

# **Religion and Conflict Transformation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1999-2004**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigates the role of religious networks in the conflict transformation process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) between 1999 and 2004. Religious groups are an important segment of Congolese civil society in that they wield enormous influence in the Congolese polity that has been characterised by years of arbitrary rule, crisis of governance and, most recently, state deflation/failure or declining state capacity arising from a deadly and complex conflict that has been labelled “Africa’s First World War”. Over the years, DR Congo’s religious networks have demonstrated their comparative advantage in social service delivery in the face of maladministration or malfeasance and corruption on the part of the political elite. The onset of war in the DRC deepened the imperative for constructive engagement by faith-based groups in the public domain, not least in the area of peacebuilding.

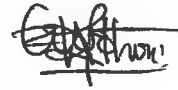
Drawing from the eschatological underpinning of liberation theology as well as existential causalities, religious networks have undertaken a number of initiatives in the conflict transformation spectrum with a view to building sustainable peace in the DRC. This study, in its explication of the specific roles of faith-based actors in the DRC’s peacebuilding process, contends that the involvement of religious networks in such activities as peace advocacy, humanitarian/relief provision, mediation, reconciliation, demobilisation/reintegration of ex-combatants and reconstruction necessitates the rethinking of the overarching paradigm which portrays religion exclusively as a negative factor in conflict situations. Hence, this study seeks to provide insight into the constructive role of religion in public life, albeit with due cognisance of its ambivalent character by which is meant the recognition of religion both as a force for bad and a resource for good.

This study contextualises the positive role of religion in public life with reference to the involvement of religious networks in the DRC’s conflict transformation process. It also seeks to replace the formal governmental peace process paradigm with a more encompassing framework that encapsulates important and powerful civil society/non-

governmental networks, of which faith-based organisations are a part, in peacebuilding processes in Africa using the DR Congo as a case study.

## Declaration

I declare that except where explicitly stated to the contrary, this dissertation – “Religion and Conflict Transformation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1999-2004” – is my original work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ayo Whetho', with a horizontal line drawn through it.

Ayo Whetho

November 2006

## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to Jehovah God, my help in years past and my hope for years to come; the One who ceases not to perfect our laudable ambitions – and also to my mother and siblings.

### **Acknowledgement**

I wish to express my profound gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Nwabufo Okeke Uzodike for his invaluable assistance, guidance, encouragement and suggestions towards ensuring the completion of this work. His poise, professionalism and integrity have been sources of academic inspiration to me. I am also grateful to all staff in the School of Politics for their kind assistance, which has made my sojourn in South Africa a pleasant one and has also given impetus to my academic pursuits.

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Needless to say, I alone take full responsibility for this work.

## Abbreviations

AACC	All Africa Conference of Churches
AFDL	<i>Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaire</i> i.e. Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire
AU	African Union
CBCN	<i>Communauté Baptiste du Congo Nord</i> i.e. the Baptist Community of Northern Congo
CEI	<i>Commission Électorale Indépendante</i> i.e. the Independent Electoral Commission
CELPA	<i>La Communauté des Eglises Libres de Pentecôte en Afrique</i> i.e. the Community of the Free Churches of Pentecost in Africa
CENCO	<i>Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo</i> i.e. the National Episcopal Conference of Congo
CEPAC	<i>Communauté des Eglises de Pentecôte en Afrique Centrale</i> i.e. the Community of the Churches of Pentecost in Central Africa
CFA	Commission for Africa
CIIR	Catholic Institute for International Relations
CJP	Commission for Justice and Peace
CJPC	<i>Commission Justice et Paix Congo</i> i.e. the Justice and Peace Commission of the Congo
CNS	<i>Conférence nationale souveraine</i> i.e. Sovereign National Conference
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECC	<i>Église du Christ au Congo</i> i.e. the Church of Christ in the Congo
ECZ	<i>Église du Christ au Zaïre</i> i.e. the Church of Christ in Zaïre
EJCSK	<i>l'Église de Jésus-Christ sur la Terre par le Prophète Simon Kimbangu</i> i.e. the Church of Jesus Christ on Earth by the Prophet Simon Kimbangu
FNLC	<i>Front national de la libération du Congo</i> i.e. National Front for the Liberation of the Congo

FP	<i>Force Publique</i> i.e. Public Forces
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICD	Inter-Congolese Dialogue
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IRC-DRC	Inter-religious Council of the Democratic Republic of the Congo
LPA	Lusaka Peace Accord
MCC	Mennonite Central Committee
MONUC	<i>Mission des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo</i> i.e. United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo
NIC	National Islamic Council
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
RCD	<i>Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie</i> i.e. the Congolese Rally for Democracy
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SCC	Sudan Council of Churches
UDPS	<i>Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social</i> i.e. Union for Democracy and Social Progress
ULC	<i>Université libre du Congo</i> i.e. the Free University of the Congo
UMC	United Methodist Church
UMCOR	United Methodist Church Committee on Relief
UN	United Nations
UNITA	<i>União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola</i> i.e. the National Union for Total Independence of Angola
WCC	World Council of Churches

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Those who neglect religion in their analyses of contemporary affairs do so at great peril (Berger, 1999: 18).

#### 1.1 Introduction

Berger's assertion is underscored by the realisation of the increasing socio-political role of religion in human affairs, or as Rubin (1994: 20) puts it, its 'profound political influence in public life'.<sup>1</sup> Paradoxically, religion (and its role in society) has been a subject of intense debate over the years. For most part of the twentieth century though, religion was ignored or marginalised in the analyses of social, economic, and political phenomena. This was due largely to the dominance of non-eschatological paradigms, which were influenced primarily by the Age of Enlightenment as well as the writings of philosophers. Haynes (1993: 6) notes that 'the analysis of political behaviour for the greatest part of the twentieth century was dominated by the modernisation or the political development paradigm, dependency/underdevelopment, neo-Marxist and other radical perspectives.' Religion was considered as purely tenacious and atavistic. At best, religion was ignored; at worst, it was regarded as 'an opium' (*a la* Marx) and completely denounced.

The promise held forth by the dominant theories of liberalism, modernisation, and Marxism, spawned the prediction of the decline or demise of religion. Cox (1965: 1) and Wallace (1966: 264) had predicted that religion was to disappear and become consigned to history. In other words, the decline (and the possible extinction) of religion, in view of the inception of modernity, was expected. According to Rubin (1994: 21), it was anticipated – in the West during the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and (early part of the) 20<sup>th</sup> centuries – that 'modern ideas, such as science, technology, secularism, and humanism, would overcome the religious concepts that dominated premodern society'. Lubbe (2002: 237) notes that

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<sup>1</sup> It is instructive to note from the outset that religion has been implicated in a number of conflicts around the world. Although the focus of this study is to examine the positive role of faith-based organisations in peacebuilding, the researcher acknowledges the reality that religion has been and continues to be a factor in the fuelling of conflict.

this expectation was informed by the conviction that “modernity goes hand in hand with a decline in religion.” The advent of the Cold War reinforced the fervour concerning the atrophy of religion as ideologies such as capitalism, socialism/communism, imperialism, and nationalism gained ascendance in the analyses of issues. Again, religion was viewed as “irrational and premodern” (Weigel, 1991: 27; Reychler, 1997). In the defunct Communist bloc, religion was officially stigmatised and repressed. In the West, it was regarded as a remnant of tradition. Religion was simply depicted as ‘epiphenomena’ (Haynes, 1993: 6). The tendentious treatment of religion in both academic circles and in the public domain promoted secularisation. The futuristic resurgence of religion was not anticipated. However, in deference to Crawford’s (2002: 204) opinion that religion has a way of revitalising itself, the resurgence of religion (in the form of intensifying religiosity) has been witnessed in Africa and Eastern Europe, thereby stultifying the central propositions of Marxism, modernisation, and development paradigms vis-à-vis the future of religion.

The ‘crisis of modernity’, according to Lubbe (2002: 240) is one of the three factors that account for the renaissance of religion. The inability of modernity (and secular philosophies) to furnish convincing explanations regarding the origin and destiny of human life has made religion attractive. Hence, Rubin (1994: 23) submits that ‘the secret of the influence of religion in contemporary politics is that the modernization process, rather than causing religion to weaken and disappear, often makes its public role stronger and a more necessary part of the process of state-building or revolutionary transformation’. Furthermore, the contradictions of globalisation (such as the mass movement of refugees and economic immigrants across national boundaries, and the weakening of state boundaries) have resulted in the loss of identity and national self-confidence in many societies. The search for identity has led many to religion. In addition, ‘political uncertainty and financial risks’ associated with the globalised environment induce volatility and instability that necessitate considerable adjustment. Within this milieu, religion is seen as a stabilising factor since it “provides humanity with a sense of direction and destiny” (Lubbe, 2002: 240).

