these tend to have lost that particularity through intermarriage with Fulɓe[1] and concubinage with Nilotic slaves. Furthermore, in many regions in Africa not only one's biological father is referred to and addressed as 'father' but also the shaikh who led a person to Islam and gave him or her an Islamic name. It would be hard to ascertain how many of the patrilinear genealogies going back to the Quraysh, the tribe of the Prophet (curiously, other Arabic tribes are rarely mentioned in the genealogies), are 'Arabic' only by the mere spiritual connection. The Prophet himself, by the way, was not too fond of genealogies and often stressed the equality of all Muslims.

Above, we have already briefly discussed the Mahdiyya from a Nile valley perspective as a revolt against Egyptian rule. Much of it, however, was a West African and western Sudanese phenomenon. Expectations of the Mahdi, the 'rightly guided' leader of the Muslims, spread from West Africa to Sudan in the late nineteenth century. A Mahdi was found and he succeeded in conquering Sudan (1874). But shortly after (1876) he died, and a caliph (*khalifa*) was named to replace him, following the example of the life of the Prophet. This *khalifa* was a West African, like many of his followers, who came from West Africa and Sudan, including Darfur and Kordofan. After the recapture of Sudan, which ended with the Battle of Omdurman (1898), the sons of the high-ranking Mahdists quickly became the new educated elite. The new college was named after the Mahdiyya's most prominent victim (Gordon Memorial College, today the University of Khartoum). Until today, the legacy of the Mahdiyya influences one of the two or three most important political currents in Sudan.

Independent rule was maintained in Darfur longer than in any other part of present-day Sudan. Darfur was conquered only in 1923. The fronts in Darfur's anti-colonial fight were drawn – needless to say – not between 'Africans' and 'Arab Muslims' but between the defenders of Islam and the 'infidels' (the British).

A renewal of western Sudanese elements in the political Islam of the country followed the dramatic change in 1989, when the National Islamic Front (NIF) came

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1. According to Braukämper, this union also led to the cow-herding culture of the Baggara 'Arabs'.

to power. Its chairman, Hassan al Turabi, had his power base in the west. He served as a figure of identification for Islamists across the whole world. He had the ominous reputation of being the 'Black Pope', and, since Osama bin Laden had been a guest in Sudan until 1996, Turabi served as the embodiment of the enemy to Americans. Since he was placed under house arrest in 2000, he is said to have ties to the JEM (Justice and Equality Movement), a major rebel group in Darfur, and that many of his partisans have formed the JEM is undisputed.

By now it should be evident that the aforementioned, widely popular dichotomy of 'black Africans' versus 'Muslim Arabs' does not provide categories adequate for describing the social reality or the reasons for conflict. But, if it is erroneous, how did it originate and why does it prevail?

Possible explanations for its origins can be found on a global scale and on a more local one. Globally, the idea of dangerous Muslims threatening non-Muslims has long been used to explain behaviour and outcomes. It can be traced to the early modern period in Europe and beyond that to the Middle Ages. The Reconquista of Spain, fuelled by the ideas of the crusades from many centuries before, directly precedes the expansion of European powers onto other continents. Africa was explored starting from the eastern and southern coasts inwards in competition with Islamic states and trade networks that had formerly sealed the continent off from Europe in the north. On a local level, colonialists, especially the British, often cooperated with Islamic potentates, celebrated Islamic holidays and perceived Christian missionaries as bothersome. And yet the reality is that, throughout the colonial period and after, the bulk of the taxpayers and churchgoers in Europe viewed Islam and the Christian and post-Christian 'civilizations' to be competing models. Since 11 September, the world is now completely caught up in these dangerous and simplistic dichotomies. They are so popular that their mere appearance anywhere should be reason enough to question them.