The above submissions find practical expression in many societies in the Third World, particularly in Africa, such that ‘the political importance of religion reverberates with special strength in these societies’ (Rubin, 1994: 22). For example, the Commission for Africa [CFA] (2005: 120) notes the astounding increase in religiosity in Africa, which is underpinned by certain causalities. The CFA argues that nationalism in Africa is exhausted and that its place has been overtaken by religion. Bunting (2005) adds that ‘politicians and state structures have lost almost all credibility or legitimacy’. Consequently, religion has emerged as a strong socio-political factor in galvanising people such that it cannot – and should not – be ignored in the analyses of contemporary issues – in Africa and elsewhere. Indeed, religion is assuming greater importance in many countries irrespective of their level of economic development (Thomas, 2000: 817). Given this context, therefore, it is apposite to examine the underlying dynamics of intensifying religiosity underway in Africa. One of such dynamics is the increasing importance of religion in the public domain (especially in countries that have a weak state apparatus) such that faith-based actors are often co-opted into crucial local and national decision making structures and processes in that they are a key constituency in civil society.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Policymakers, diplomats, journalists and scholars ... are still in the habit of disregarding the role of religion, religious institutions, and religious motivations in explaining politics and conflict, and even in reporting their concrete modalities. Equally, the role of religious leaders, religious institutions and religiously motivated lay figures in conflict resolution has also been disregarded – or treated as a marginal phenomenon hardly worth noting (Luttwak, 1994: 9-10).

The above commentary, which speaks to the marginal treatment of religion in scholarly analyses, is a carryover of the “Enlightenment prejudice” that has been challenged by ascendant religiosity and the increasing role of religion in national and international politics. More than ever before, religious leaders and networks are getting involved in activities that cannot go unnoticed for they typically have the greatest presence and

influence in society. In Africa and Latin America, for example, the religious constituency has often functioned as “the intellectual and social center of the masses” (Rubin, 1994: 24) in such a manner that it serves the purpose of interest aggregation, articulation and actualisation. Apart from ‘rendering critical support for movements toward democracy around the world, religious networks also play a constructive role in the world’s trouble spots in demonstration of the moral and social characteristics that equip them in unique ways to engage in efforts to promote peace’ (Carter, 1994: vii-viii). However, the “other” reality speaks to the implication of religion in war or various forms of organised violence. In Africa, religion is identified more often than not in terms of its role in precipitating, fuelling or exacerbating conflict. The growing importance of faith-based actors in peacebuilding, or generally, faith-based peacebuilding, is conveniently ignored in a manner that illustrates intellectual bias and perhaps a continuation of the “Enlightenment prejudice” by other means.

Contemporaneously, the renaissance of religion in Africa has been accompanied by a bewildering profusion of (internal) conflicts. Indeed, one of the many challenges that African states have had to grapple with in recent times is the profusion of violent conflicts. It is beyond contention that Africa’s share of post-Cold War conflicts is significant. Notable flashpoints of large-scale violence have been the Horn of Africa, West Africa (as typified by the crises in Liberia, Sierra Leone and, more recently, Côte d’Ivoire), and the Great Lakes Region. The Burundi conflict, the Rwandan conflict and genocide, the crisis in Uganda and, most remarkably, the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (given its regional and continental implications), put together, make the Great Lakes the most volatile of Africa’s geopolitical regions. The ‘conflicts in the region have many layers and overlapping set of actors’ (Morten, 2004: 283) thus making them intractable. Colonial legacies, authoritarianism, ethnonationalism, scramble for strategic (mineral) resources (or vested economic/commercial interests), and poor leadership account for the eruption, continuation, and internationalisation of the conflicts in the Great Lakes Region of Africa.

Of all the countries in the region, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) [formerly Zaire]<sup>2</sup> has been the most unstable. The country's 'biography' is steeped in conflict as its history attests. The recent/current conflict (discussed in Chapter Two) presents a case study not only in state deflation/collapse but also on how the prospect of economic gains can introduce or unleash highly destructive external dimensions and interventions into an otherwise local conflict. Indeed, military intervention by countries opposed to the regime in Kinshasa and their occupation of parts of the DRC's territory presupposed that the government was not in control of the entire country. Quite aside from the difficulties presented by local challenges to its authority, the government has had to deal also with the invasion and occupation of the DRC by foreign forces and, as such, has not been able to fulfil its responsibilities towards its people, typifying the failure of governmental authority and portraying a semblance of state collapse.<sup>3</sup> Such a scenario gives non-governmental, religious and international organisations a comparative advantage in assisting the affected to adjust to conflict as well as to stimulate and facilitate the search for peace. It is apposite to recall here that non-governmental, civil society organisations and religious networks had been active in DR Congo even before the onset of war and had channelled their energies towards expanding the country's political space through activism which was intended to emasculate Mobutu's authoritarianism (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 244). The eruption of conflict, no doubt, necessitated increased activism by these organisations, not least in the sphere of peacebuilding.

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<sup>2</sup> The late President Laurent Kabila renamed the country Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on 17 May 1997 after his *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre* (i.e. Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo) seized Kinshasa (the capital city) by force, ousting the regime of President Mobutu Sese Seko in the process (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 1; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1998a: 5; Rosenblum, 1998: 193).

<sup>3</sup> It is instructive to note that the DRC ranked second on the list of top ten failed states in 2005 and 2006, according to the "State Failure Index" released by the United States *Foreign Policy Magazine* and the United States-based think-tank – Fund for Peace (See Internet 27). The index measures the vulnerability of states, using twelve (12) indicators: (1) mounting demographic pressures (2) massive movement of refugees and internally displaced persons creating complex humanitarian emergencies (3) legacy of violence – seeking group grievance or group paranoia (4) chronic and sustained human flight (5) uneven economic development along group lines (6) sharp and/or severe economic decline (7) criminalisation and delegitimisation of the state (8) progressive deterioration of public services (9) suspension or arbitrary application of the rule of law and widespread violation of human rights (10) security apparatus operates as a "state within a state" (11) rise of factionalised elites and (12) intervention of other states or external political actors (See Internet 28 and Internet 29). Suffice it to say that the DRC has been plagued by most of these conditions encapsulated in the 'state failure index'.

Against the backdrop of the war in the DRC and the failure of the state to meet the expectations of the people, the pivotal role of religious groups in social services delivery, development processes and peacebuilding has become more salient and needs to be acknowledged. For example, this role is exemplified by the crucial roles of the Roman Catholic Church in belligerent and post-conflict(?) DR Congo. As the Commission for Africa (2005: 120) reports, the ‘Catholic Church is the only reasonable coherent organisation in the country and functions as a post office in the absence of a national postal service’. This point reflects the extent to which DR Congolese state has failed and underscores the urgent need to reconstruct the DRC and to resuscitate state institutions. The involvement of the Roman Catholic Church in such activity typifies the important influences of religious networks in transforming conflict situations with a view to engendering sustainable peace and development. Accordingly, the study explores or investigates the role of religious networks in transforming the conflict situation in DR Congo between 1999 and 2004.

### **1.3 Objectives of the research**

The main objective of this study is to examine and evaluate critically the role of DR Congo’s religious networks in transforming the conflict situation to one that offers hope while also engendering sustainable development. This study seeks to replace the formal governmental peace process paradigm with a more encompassing framework that encapsulates important and powerful non-governmental networks, of which faith-based organisations are a part. Specifically, the study’s core objectives are as follows:

- To contextualise the involvement of religious networks in conflict transformation against the background of failing government or declining statecraft in the DRC.
- To explore the specifics and extent of the role(s) of religious groups in the conflict transformation process.
- To evaluate critically the involvement of faith-based organisations in the peace process with a view to highlighting the success or failure of such engagement.

#### 1.4 Scope of the study

This study explicates the causalities in, and the character of, the involvement of faith-based networks in DR Congo's conflict transformation process with reference to the period characterised by the eruption and continuation of conflict in the country. This study's primary task or objective covers a five-year period, namely 1999-2004 – a period which, arguably, is the most traumatic in the recent history of the DRC. It was a period during which the country was plagued by what has been labelled “Africa's First World War”. The period is therefore most suitable for the analysis of any initiatives at attenuating the conflict, including the role of religious networks in the process of building peace in the DRC, which constitutes the focal point of the study. This research investigates the roles of the following religious organisations vis-à-vis peacebuilding during the said period:

- The Roman Catholic Church;
- The *Eglise du Christ au Congo* (ECC) i.e. the Church of Christ in the Congo, formerly *Eglise du Christ au Zaïre* (ECZ) i.e. the Church of Christ in Zaïre, which represents a majority of the country's Pentecostal churches;
- The Kimbanguist Church – the largest indigenous religious movement;
- The Islamic society; and
- Minority religious networks/multi-faith international actors such as the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), the Salvation Army and Christian Aid, the Community of Sant' Egidio and the United Methodist Church (UMC).

These organisations have made important contributions to the process of transforming DR Congo's conflict environment through a wide range of programmes. Given this context, this study examines the specifics of religiously motivated peacebuilding including post-conflict initiatives that fall within the realm of conflict transformation.

Without a doubt, some limitations are inevitable in a study of this nature. An obvious challenge is the unwillingness of many prominent Congolese to volunteer information despite the assurances of confidentiality provided by the researcher. (There is a climate of fear in the DRC, and whatever one says or does may determine whether one remains

alive or not, even if such information were disclosed to friends or neighbours). The difficulties notwithstanding, a considerable number of respondents did provide relevant information that speaks to the primary task of this research. Moreover, the celerity at which events unfold in the DRC presents a formidable challenge in time-limited research. As such, giving tangential treatment to events that take place in the immediate aftermath of the research's timeframe may become imperative in order to engender a holistic appreciation of the subject-matter of the scholarly inquiry in question. Therefore, not only does this research examine the role of DRC's faith-based actors in the post-conflict epoch, it also prognosticates their involvement in the country's public domain.

### **1.5 The significance of the study**

[Africa] is another part of the globe that urgently needs to be mapped in terms of its rapidly intensifying religiosity if we are to begin to understand what is happening there. (Bunting, 2005)

The Commission for Africa (2005: 120-123) notes the growing importance of religious networks in many African countries. Such 'growing importance' of religious entities has not been adequately reflected in the analyses of contemporary African affairs, including the war in the DRC. This is despite overwhelming evidence gleaned from that country's religious demography and history which suggest that faith-based organisations have played decisive roles within DR Congo's socio-political space (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 173,190; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2001: 310; Weiss, 1995: 165; Callaghy, 1984: 176, 305-06). These networks wield enormous influence over the Congolese and it is most apposite to examine their role in the DRC's peace process.

The choice of the DRC is informed by its strategic importance not only in the Great Lakes region and in Central Africa but also in Africa generally. A number of analysts and policy makers find it "difficult to imagine a place more pivotal to the future of Africa than the [DRC]" (Doyle, 2004: internet document, hereafter i.d.). It is relatively easy to reach this conclusion about DR Congo in view of its geographical size and staggering

resource endowment.<sup>4</sup> Franz Fanon (quoted in Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1998b) was so awed by the enormity of DR Congo's resources that he concluded that the DRC was (and still is) a "geological scandal". Paradoxically, it is the vastness and strategic importance of DR Congo's mineral wealth that has made it a major target for plunder. The country is of strategic importance in Africa, at least against the background of its geo-economic variables. Fanon (quoted in Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1998b) reckons: "Africa is a revolver; the trigger is the Congo." For a certainty, the DRC has a strategic value that cannot be ignored. The geo-strategic importance of DR Congo makes it an important subject of intellectual inquiry. This imperative takes on added significance against the reality of the instability in the country and its implications for Africa vis-à-vis the continent's drive for renaissance.

This study seeks to contribute to the scholarship on rethinking the formal governmental peace process paradigm by highlighting a more encompassing framework that encapsulates significant role players such as faith-based organisations and other civil society actors in peacebuilding processes in Africa. More than that, it is expected that the study's findings will engender scholarly debate and stimulate further research into the dynamics of the involvement of non-governmental networks in African conflicts and peacebuilding processes.

## 1.6 Methodology

The methodology adopted for this study is qualitative, with reliance on both primary and secondary sources of data. It is instructive to point out that this researcher shares the sentiment expressed by M<sup>c</sup>Ternan (2003: xii) who posits that "[t]he problem one encounters when trying to access the role of religion in conflict is the lack of data." This

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<sup>4</sup> The DRC is Africa's third largest country. It shares borders with nine states. It is arguably the richest African state in terms of natural resource endowment. DR Congo is blessed with minerals including cobalt, coltan, copper, cadmium, tin, zinc, gold, uranium, tungsten, columbite, tantalum, diamonds, iron ore, crude oil (offshore deposits), thorium, and other precious minerals used in leading edge industries such as electronics, aeronautics and nuclear medicine. The country is home to '50% of Africa's hardwoods and about 10% of the world's hydroelectric power potential'. The Inga Dam is emblematic of this potential. The Congo River (the second longest in Africa and the fifth longest in the world) can light up Africa from Cairo to Cape Town for 200 years. For details, see Swing (2003: 25); *The Guardian* (Lagos) 29 January 2001: 63; and Nzongola-Ntalaja (1998b; 2002: 28).

was one major challenge that confronted this study; there are very few published works on the role of religious entities in DR Congo's public sphere. Although a fairly large number of studies have been conducted on the conflict in the DRC, no systematic or comprehensive analysis of the role of religion in the conflict (especially as far as peacebuilding efforts are concerned) has been undertaken. Hence, the exploratory nature of this research which was intended to break new ground as well as furnish new insights into the nexus between religion and conflict.

This research has been conducted through the use of overlapping research techniques. These research methods included historical analysis as well the examination of relevant literature on the topical issues in research. Sources such as books, academic/scholarly journals, magazines, newspapers and Internet articles were consulted and their contents analysed. However, the lack of sufficient information in secondary sources necessitated the conduct of field research and the use of primary data sources. The administration of questionnaires and the use of interviews more than compensated for the lacunae in secondary data sources. Oral, written and e-interviews were conducted (with Congolese in the DRC and in South Africa) using interview schedules based on open-ended questions to engender a robust engagement with the issues in research. Interviews with religious leaders, their followers, community leaders (whose communities have been impacted by the activities of religious networks), academics, political leaders, media practitioners and civil society activists did help to provide critical insights into the study.

This study synthesized data gathered from both primary and secondary sources so as to provide a holistic analysis of religion's role in conflict transformation in the DRC.

### **1.7 Structure of the study**

This study is organised into six chapters. Chapter One is an introduction to the study. It furnishes a background to the study, highlights the statement of the research problem and outlines the objectives of the study. The introductory chapter also deals with the scope of the study, highlights the significance of the study, explicates the methodology of research and presents an overview or structure of the study.

Chapter Two explores the religious landscape in the DRC with reference to the history of the country's major religious networks, the demographic character of religion and the socio-political function of religion in DR Congo. The chapter also provides an overview of the conflict in the DRC.

Chapter Three is a thematic review of the relevant literature on the subject matters of this research. It offers a holistic definition of religion, explores the debate on the role of religion in conflict and synthesizes the arguments regarding the nexus between religion and conflict. The chapter also appraises the social construction of the concept of liberation theology. The notion of conflict transformation as a paradigm shift in conflict analysis is also addressed in Chapter Three. The chapter concludes with a review of some scholarly works on the conflict in the DRC.

Chapter Four investigates the role of religious networks in the DRC's conflict environment vis-à-vis their transformational initiatives. It examines the roles played by faith-based actors such as the Roman Catholic Church, the *Eglise du Christ au Congo* (ECC) representing a majority of the country's Pentecostal churches, the Kimbanguist Church, the Islamic community and minority/multi-faith networks, in the conflict transformation process.

Chapter Five critiques the roles of faith-based organisations in the DRC's peacebuilding process. It examines the local responses to religious networks' role in the peace process. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of the DRC's religious actors' conflict transformational initiatives.

Chapter Six, the concluding chapter, draws logical inferences from the findings of the research and proffers suggestions for effective faith-based peacebuilding in the DRC.

## CHAPTER TWO

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE, SEEDS OF CRISIS AND CONFLICT SKETCH

#### 2.1 Religion in DR Congo: history, demography and socio-political roles

[Religious networks represent] a voice ... in Congolese politics as *major civil society actors* (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 51) [emphasis mine].

Faith-based organisations are arguably the most important actors in DR Congo's civil society or non-governmental constituency. Not only do DR Congo's religious groups wield extensive influence over the people but they also play prominent socio-political roles that often disconcert the government.<sup>5</sup> The pre-eminence of these groups within DRC's socio-political space does not come as a surprise to those who are abreast with realities in the country. Decades of misrule, crises, plunder (by both local and external forces) and the incapacitation or implosion of civil rights movements implied that "[o]nly religious organizations had the possibility of retaining some autonomy" (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 173), which gave them considerable leverage in DR Congo's socio-political space especially in the areas where governments typically have peerless competence.

Remarkably, some of these religious institutions predate the emergence of the DRC as a sovereign entity as they played crucial roles in the extrication of the vast country from the shackles of (Belgian) colonialism. The plethora of religious movements that have been active in the DRC include the Roman Catholic Church, several Protestant Churches or denominations (which come under a loose agglomeration known as the *Eglise du Christ au Congo* [ECC], formerly *Eglise du Christ au Zaire* – ECZ), the Kimbanguist Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Islam among other numerous local syncretic religious groups and sects (Callaghy, 1984: 176, 303). However, the Roman Catholic Church, the ECC and the Kimbanguist Church have been the most politically active faith-based institutions in the DR Congo. This section restricts itself to

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<sup>5</sup> For instance, Callaghy (1984) highlights the tensions between the government and the Roman Catholic Church in his lucid analysis of the state-society struggle during the Mobutu era in the former Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo).

the exploration of the history of these more vibrant groups as an expedition into the historical trajectories of all DR Congo's religious networks is of marginal utility to the focus of this study. The history of the biggest and most powerful religious institution in the DRC, the Roman Catholic Church, comes first.

### *Roman Catholic Church*

The history of the Roman Catholic Church, nay Christianity, in the DR Congo is associated with the advent of colonialism. Portuguese explorers had brought Christianity to the DRC (then known as Kongo) in 1482 when they made their first contact with the locals. A group of missionaries comprising Franciscan and Dominican priests returned in 1491, baptised the Kongo king, Nzinga a Nkuwu and established a church within the territory the same year. King Nkuwu's son, Nzinga Mbebe (later Afonso) became king and reinforced the links between the Portuguese and his kingdom. King Afonso (who also became a Catholic and built many churches) sold slaves and ivory to the Portuguese in return for luxury goods from Europe. The king made Christianity (Catholicism in the main) the 'state' religion in his attempt at 'evangelising' the kingdom. This was significant because it marked the 'Christianisation' of the Kongo and the solidification of relations between the Kongo and the Portuguese which centred on missionary activities, mining and trade (Vansina & Obenga, 1992: 555-557).