The other origin is in Sudan itself. For some actors in the conflict in southern Sudan (Johnson, this volume) the strategy of dichotomizing 'black Africans' and 'Arab Muslims' proved quite successful. In southern Sudan, the notion that English-speaking Christians of African descent are oppressed, exploited or enslaved by Arab Muslims can be a useful fiction for 'crusaders'. That is the term the regime in Khartoum uses for foreigners, mostly representatives of American Protestant churches who have allegedly financed and fuelled the conflict. Similarities between the ideas of the religious right in America and the crusaders of the tenth and eleventh century are indeed hard to refute. The chapters in this collection show that there is no neat division between 'Muslim north' and 'black Christian south'. The command language of the SPLA is Arabic. During the last years, the fighting in the area was dominated as much by conflicts between different factions of the SPLA, led by Nuer and Dinka, as it was by conflict with the north. The government in Khartoum was only one of the parties forging ever-changing alliances and conflict. Since oil production started in Sudan several years ago, the desire to gain power over the oilfields provides a far better explanation for the conflict than theological position (Christian vs. Muslim).

How then can we explain the success this dichotomy has had in spreading and gaining wider currency? It is a strange success story as it has been found inadequate

for the case to which it has been recently extended (Darfur) and only partly adequate for describing the case from which it was derived (north-south conflict). Under the heading 'a size theory of identification', Schlee (2004a: 136; see also the introduction to Volume I), on the basis of examples other than Darfur, has proposed that it is necessary to pay attention to identity discourses with regard to the sizes of the groups and alliances these discourses propagate. In other words, it is necessary to look at identification strategies from the perspective of the group sizes that result from them. There are conditions under which it seems rational to make the group limits more stringent (arguing for exclusion of group members who are not needed for maintaining the resource base of the group, and with whom one therefore does not want to share these resources). Other conditions will promote expanding the 'we'-group and alliances (arguing for inclusion in the face of a threat or when trying to gain access to resources). So it makes sense to analyse whether the size and power[2] of the group or the alliance expected to be reached after successful implementation of an identification strategy played a role in choosing this particular identification strategy. This analysis should be carried out in comparison with other factors.[3]

By analysing identification strategies in light of the resulting alliances in Darfur, while at the same time stepping back to view the broader relations, an answer is found to the question of why the dichotomy between 'Africans' and 'Arabic Muslims' is so successful. Experts on the region have also come to a similar answer without having to learn Schlee's jargon first. Alex de Waal points out that it makes sense for one party to propagate its 'Arabic' identity and still, despite the atrocities committed,[4] claim to be Muslims, because this pan-Arabic and Islamic identification elicits the help of Libyan president Muammar al-Gaddafi. On the other side, the argument that American support can be mobilized by people who speak just as good Arabic and are also Muslims, through the argument that they are 'African' victims of 'Arabic-Islamic' persecution, requires a bit more explanation. Alex de Waal distinguishes between four types of Americans:

1. The US government.
2. The religious right (only partly identical to 1).
3. Liberals and human rights activists.
4. Americans with African ancestors.

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2. The power is dependent not only on the demographic size but also on technological factors.
3. Those factors might include historical plausibility, which is flexible but of course not unlimited; the virtuosity of the leaders (their knowledge and social skills); or psychological factors such as collective trauma. Countless historical examples prove, however, that these factors do not often seem to hinder the assimilation to or forging of alliances with former enemies.
4. Atrocities are often committed in response to previous atrocities, and lead to further atrocities. In situations like these, reassigning the blame is not the trick, but stopping the cycle of violence.

In the Darfur conflict, the US government can be assumed to be a single coherent actor, at least with respect to its foreign policy towards Sudan.[5] Throughout the 1990s the US deemed the regime in Khartoum a 'rogue state' and aimed to overthrow it. Advances by the Sudanese government to help in the fight against Al-Qaeda were rejected on the grounds that the regime in Khartoum itself was terroristic. A more prudent policy might have helped to prevent the 11 September attacks. In November 1997, the US imposed a complete trade embargo against Sudan, excluding the export of gum arabic, an ingredient of Coca-Cola. Later *Der Spiegel* reported that Osama bin Laden had brought the gum arabic export under his control prior to his expulsion from the country in 1996. Believing they were fighting international terrorism, the US boycotted the entire Sudan except for the business interests of Osama bin Laden. In 1998 the Americans bombed a factory producing malaria pills in Khartoum. As a justification they claimed that toxic gas had been produced there, or that it had belonged to Osama bin Laden. Sudanese friends assured Schlee that they could name ten targets belonging to Osama bin Laden, but that this particular factory was not one of them. The Carter Foundation later concluded that it was a falsely identified target. An admission of guilt or even payment of damages by the US has never come.