Remarkably, the conversion of King Afonso set the stage for the 'Christianisation' of more of his subjects. However, the slave trade – an infamous enterprise that engaged some of the missionaries and their compatriots – hampered the vitality of the Christian movement but did not culminate in its demise. A series of revolts by slaves and counter actions by the noble class resulted in the Jaga War of 1569, which destroyed the Kongo kingdom (Jordan, 1998) but the 'state' religion survived the crucible of 'kingdom collapse'. The colonial period, which began officially with the creation of the Congo Free State in 1885 under the absolute control of the Belgian monarchy, marked a watershed in the consolidation of the Roman Catholic Church's position in DR Congo. The 1884-85 Berlin Conference – noted for its partitioning of Africa – formally recognised Belgian King Leopold II as the sovereign over the Congo Free State thus

making him *de facto* owner of the territory. In his quest for the exploitation of the territory's resources, Leopold II despatched missionaries to the Congo Free State, granted them property, subsidies and the right to fulfil certain state functions as well as a virtual monopoly over education and medical services. The unbridled exploitation of the resources of the Congo Free State did not go down well with the locals who in turn protested the plundering of their resources. Such protestations were suppressed by the *Force Publique* in the characteristic brutality of the personal fiefdom which King Leopold II has been identified with. In 1909 (following sustained pressure and international opprobrium over the atrocities being committed by Leopold's agents in the territory), the Belgian Parliament compelled the king to cede the Congo Free State to the Belgian state (Hochschild, 1999). The Congo Free State was subsequently rechristened Belgian Congo.

A "Colonial Trinity" or "Trinity of Power" which comprised the colonial administration, the Roman Catholic Church and large (private) foreign companies administered the Belgian Congo (Merriam, 1961: 1). The Roman Catholic Church lubricated the colonial enterprise, which undermined the emergence of a nationalist elite class while it simultaneously (or paradoxically) established a fairly dense network of schools, churches and health centres. Beyond the provision of education and healthcare subsumed under the rubric of 'Benevolent Paternalism' (Merriam, 1961: 32), the 'Christianising' mission of the Church, 'in the logic of colonialism, helped to undermine African autonomy and to promote colonial domination' (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 39). The position of the Roman Catholic Church within the ruling 'tripartite alliance' bestowed advantages on the Church, much to the indignation of Protestants who felt marginalised. Although the Roman Catholic Church initially believed in the 'intrinsic necessity of colonialism' (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 40), the Church 'in 1956 not only opposed the colonial system by its disapproval of the injustices perpetrated by the colonial administration against the Congolese but also began its advocacy on their behalf' (Presbyterian Church USA, n.d.).

This political reorientation on the part of the Roman Catholic Church endeared many Congolese to the Church thus 'helping it to retain significant control and to play major

socio-political roles after independence in 1960'. By that year, the Church "had almost 700 mission stations and some 6,000 missionaries in educational, medical, philanthropic and social services" (Presbyterian Church USA, n.d.). The Church's influence in the country's post-independence political economy could only grow given its massive human and material base. However, in an attempt to consolidate the absolutist state, the regime of the late dictator Joseph Désiré Mobutu (later Mobutu Sese Seko) in the late 60s and the 70s sought to undermine the influence of the Roman Catholic Church which was then the most formidable societal group in the vanguard of the masses (Callaghy, 1984: 302-304). The late 60s was marked by the Roman Catholic Church's virulent criticism of Mobutu's regime. The Church denounced the 'injustices, corruption, crass materialism, and the authoritarian/centralising tendencies of the Mobutu government' (Callaghy, 1984: 304). Mobutu (who had renamed the country Zaire from the Congo and proclaimed himself the Founder-President of the Nation, the Enlightened Guide, and the Leopard) viewed the Roman Catholic Church as a threat to his sovereignty.<sup>6</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002: 173) notes that the Roman Catholic Church, 'inspired by the theology of liberation, became a powerful voice of dissent against the Mobutu regime'.

Consequently, the late dictator, in what could be described as an onslaught against the church, promulgated a decree banning the use of Christian names, outlawed the observance of Christmas as a national holiday, abolished religious instruction in public schools in preference for courses in 'Mobutuism', banned all religious publications, ordered the removal of the Pope's photographs from public places while replacing them with his, and took over the entire school system. Mobutu even threatened to close the churches (Callaghy, 1984: 304-305). Suffice it to say that these actions were taken to silence the Roman Catholic Church and to undermine its political influence in Zaire as it was then known. To Mobutu, it was politically expedient to crush any force that stood against the survival of the absolutist state.

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<sup>6</sup> It is instructive to note that these titles adopted by Mobutu Sese Seko typify nothing but absolutism. He claimed "authentic right to exercise absolute power over his 'children', the Congolese". His full name, Mobutu Sese Seko Koko Ngbendu Wa Za Banga, which he adopted in 1972, also depicted absolutism. The meaning of his name goes thus: "the all-powerful warrior who, because of his endurance and inflexible will to win, will go from conquest to conquest, leaving fire in his wake" (*Encyclopædia Britannica's Guide to Black History* 2005 [online version], Internet 1).

The cumulative effect of these draconian measures against the Roman Catholic Church was a rupture in relations between the Mobutu government and the Church. However, reconciliatory gestures (including the restoration of rights and privileges denied the church) on the part of Mobutu after mid-1975 led to improved relations between the government and the Church. Yet, the thaw in government-church relations did not obliterate the tension between them (Callaghy, 1984: 307). 'Following the government's reversal of its diminution of the Catholic Church's influence, the church's fortunes in public life continued to rise'. As a matter of fact, the powerful influence of religious networks in DR Congo's socio-political space finds expression mainly in the huge stature of the Roman Catholic Church. Schatzberg (n.d.) describes the Roman Catholic Church as "[DR Congo's] only truly national institution apart from the state;" it operates an extensive network of hospitals, schools, clinics, farms, ranches, stores, and artisans' shops in addition to *holding the allegiance of approximately half of DR Congolese population*. The preceding harmonises with Callaghy's (1984: 176) observation:

[t]he Catholic Church is the strongest non-ethnic intermediary authority in Zaire [now the DRC]. It is so because it possesses ... good organization throughout the country, a clearly established and recognized hierarchy, immense resources, control of much of the country's health, wealth, educational, and publications activities, and strong external ties. The new central elite began to view the church as a sort of *proto-state*. [emphasis added]

In addition, the church (over the years) has provided 'certain facilities, credit, advice and equipment which were unavailable from any other source including the state to aspiring entrepreneurs' (Schatzberg, 1988: 122). Callaghy (1984: 304) adds that the Roman Catholic Church has also been involved in the delivery of social services such as the construction of roads, and notes that its "logistical infrastructure is far superior to that of the state." Haynes (1996: 116) posits that 'the church moved in to fill the gap as the state withdrew from its responsibilities'. Little wonder that the Roman Catholic Church in the DRC is viewed as a "proto-state".<sup>7</sup> Apart from its opposition to the defunct Mobutu

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<sup>7</sup> It is not uncommon to find a few Congolese who would go as far as equating the church with the state. Cardinal Joseph Malula, a former head of the Roman Catholic Church in DR Congo, once argued: "[f]or our people, the Church was the state and the State was the Church" (Internet 2).

regime, the church played a central role in the convocation of the *conférence nationale souveraine* (CNS) (sovereign national conference) in 1991 and its reopening in 1992 after a halt to its proceedings following violence by Mobutu's forces (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 189-208). Remarkably, Monsignor Laurent Monsengwo, the Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Church in Kisangani, presided over the CNS. His appointment by Mobutu, although apparently informed by parochial considerations, was in itself a recognition of the significant position of the Catholic Church in DR Congo's public space.

### *Protestant Churches*

The history of Protestant churches in the DRC is traced to the arrival of Baptist missionaries in the Kongo in 1878. Thirteen years later, American Southern Presbyterians arrived in Luebo and established ministries at Kasai and Kananga. American Baptists had also been working in the Lower Congo province even as Scandinavian Baptists engaged in missionary work around Bandundu and the Lower Uele areas. Conservative Baptists, on the other hand, focused their ministries in Goma. Another group, the Disciples of Christ, arrived before the turn of the century and established their presence in Bolenge following their take over (in 1899) of the missionary activities previously undertaken by American Baptists (Presbyterian Church USA, n.d.). In 1912, the African Inland Mission established a mission at Kasengu and extended its work to the north eastern part of the country. American Methodists began missionary work in the Shaba province a year later. In 1915, some members of the Assemblies of God came to northern Shaba and Kalemie from the United States. Their counterparts from the United Kingdom worked in Isiro and Kinshasa while those from Norway and Sweden took charge of Bukavu. The period before DR Congo's independence witnessed the influx of missionaries representing diverse religious networks namely the Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Christian Brethren, Mennonite groups, the Salvation Army, and the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. At the time of DRC's independence, "there were 46 Protestant missionary groups at work in 345 scattered mission stations, staffed by 2,511 missionaries of 11 different nationalities" (Presbyterian Church USA, n.d.).

Suffice it to say that there were early attempts at collaboration between the diverse Protestant churches and groups operating in the country. The first significant step in the series of these collaborative efforts was the setting up of “a committee to maintain contact and national cooperation and to minimize internal competition” (Presbyterian Church USA, n.d.). It was absolutely necessary to work towards cooperation and harmonious coexistence between and among these religious networks given that they did not restrict themselves to the ‘Christianisation’ of the people but engaged in commercial ventures that were bound to engender friction around such issues as mining rights, mission employees’ recruitment, and produce marketing. Cooperation between and among Protestant groups in the country received a boost with the formation of the Congo Protestant Council in 1924. The council metamorphosed into a union of Congolese Protestant Churches – a precursor of the *Eglise du Christ au Zaire* (ECZ) i.e. Church of Christ in Zaire, which was established in 1970 (Presbyterian Church USA, n.d.).<sup>8</sup> Since its formation, the ECC has been the second most influential religious group (after the Catholic Church) in DR Congo’s history.

The ECC, which has institutions that serve needs common to its members such as missionary guest houses and book stores, has played substantial roles in national life through “educational and social ministries” either independently or in collaboration with the Catholic Church (Presbyterian Church USA, n.d.). A significant role in the promotion of learning and scholarship was the establishment of the *Université libre du Congo* (ULC) (the Free University of the Congo) at Kisangani by the Protestants in 1963 (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 174) but the institution was nationalised by the Mobutu regime in 1971 as part of his [Mobutu’s] implementation of ‘*authenticité*’, a policy that sought to promote ‘*Zairianess*’. It should be stated that the nationalisation of the university was part of a grand scheme by Mobutu to undermine social forces, including religious groups, that seemed to constrain his absolute rule. Remarkably, the Protestant churches did put up with Mobutu’s campaign of ‘*authenticité*’ as its implementation hit the Roman Catholic Church the most. The diminution of the Roman Catholic Church, the

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<sup>8</sup> The *Eglise du Christ au Zaire* (ECZ) is now *Eglise du Christ au Congo* (ECC) i.e. Church of Christ in the Congo, following the rechristening of the country from Zaire to Democratic Republic of Congo by the late President Laurent-Désiré Kabila on May 17, 1997.

Protestants ostensibly reckoned, would compensate for the low profile that Protestantism had during colonial rule and the immediate post-independence period. In other words, “the Protestants apparently considered that what was bad news for the Catholics necessarily was good news for them” (Internet 3).

Therefore, the Protestant churches were not as vehement as the Roman Catholic Church in their condemnation of the regime’s excesses as they sought to maximise their “gains” from the friction between Mobutu and the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, it has been argued that ‘Protestant churches, particularly the then ECZ leadership, were consistently supportive of Mobutu, and that this made them an attractive potential partner whereby the ECZ served the state interests where church-state interests coincided’. However, the Mobutu regime shot itself in the leg when it ‘announced the process of popular consultation’ in the early 90s. Seizing the momentum, the ECZ criticised the regime, denounced its excesses and simultaneously called for change (Internet 4). It was the activism by the leaders of the ECZ, the Roman Catholic Church and other civil society groups that compelled Mobutu to acquiesce to the demand for the convocation of a CNS in 1991 (*supra*, p. 17). Over the years, the ECZ (now the ECC) has been the voice of Protestant Churches and has dealt directly with the government on their behalf.

### *Kimbanguist Church*

The third major religious group and the largest independent church in the DRC is the Kimbanguist Church, officially known as *l’Eglise de Jésus-Christ sur la Terre par le Prophète Simon Kimbangu* (EJCSK) (the Church of Jesus Christ on Earth by the Prophet Simon Kimbangu). The EJCSK is an indigenous, syncretic religious movement, which emerged from the charismatic activities of Prophet Simon Kimbangu around the Bas-Congo areas in 1921. Kimbangu claimed that God had appeared to him and commanded ‘him to preach the gospel of liberation from all forms of oppression, negative customs and white domination’ (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 48). His “messianic movement had heavy political undertones” (Callaghy, 1984: 308) in that he decried the colonial enterprise and espoused pan-African views about “racial pride, liberation and self-reliance” (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 49). Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002: 49) recalls that

“thousands of workers abandoned their jobs in government agencies, private companies and white households to see” and listen to Kimbangu’s sermons. Suffice it to say that the people readily identified with his radical views. According to Callaghy (1984: 308), Kimbangu’s movement “alarmed the colonial administration” and expectedly, “the colonial trinity of the state, the Roman Catholic Church and major private companies reacted quickly and vigorously” (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 49). How? “Kimbangu was arrested for preaching the subversive ideas of Pan-Africanism, tried and condemned to death for sedition” (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 49). However, the death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment, ‘which he served at the infamous Kasapa Prison at Lubumbashi until his death in 1951’ (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 49). But his death did not signal the demise of the movement.

It is on record that Pan-African ideas influenced Kimbangu’s ministry and activism. As far as Kimbangu and his “comrades” were concerned, “the realisation of the Pan-African ideal of ‘Africa for the Africans was God’s will, indeed” (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 49). And according to Muzong Kodi (quoted in Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 50), “Kimbanguism had two concomitant goals: the salvation of the soul and *the liberation of the Congo from Belgian colonialism*” [emphasis added]. The foregoing underscored the involvement of Kimbanguists in anti-colonial resistance and ‘the radical questioning of oppressive authority’ for which many of them were incarcerated in camps (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 50, 51). It is instructive to note that Kimbangu and his followers strongly resisted colonialism “at a time when Catholicism was a pillar of the colonial system and Protestantism an advocate for mild reforms” (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 51). In spite of the ban on the religious group and the bitter persecution of the Kimbanguists between 1921 and 1959, the movement grew stronger and “several politico-religious movements of Kimbanguist inspiration arose to occupy the political space” (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 51) such that it had a strong hold on workers and peasants in particular and Congolese in general. Belgium granted legal recognition to the EJCSK on December 24, 1959 and ten years later, the movement became a member of the World Council of Churches.

As noted earlier, the Kimbanguist Church played a significant role in the struggle for DR Congo's independence. In the Mobutu era, members of the movement were 'less apolitical than the Protestants and sought good relations with the Mobutu regime, and in turn the latter always responded well to Kimbanguists' overtures by expressing state support for the movement (Callaghy, 1984: 308). It is interesting to note that 'during the height of the tension between Mobutu's regime and the Catholic Church, Mobutu visited several Kimbanguist schools and social centres to show his pleasure with this group that had manifested its cooperation with his regime' (Callaghy, 1984: 308). It is on record that the Kimbanguist Church, an outcast during colonial rule, was Mobutu's close ally whereas the former ally of the colonial government – the Roman Catholic Church – became an outspoken critic of the Mobutu regime and expectedly, bore the brunt of his draconian rule (Internet 5).

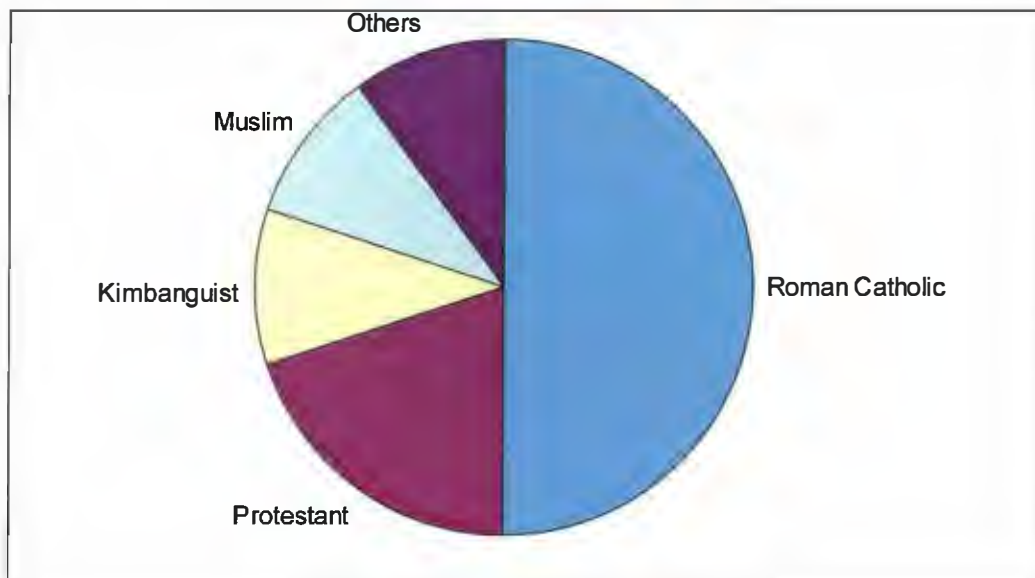
An understanding of the history and socio-political roles of the three major religious groups in the DR Congo is pertinent to this narrative on the country's religious demographics. However, what comes across in the comparison of figures on religious affiliation is the imprecision of statistics as a majority of Congolese, for instance, 'belong to one Christian church or another'. Hence, DR Congo's religious configuration exhibits overlapping affiliations, which make exclusive categorisations difficult. In addition, religious identity in DR Congo (as with class and ethnic identities) is often situational and based on pragmatism (Internet 6). That said, the DRC – with 60,085,804 inhabitants in 2005 – has a huge Christian population (put at 80%), predominantly Roman Catholic. Approximately 50% of the DRC's population is Roman Catholic, 20% is Protestant, 10% is Kimbanguist, 10% is Muslim while the remaining 10% comprises other religious organisations, syncretic sects and traditional religions.<sup>9</sup> It is stated elsewhere that 16.5% of the population is Kimbanguist and that Islam 'counts only a small number of adherents in DR Congo, perhaps 1% of the population and principally clustered in a few cities' (Internet 6). This is significantly divergent from the 10% estimation given above. Regardless of the percentage adopted, it is evident that 'Islam has relatively little impact