This hostile but incompetent policy was later revised when the peace talks on Sudan taking place in Kenya[6] started to move in a promising direction. There is now a peace treaty (9 January 2005, Nairobi, called the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)), which includes a six-year term of shared power between the former conflict parties (power sharing), the division of oil interests (wealth sharing) and the holding of a referendum after the end of this term to decide on a unified state or a peaceful separation.

Peace in Sudan, however, is not necessarily in the interests of the 'crusaders' within the religious right in the US. It is not surprising that the 'crusaders' are supporting the opposition in Darfur, who, in turn, facilitate this alliance by exaggerating their 'African' characteristics and correspondingly blanking out their Islamic identity. Other forces, usually not in the company of the religious right, are also part of this alliance. Liberals and human rights activists have – in part rightly so – taken up a position against the Sudanese government for a long time, and are thus tempted to assume that enemies of this government are better or different. African Americans also rather tend to identify with the 'Africans' than the Muslim 'slave hunters'.

These alliances also have to be considered against the regional backdrop, including Chad.[7] Cross-border ethnic groups, including the Arabs but also a vast number of

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5. The Sudanese government cannot be perceived as a monolithic entity. Parts of it (like parts of the northern opposition) have supported the *janjawiid*, but it is doubtful that pressure on them to disarm the *janjawiid* can achieve much. Even the elements willing to do so might not be capable of carrying this out. Among the numerous factions of the *janjawiid* there are many of which not even the local leaders are in effective control.

6. First in Machakos, later in Naivasha.

7. We are grateful to Andrea Behrends, researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, for sharing her knowledge on Chad.

other groups, such as the Tama, the Masalit and the Zaghawa (of the last of which Chad's president is a member), play a role in this context, as do some aid organizations with operative bases in Chad. The situation is further complicated by conflicting American and French oil interests in Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria and other regions, as well as by the problem of oil transportation routes. Political weaknesses are exploited. The Chadian government only obtains 10 per cent instead of the usual 50 per cent of the oil profits from the licensees. Perhaps this is part of the explanation for the instability in the region. There are strong interests that do not foster self-reliant governments or peaceful and prosperous states. Much of what goes on may never be publicly known. But among the few certainties we can have is that the ethnic-religious macro-categories of 'Africans' versus 'Arabic Muslims' are historically inadequate. They were not pre-existent; they do not date back to a time before the conflict, and thus they cannot be used to explain the cause of the conflict. Their origin and their use are as labels for identification that have emerged in the course of the conflict.

The fact that they are favoured by journalists can easily be explained by the thirty- or ninety-second slots the TV journalists are allocated for their stories. They are also, in general, quite laborious to differentiate in detail. An account like the one at hand here, however short and only comprising a summary of already existing secondary literature, would still be too long and complicated for the daily press. In this situation the circulation conditions for simple, albeit wrong dichotomies are ideal. They capture the imagination of many, among them political decision-makers.

On borders

The histories of particular nations are not necessarily very instructive regarding what happens at the margins of these national units, where territories have been contested and boundaries drawn and redrawn more to serve the interests of bureaucrats at the centre than the interests of the people who live there. In this corner of North-East Africa, the boundaries between Kenya, Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia have shifted, depending on the willingness of particular colonial governments to take responsibility for administering these areas and depending on the relations and competition between the colonial state governments. These areas were seen in the main as logistically difficult and expensive to manage. It is notable, however, that, since the end of colonialism, the boundaries have remained remarkably stable (Clapham 1996).

During colonial times, Ugandan territory was much larger than it is today. The boundary between Kenya and Uganda was moved eastwards in 1902. Prior to that, the line had been drawn boldly through the middle of Lake Turkana (then Lake Rudolf), undulating south through much not yet effectively controlled land to what is now the boundary with Tanzania (then Tanganyika or German East Africa). This line included Lakes Naivasha and Baringo on the Ugandan side. The area south of the River Turkwell (passing Lodwar in Turkanaland and flowing into Lake Rudolf) was transferred to Kenya in 1902, but the area north of it, to the present boundary in the west, was transferred only in 1919 (Barber 1968).

A part of southern Sudan, the Ilemi Triangle, has been under more or less continuous Kenyan administration since colonial times (Tornay 2001: 39).