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<sup>9</sup> Although there are conflicting statistics as to religious networks' membership profile in the DRC, these figures have gained wide acceptance in official circles. See Internet 7; Internet 8; and Internet 9.

in the DRC' (Presbyterian Church USA, n.d.). The figure below is a pictorial representation of DR Congo's religious demography:

**Figure 1: Religious affiliation in DR Congo (in %)**



As noted above, the three major religious groups in the DRC namely the Roman Catholic Church, the ECC and the Kimbanguist Church wield tremendous influence as a result of their membership, immense resources and strong external ties. It can be argued that the influence that these networks have on the generality of the Congolese rivals (if not surpasses) that of the state in view of the latter's failure to meet basic human needs. Evidence from my field research suggests that the generality of Congolese construe faith-based organisations as an oasis of social service provision and harbingers of hope in the wilderness of crises and disillusionment arising from state deflation. Haynes (1996:116) makes a potent observation against the backdrop of these churches' towering influence in the face of state incapacitation: 'the state virtually gave up its developmental role, passing it to the three churches: Catholic, Protestant and Kimbanguist.' The twin facts that these religious institutions are 'autonomous structures beyond the state's control' and that they 'provide development goods which the state has been unable or unwilling to supply'

(Haynes, 1996: 116) make them important civil society actors. It goes without saying that their pre-eminence as civil society actors in DR Congo's public space stems from their character as forces for social mobilisation and from their economic, social and political roles. This point will be dilated later, albeit in relation to their role in peacebuilding.

## 2.2 The seeds of crisis and the conflict in the DRC

The crisis in [DR] Congo cannot be understood as an event in isolation; it is the result of a series of postcolonial tragedies that exacerbated the legacies of a harsh colonialism and a miscalculated independence (McCalpin, 2002: 33).

The DRC – Africa's third largest country (*The Guardian* [Lagos] 17 January 2001: 4) – has been the epicentre of a deadly and complex conflict since 1998. However, this is not to suggest that the country has always been at peace with itself and neighbours prior to 1998. As a matter of fact, the DRC has been the most unstable of all the countries in the Great Lakes Region of Africa. This mineral-rich country at the heart of Africa has been besmirched by unprecedented crisis since the attainment of independence from Belgium in 1960. That DR Congo's 'biography' is steeped in conflict is indeed obvious. A series of post-colonial traumas illustrate the country's perennial tempestuousness: the mutiny in the immediate post-independence epoch (exacerbated by the ill-fated secession of the mineral-rich Katanga province) coupled with the assassination of Patrice Emery Lumumba, with the conspiracy of Western nations (mainly the United States' Central Intelligence Agency) and United Nations observers (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2001: 7; McCalpin, 2002: 39; Ibeike-Jonah, 2001: 2; Babatope, 1981: 43-48; Stockwell, 1978); the Shaba invasions of 1977 and 1978, led by the Angolan-based *Front national de libération du Congo* (FNLC) or the National Front for the Liberation of the Congo; several uprisings – often with external support – against the defunct Mobutu regime (Ojo, 1985); Laurent Kabila's *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaire* (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo – AFDL) rebellion (1996-1997) which ousted Mobutu; and the anti-Kabila rebellion which culminated in the

receding(?) war (1998-?).<sup>10</sup> It is trite to say that the Congolese have never experienced real peace over a sustained period in the post-colonial period.

The quotation at the outset of this section speaks to the fact that DR Congo's recent/current traumas have their roots in the country's historical trajectory. For a certainty, the Belgian colonial policy of "benevolent paternalism" (Merriam, 1961: 35) had done little to prepare the Congolese for governance (Clark, 2002: 2) and, as such, DR Congo's gravitation towards state failure was only a matter of time. The Belgian failure to prepare the DRC for nationhood and to instil a sense of cohesion and nationalist fervour in the people did not take long to manifest itself. The DRC was plagued by chaos barely a week after independence when the *Force publique* (Public Forces – FP) mutinied on 5 – 9 July 1960 (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 270). The violence that ensued snowballed into a national crisis that eventually consumed the first democratically elected Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba. Taking 'advantage' of the crisis, Colonel (later General, and from December 1962, Marshal) Joseph Désiré Mobutu (later Mobutu Sese Seko) seized power through a *coup d'état* in September 1960 (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 271). Although Mobutu relinquished power in February 1961, he again seized the reins of governance on November 25, 1965 and declared himself president. Mobutu Sese Seko held the country's political firmament for an uninterrupted period of thirty-two years during which "an extraordinary personalization of political rule resulted [and] a cult of personality flourished" (McCalpin, 2002: 42). The Mobutu regime was characterised by repression and tyranny; its record of brutality was *nonpareil*.

Perhaps it should be stated here that Mobutu's brutal regime was actively supported (and consolidated) by Western powers. Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002: 160-161) predicates external support for the Mobutu regime on three interdependent premises: first, the need to prevent or contain the spread of communism in consonance with the logic of Cold War politics; second, "the need to support loyal friends, regardless of their behaviour towards

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<sup>10</sup> John Stockwell's *In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978) offers a fairly convincing eyewitness account of the complicity of the CIA in the assassination of Lumumba. Stockwell is a former CIA officer who served in Central Africa in the 1960s. He became a critic of United States government policies after he resigned from the agency in 1976.

their own people” – still another strand in the logic of Cold War politics; and third (perhaps the most important), “the need to use the [DR] Congo to promote Western interests in Central and Southern Africa”. Given the foreign policy priorities of the Western powers during the Cold War, unflinching support for an ally – a bulwark of some sort against communism – was an absolute imperative. In essence, the fight against communism and the need to curtail Soviet influence in Africa were the rationale for Western support for Mobutu. Also at stake were the strategic and economic interests of the United States in particular. Hartung and Moix (2000) in a report prepared for the World Policy Institute posit that in order to keep this puppet regime in power, the United States assisted Mobutu by building his ‘arsenal’ through a “steady supply of rifles, ammunition, trucks, jeeps, patrol boats, and communications equipment. By the time the dictator was ousted in 1997, the U.S had delivered more than \$300 million (measured in constant 1998 dollars) in military hardware to Mobutu’s regime.” Besides, the United States reportedly “trained 1,350 of Mobutu’s soldiers at a cost of more than \$100 million” (*The Guardian* [Lagos] 30 January 2001: 61). The West not only kept or sustained Mobutu in power but also put a ‘hearty arsenal of deadly weaponry’ at his disposal in spite of his egregious human rights record. The cumulative effect of “Mobutuism” was the undermining of the Congolese state and the jeopardising of its prospects for survival. “In terms of political economy”, Clark (2002: 2) argues that “the internal logic of Mobutu’s ... state was such that it evolved inexorably toward collapse.”

It can be said that the Western nations betrayed the Congolese in at least two instances: first, their culpability in the assassination of DR Congo’s first prime minister and Pan-Africanist, Patrice Lumumba; and second, their ignominious support for Mobutu and his dictatorship. “[T]hese shameful episodes of betrayal” (*The Guardian* [Lagos] 30 January 2001: 61) illuminate the holistic understanding of the causalities in DR Congo’s postcolonial traumas, including the current crisis. The contradictions of Belgian colonialism, ‘Mobutuism’ (and its legacies) as well as Western complicity invariably lurk at the background of the crisis in the DRC. As McCalpin (2002: 46) aptly observes, ‘the only constant in more than three decades of DR Congo’s independence had been patrimonialism, authoritarianism, and political decline’. Perhaps it should be added that

this constant characterised no other regime but Mobutu's. Hence, the armed rebellion against Mobutu, which crystallised with the formation of the AFDL in 1996, did not come as a surprise to many observers. The AFDL, under the leadership of (now deceased) Laurent-Désiré Kabila, and with support from Rwanda and Uganda, swept through the DRC as Mobutu's poorly motivated soldiers offered little or no resistance to the insurrection. By May 1997, it became apparent that the Mobutu regime had had its days. AFDL troops seized Kinshasa on May 17, 1997 whilst Kabila renamed the country and proclaimed himself president.