'Continuous' in these peripheral areas has not meant any consistent degree of state penetration or efficacy. But, whatever state presence there was, it was that of Kenya and not that of Sudan. What Barber says of Karamoja in north-west Uganda may be true for all these border areas, which have been claimed by different powers at different times, sometimes with hesitation and often with little success, and often only in order to stake a claim: colonial incorporation was 'an attempt to acquire authority on the cheap, to state rights without accepting obligations' (Barber 1968: 11). The impact of the colonial borders and administrative institutions are only some of the, albeit very important, factors that have shaped the nature of identifications and alliances in the region.

Uganda

There is only one chapter in this volume that focuses specifically on Uganda, that by Gray, which needs to be placed within the context of the political history of Uganda. Uganda's political history is of wider significance to this volume, however, as the relations between Uganda and Sudan have influenced the nature of conflicts, identifications and possibilities for peace on both sides of the Uganda-Sudan border.

At the turn of twenty-first century, areas of Western Equatoria (Sudan) appear to be more orientated to the Ugandan state than to the Sudanese. In Yambio and Nzara towns, for example, in 2007, the Ugandan shilling was still the currency, not the Sudanese dinar or the new Sudanese pound. Individuals travelled to Ugandan towns such as Arua to buy basic provisions (such as hoes), if they wished to be tested for HIV/AIDS or to obtain other forms of health care. Seen from the Sudanese side of the border, therefore, the Ugandan state appeared to be functioning well, but this appearance disguises the very troubled and turbulent history of Uganda and the levels of violence experienced by its citizens.

From 1894, Uganda was a British Protectorate, and, from the beginning, the state was characterized by an imbalance in investment, development and benefits enjoyed by people in the north and the south, and also between different groups within the south. In the south, when the British arrived they found the powerful kingdom of Buganda, with its own king, the Kabaka, and his council of 'ministers', the Lukiiko. The kingdom was already relatively well armed and educated (Gertzel 1976). The British entered into an agreement with the new leadership of Buganda, which was given a certain degree of autonomy under an indirect rule arrangement. The British also recognized the other southern kingdoms, those of the Toro and Ankole, but did not give them the same privileges. Finally, the British were also much more aggressive towards the historic rival of Buganda, the Bunyoro kingdom; the Baganda assisted the British in controlling Bunyoro and gained position and territory in return. As a consequence of their original advantage and favoured position, much of the early development and industrial activity of Uganda took place in Buganda, where the towns of Kampala and Entebbe are now situated.

One axis of inequality between these groups was institutionalized by the colonial state, therefore. A second main axis of uneven development in the country corresponded to the line between north and south usually drawn along the River Nile, from Lake Kyoga to Lake Albert. To the south and south-west of this line,

where the kingdoms are located, the people are described as Bantu; to the north and north-east they are described as Nilotic, Nilo-Hamitic or Sudanic. Consistent with the colonial policy of divide and rule, the northern areas, where the Langi, Acholi and West Nile people are situated, were mainly considered as reserves of migrant labourers for the central-south, which was promoted as a cash-cropping and industrial area. Additionally, while many civil servants came from the south, the north became the main source of recruits for the army, police and prisons. At independence in 1962, therefore, the country was structured into areas of unequal economic development, which were regional, but also to some extent related to and perceived as being connected to cultural and ethnic identity (Gertzel 1976). More than thirty thousand Asians were also engaged in commerce and industry in the south. In addition, there had been a long history of Christian missionary activity in the country, with French missionaries in the nineteenth century encouraging conversion to Roman Catholicism, while British missionaries encouraged conversion to Protestantism (Karugire 1980). Religious identity became another main axis of difference, and, following the British promotion of Protestantism during the colonization process, Protestantism became the religion of the establishment. Islam, which had come earlier through traders from the coast or the north, was also present in the country, but as a minority religion. From the beginning, religious practice and identity have often cross-cut as much as they have coincided with ethnic identities, but they have been a further factor defining the lines between conflicting parties in regional, national and international political struggles.

Accounts of Uganda's history include those of Gertzel (1976), Mamdani (1976), Karugire (1980), Mutibwa (1992), Behrend (1999), Reno (2002), Knighton (2003) and Rake with Jennings (2003).[8] These accounts describe a history of post-colonial Uganda as 'one of violence and counterviolence' (Behrend 1999: 23). Since independence, the majority of regimes have come to power through the use of military force and have continued to be closely allied to the army or to unite the roles of head of state and head of army. The history is one of power struggles and shifting alliances in which the use of violence, often by the state, has been institutionalized.

At independence, the first Ugandan government was made up of a coalition between the Kabaka Yekka (KY – 'Kabaka only') party and the Ugandan Peoples Congress (UPC). The Buganda-based KY was led by the Kabaka, Edward Mutesa II and the UPC was led by Apollo Milton Obote, a Langi from the north. Soon after independence cracks began to open in the uneasy north-south partnership. Obote consolidated his power through judicial and administrative reforms, politically motivated appointments and attacks on trade unions and other civil society organizations. In 1964, the KY-UPC alliance was formally dissolved and Obote dismissed KY members from government positions.

In 1965, dismissed and alienated KY and UPC members accused Obote, together with Colonel Idi Amin, the Deputy Army Commander, of embezzling

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8.   We are grateful for the comments on Ugandan history from Godfrey Asiimwe, Joe Powell and Glen Rangwala. The authors remain entirely responsible for the content of this introduction, however.

money, gold and ivory from Congo. In response Obote ordered an attack on the Kabaka palace. Led by Idi Amin, the attack, known as the battle of Mengo, has been described as the 'first major bloodbath of postcolonial Uganda' (Mutibwa 1992: 39) and was followed by more harassment and killing of Buganda people.

What started as harassment of the Baganda people was soon extended to anyone who was considered to harbour resistance to Obote's regime. In 1967, the attack on the power of the southern kingdoms was completed, as a new constitution abolished all forms of kingship and declared Uganda a republic. The republic was a repressive one, however: no opposition parties were permitted, and violence, torture and detention were commonplace. Economic problems were also rife.

In the last years of Obote's rule, Obote's and Amin's sources of military strength became increasingly divided along ethnic lines. By 1969, according to Mutibwa (1992), Obote drew support from the Acholi and Lango sections; Amin, himself from West Nile, drew support from the West Nile peoples, mainly from the Kakwa, Lugbara and Madi (Allen 1994). In 1971, Obote accused Amin of corruption, in a move that appeared to be the first step of removing him from office. In response, when Obote went to a meeting of Commonwealth leaders in Singapore in January 1971, Amin seized power.

Amin's rise to power was popular initially. He was heralded as a liberator and a peacemaker. But the violence continued: thousands of Langi and Acholi soldiers, seen as Obote supporters, were massacred in their barracks. Amin's term of rule was initiated therefore with the calculated killing of a large group of people he viewed as a threat. One year into his office he also expelled all the Asians from the country, on the grounds of promoting the economic interests of the Ugandan people. No positive economic results were felt, however, and the heavy-handed manner in which the Asians were expelled, in which they lost much property and were abused and displaced, has been heavily criticized.

The appalling story of the Amin years is well known and impossible to do justice to here. Outwardly charismatic and successful on the international stage (becoming Chair of the Organization of African Unity for example), his regime at home was characterized by the brutal murder of prominent people and ordinary civilians, by torture, detentions and dismemberment of individuals and by the general destruction of lives and livelihoods, often at the personal order of the President. This rule went on for eight years, until, finally, when Amin invaded Tanzania, Tanzanian troops counter-attacked. With the help of rebel forces known as the Ugandan National Liberation Army (UNLA), Amin was defeated in 1979. With the fall of Amin, the Acholi and Langi sections within the UNLA carried out a massive attack on West Nile, destroying the town of Arua and killing citizens and soldiers, in revenge for the West Nile attack on Acholi and Lango almost a decade before.

In 1980, a general election was held, and, despite the controversial results, Milton Obote and the UPC returned to power. This prompted the outbreak of a guerrilla war. By 1985, the Yoweri Museveni-led National Resistance Army (NRA) had weakened government forces significantly and Obote was overthrown in a coup. In 1986, after an interim period under the rule of General Tito Okello, an Acholi, the NRA took Kampala, bringing Yoweri Museveni to power.