As stated at the outset of this section, the DRC has been in the throes of conflict since 1998. On August 2 of that year, President Laurent-Désiré Kabila's (former) allies in the AFDL launched a rebellion in eastern DR Congo signalling a rupture in the alliance that brought Kabila to power in 1997.<sup>11</sup> The schism in the alliance dashed expectations that Laurent Kabila's assumption of political power would engender peace. Rwanda and Uganda – two countries that had backed Kabila in the rebellion that overthrew Mobutu – took up arms against Kabila, mainly on the grounds of Kabila's unwillingness to do the biddings of Kigali and Kampala. Rwanda accused Kabila of failing not only to take decisive action to protect Congolese Tutsis (whose safety and interests were dear to the government in Kigali) but also to 'liquidate' the *Interahamwe* (remnants of the extremist Hutu militia) and ex-FAR (*Forces Armées Rwandaises* or Rwandan Armed Forces) responsible for the Rwandan genocide – groups which were now taking refuge in DR Congo and constituting security threats to Rwanda. Given these factors, the Rwandans justified their invasion of (or intervention in) the DR Congo on "humanitarian and defensive grounds" (Longman, 2002: 128). On the other hand, Kampala accused the Kabila regime of undermining Uganda's national security since Kinshasa was allowing subversive elements and rebel movements, including the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), to launch attacks on Uganda from within DR Congo's territory (Owoeye & Amusan, 2000: 173). The foregoing marked the beginning of the conflict that later snowballed into a regional war.

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<sup>11</sup> The ousting of Mobutu as well as the eruption of the anti-Kabila revolution is well documented in several works on the conflict in the DRC. See for instance, Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002); Clark (2002); Ibeike-Jonah (2001); and Weiss (2000).

The intervention of Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe in support of the government in Kinshasa “widened” the war. Although the motivations of these countries differed, their intervention in the DR Congo war was apparently in response to Kabila’s diplomatic overtures, mainly the request for assistance in dealing with the aggression and invasion of the DRC by Rwanda and Uganda. Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe predicated their support for Kinshasa on (or under the guise of) the logic of mutual defence as provided for in the security and defence framework of the Southern African Development Community – SADC (Rupiya, 2002: 96; Dunn, 2002: 64).

However, various chapters in Clark’s (2002) compendium illustrate the fact that each (intervening) state had its own motivation(s), interest(s) and agenda(s) even though the SADC countries that intervened foiled the attempt by the Rwanda and Uganda-backed rebels to overthrow Kabila. In the case of Angola, its role in the DRC conflict was premised on three key elements: (i) the fight against the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (the National Union for Total Independence of Angola – UNITA), “especially by interdicting its supplies”; (ii) the need to protect the oil installations that finance Luanda’s war efforts; and (iii) the need “to maintain a favourable or compliant regime in Kinshasa” (Turner, 2002: 75). Namibia’s intervention in the DRC has been predicated largely on the economic interests of private individuals including former President Sam Nujoma’s family members. Many of his family members were reportedly deeply involved in the mining industry in the diamond rich Mbuji-Mayi in the Kasai province of the DRC (Owoeye & Amusan, 2000: 176).

At least three factors underpinned Zimbabwe’s involvement in the DR Congo war: (i) President Robert Mugabe’s desire to become Southern Africa’s *première* statesman and ‘kingmaker’ as a counterpoise to the growing influence of a post-apartheid South Africa; (ii) the formal request by the government of the DRC to the SADC; and (iii) economic motives of Mugabe and his family members (Rupiya, 2002: 96-97; Owoeye & Amusan,

2000: 176).<sup>12</sup> Suffice it to say that the involvement of Rwanda and Uganda (on the side of the rebels) and Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe (on the side of the government) exacerbated the conflict.

Indeed, the war in the DRC has been characterised by complexities that previously had not been witnessed in African conflicts. At one time the war drew in the armies of nine African countries – “directly or through the medium of proxy militias, mafia-style business networks or ethnic links” (Doyle, 2004: i.d.) – and as many as twelve irregular non-governmental militia groups, thus giving it the “qualities of a civil war and an international war” (Ross, 2004: 53). Elsewhere, I have described the war in the DRC as an internationalised intrastate conflict (Whetho, 2001: 62). Interlopers/foreign forces with divergent motivations have allied themselves with or fought against Congolese rebel groups in this brutal war of partition and plunder. It has been a conflict involving ‘a variety of shadow networks, states, mafias, private armies, “businessmen” and assorted state elites from both within and outside Africa’, with concomitant social, political and ecological dislocation for the whole of Central Africa (Taylor, 2003: 45).

The involvement of several actors (and their divergent but vested interests and agendas), including global businesses (Latham, Kassimir & Callaghy, 2001: 2) and profiteering networks has given the conflict the labels of “Africa’s First World War” (Taylor, 2003: 45) and “Africa’s First Continental War” (Weiss, 1999: 4). The conflict has equally been described as “the most deadly war ever documented in Africa or anywhere in the world during the past half-century” (Clark, 2002: 1). The DRC’s conflict, characterised by a “game of alliances” in which every actor has been guided by “my enemy’s enemy is my friend” logic (Reyntjens, 1998: 10), is undeniably Africa’s biggest war since the end of the Cold War. And according to the International Rescue Committee (2006c: i.d.), a

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<sup>12</sup> In terms of the economic interests of the Mugabe regime vis-à-vis Zimbabwe’s involvement in the DRC, Rupiya (2002: 96-97) argues that “whatever economic interests Zimbabwe subsequently acquired in [DR] Congo were not part of its initial calculus of intervention.” However, the validity of Rupiya’s claim is challenged by the “other” view that Mugabe was “lured by [DR] Congo’s rich natural resources” and that “Kabila and Mugabe had signed a US\$200 million contract involving corporations owned by Mugabe and his family” (Internet 10). The foregoing, it should be stated, does not lend credence to the subordination of economic motives to other factors in the intervention calculus.

global agency involved in peace work, the DRC conflict is “the deadliest since World War II”.

That said, natural resources, ethnicity and security concerns are at the hub of the conflict in the DRC. Furthermore, the war in DR Congo, and specifically the intervention of Rwanda, can also be situated within the larger Hutu-Tutsi rivalry in the Great Lakes region. For instance, it was noted above that Kigali predicated its military invasion of DR Congo on the imperative to ‘liquidate’ the *génocidaires/remnants* of the ethnic Hutu army (the *Interhamwe*) as their presence in the DRC was/is a threat to Rwanda’s national security. However, Rwanda’s (legitimate) security concerns, as Longman (2002: 141) argues, are obliterated by its desire for enrichment, which apparently has been (or is being?) satisfied by its exploitation of DR Congo’s natural resources as well as the misdeemeanour of its troops in the DRC. As a matter of fact, the underlying motivation for the (external) actors’ involvements in the conflict has been primarily economic, clearly defined as the attraction to DR Congo’s resources (Afoaku, 2002: 109-128; Clark, 2002: 145-68; Weinstein, 2000). Dunn (2002: 70) notes rather potently that ‘the DRC has become an economic colony for most of the combatants, with its resources being drained to the east and south.’

The allure of the vast mineral wealth of the DRC and the profitability of resource looting for foreign governments, rebel militia movements, and individual officers has not only made the war intractable but also has vitiated the incentive to end it (Ross, 2004: 53-54), thereby giving credence both to the high correlation between natural resources and (civil) war, and to the continuation and expansion of its geographical scope (Fearon, 2004; Buhaug & Gates, 2002: 417-33). Granted, ethnicity and security imperatives are crucial factors in the war, but the economic motives and the vested commercial interests of parties have undermined their saliency, which indubitably have made the resolution of the conflict difficult.

Combatants have adopted a number of strategies in this war of partition and plunder. Afoaku (2002: 120) describes the rebels’ strategy as one of *blitzkrieg* or quick victory

reminiscent of the AFDL's *modus operandi* for the overthrow of Mobutu. Hence, the rebels embarked on swift combat operations leading to the seizure and control of strategic mineral-rich areas including the 'Kivu provinces and portions of the Orientale and Bas-Congo provinces *en route* Kinshasa. But the rebels could not capture Kinshasa as the government received military support from Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe' (Afoaku, 2002: 120-121). Amnesty International (2003: i.d.) reports that belligerents have adopted such strategies as pillage, forced conscription of young persons and torture in pursuing their "war for profit" agenda. The DR Congo conflict – a multilayered war between local forces (such as Hema-Lendu ethnic fighting in Ituri in early 2001) and regional forces (such as armies of Rwanda against those of Uganda in Kisangani in August 1999 and May-June 2000) (Murison, 2002: 227) – is one that has had concomitant repercussions in terms of human casualties, social dislocation, economic downturn, and the further destruction of already deficient infrastructure. According to the International Rescue Committee (2006a: i.d.),

nearly 4 million people [have been] killed from war-related causes since [the eruption of the war in] 1998, the largest documented death toll in a conflict since World War II. In a matter of six years, the world lost a population equivalent to the entire country of Ireland or the city of Los Angeles.

The figures released by the International Rescue Committee (2006b: i.d.) 'indicate that almost 38,000 persons die in DR Congo every month, above what is considered a "normal level" for the country'. Although military operations have claimed a great number of lives, war-related consequences such as food shortages, hunger, diseases and the collapse of health infrastructure have accounted for more deaths. Apart from deaths, the conflict in the DRC has precipitated social dislocation and generated a stream of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), resulting in a complex humanitarian crisis. The war – going by current estimates – has produced over 2 million IDPs (International Rescue Committee, 2006c: i.d.) and over 400,000 refugees (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2005: i.d.). It is instructive to note that the magnitude and ramifications of the crisis in the DRC underpin its description "as the world's deadliest emergency" (International Rescue Committee, 2006c: i.d.).

Having said that, efforts have been made both at regional and global levels to end the conflict in the DRC. The SADC, the defunct Organisation of African Unity – OAU (now the African Union – AU), and the United Nations (UN) have at various times taken steps to bring peace to DR Congo. Significant developments in the peace process include but are not limited to:

- The signing of the Lusaka Peace Accord (or the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement) in July 1999 – a culmination of third-party intervention by the SADC under the direction of former Zambian President, Frederick Chiluba (*The Guardian on Sunday* [Lagos] 11 July 1999: 7).
- The efforts of Sir Ketumile Masire (the former president of Botswana) as OAU's neutral facilitator of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD). [Masire's efforts were however frustrated by the late President Laurent Kabila who accused the former of favouring the rebels and subsequently rejected not only Masire but also the Lusaka Accord] (Dunn, 2002: 68).
- The assassination of Laurent Kabila and the subsequent accession to power by his son, Joseph. The young 'Kabila's break from his father's legacy' gave fillip to the peace process in that he not only 'resuscitated the Lusaka Peace Accord but also cooperated with Masire to convoke the ICD as well as to allow the deployment of the UN observer force' (Dunn, 2002: 69).
- The establishment of a two-phase peacekeeping force by the UN in November 1999. The force, known as *Mission des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo* (United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo – MONUC), has over 16,000 troops [otherwise referred to as the "blue helmets"] in what is the "[UN's] biggest peacekeeping operation" in the world (Sundaram, 2005: i.d.).
- The convocation of the ICD at Sun City, South Africa in April 2003. The ICD established the framework for the current transitional government in the DRC. The transitional authority, in turn, produced a draft constitution which was endorsed by the Congolese in a national referendum in December 2005 (Interview with PMA, Pietermaritzburg, 03 January 2006). General elections scheduled for July 2006 ("180 degrees", SABC AFRICA, 07 March 2006 – 08:00 Central

African Time) were held as planned. The presidential elections in July 2006 did not produce an outright winner thus necessitating a second round (or run-off) between the two leading candidates – incumbent President, Joseph Kabila, and opposition leader, Jean Pierre Bemba – whose supporters clashed in Kinshasa after the declaration of the results. The second round of elections, held on 29 October 2006, produced Joseph Kabila as president-elect, but not without controversy as Jean Pierre Bemba denounced the results (Internet 11). It is hoped that the conclusion of the elections – the final phase of the transition process – will climax with the inauguration of the new government and the nurturing of peace and stability in the DRC.<sup>13</sup>

Although the overall political situation in the DRC suggests some stability, ethnic conflicts and fratricidal combat between signatories to the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and among former allies as well as rebel groups in eastern DR Congo intensified for a while after the closure of the ICD in April 2003 (Boshoff & Rupiya, 2004: 29; Vlassenroot & Raeymaekers, 2004), the year in which the war was officially declared over. Expressed differently, the significant saltations in the peace process – represented mainly by the Lusaka Agreement (in 1999) and the remarkable ICD which culminated in the current transitional government in Kinshasa (Alusala, 2004: 93-6; Smis & Trefon, 2003: 672), and the presence of MONUC forces – did not result in the complete cessation of conflict in the DRC. And only time will tell if the conclusion of the democratic transition process will usher in sustainable peace. However, it must be said that the deployment of MONUC troops brought about relative security in the country, expanded state authority over substantial segments of the country's territory, and created conditions under which elections could be held as scheduled. Nonetheless, in my discussions/correspondences with a cross section of Congolese, I learnt that the eastern region of DR Congo (predominantly the two Kivus – North and South Kivu – and the Ituri region) remained a theatre of war and continues to be plagued by conflict, even as at the time of writing. This presupposes that more effort is needed to attain sustainable

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<sup>13</sup> The concluding chapter of this study highlights the implications of the elections for DR Congo's future.

country-wide peace. The next chapter reviews scholarly works that are integral to the subject-matter explored by this thesis.

## CHAPTER THREE

### A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Religion is part of culture... [it] is an essential hue in the human mosaic.

(Jordan & Rowntree, 1990: 190).

#### **3.1 What is religion?**

Religion is one thing to the anthropologist, another to the sociologist, another to the psychologist (and again another to the next psychologist!), another to the Marxist, another to the mystic, ... and yet another to the Jew or Christian... There is consequently no universally accepted definition of religion, and quite possibly there never will be (Crawford, 2002: 3).

The concept of religion is plagued by definitional complexities ascribable to the plurality of belief systems and cultures. The motley of beliefs, persuasions and philosophies about religion, its intent, its functions, formalism and relevance makes it difficult to advance an all-encompassing generalisation about the concept. Put differently, religion is a heterogeneous and multidimensional entity, which does not lend itself to a universally acceptable definition. The problem of definition is of such critical magnitude that Park (1994: 32) posits: “the difficulties of defining ‘religion’ are a vocational hazard.” However, this ‘hazard’ should neither detain us here nor obviate the need to proffer a working definition as a prelude to explicating the perspective of religion, which this study adopts. That said, an exploration of the various definitions of religion is requisite to an operational generalisation.

Barrett (1982: 841) defines religion as “a system of faith and worship, centrally concerned with the means of ultimate transformation.” It is “an attitude of awe towards God, or gods, or the supernatural, or the mystery of life, accompanied by beliefs and affecting basic patterns of individual and group behaviour” (Bullock & Stallybrass, 1981: 537). Stark and Bainbridge (1979: 119) point out the quintessence of the supernatural in their definition of religion as “solutions to questions of ultimate meaning which postulate the existence of a supernatural being, world, or force, and which further postulate that this force is active, that events and conditions here on earth are influenced

by the supernatural.” Broek and Webb (1973: 134) posit that religion “comprises any form of faith from monotheism to ancestor worship and even magic, insofar as it contains an element of reverence for the supernatural.” The quest for ultimate transformation and/or group identity/consciousness informs and reinforces belief in the supernatural. In fact, the foregoing can be described as the essence of religion. Against this backdrop, Said and Funk (2001: i.d.) define religion as “a path of ultimate transformation, comprised of systems of symbols and guidelines [which] shape the individual and group subconscious from which social practices and interactions are all given meaning.”

Crawford (2002: 1, 201) quotes a number of definitions of religion as put forward by sociologists and scholars of comparative religion:

- “A system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggle with the ultimate problems of human life.” – J. M Yinger.
- “Any beliefs which involve the acceptance of a sacred, trans-empirical realm and any behaviour designed to affect a person’s relationship with that realm.” – P. Connolly.
- “A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite into one single [moral] community called church, all those who adhere to them.” – E. Durkheim.
- “Religion is a revolutionary urge, a psycho-social impulse to generate a new humanity.” – A. Pieris.
- “Beliefs, actions and institutions, which assume the existence of supernatural entities with powers of action or impersonal powers or processes possessed of moral purpose.” – S. Bruce.

The above definitions presuppose that religion has to do with personal experience with the extra-terrestrial, that it is a catalyst for change and that it creates a bond between adherents who, in turn, may form a close-knit unit for the sake of (re)asserting or achieving social solidarity. Hence, it can be said that a functional definition conceives of religion as doing something in, and for, a society. Apart from religion’s influence on an

individual, it has the capacity to shape social dynamics in fundamental ways. In other words, it does exert tremendous influence on individuals in their various clusters, including their social formations. For one thing, its inherent potential to give meaning to life and eschatological phenomena is portrayed in these definitions. And the latent functions of religion, as Wilson (1982: 32) notes, underscore its definition as ‘an obligation, a necessity, the ‘given’ means of coping with the world.’ The functionalist theory of religion postulates that religion serves as a ‘means of coping with the world’ through its offer of psychological reassurance otherwise expressed as hope (Wilson, 1982: 32). In fact, it is more of what religion *does* (functional), rather than what it *is* (substantive), that informs and resonates in most definitions.

The search for a working definition necessitates the analysis of the various definitions on the basis of their relational aspects i.e. whether these definitions are substantive or functional. In other words, it is necessary to categorise these definitions according to their contextual syllogisms with a view to arriving at an operational definition of religion, which not only encapsulates the substantive and functional aspects but also suits the sense in which the concept is used in this study. The various definitions (whether substantive or functional), according to Crawford (2002: 3-7, 192-202), can be grouped into the following broad categories: ethical, legal, ritual, institutional, credal, personal and political.

An *ethical* definition of religion stresses the importance of morality and ethical values including good conduct and the ‘dignity of the human person’. Almost (if not all) faiths emphasize certain virtues or ideals that should guide one’s relationship with the supernatural and even one’s neighbour. The ethical definition of religion puts these values as well as adherence to them ahead of every other trait of belief systems. Therefore, it can be said that the primacy of idealism – the cardinal thrust of the ethical definition – pretermits other traits that are religious in character and thus require a mention in any definition. Undoubtedly, religion involves much more than morality. Besides, the ethical definition ignores the darker side of human nature (Crawford, 2002:

193). Consequently, a purely ethical definition of religion is both restrictive and defective.

A *legal* definition conceives of religion as a legal instrument, which regulates human interaction with the supernatural. All known faiths have established codes of conduct which guide their adherents. Anyone who ascribes to the code of a particular faith is thus said to profess or belong to that religion. However, religion is much more than a collection of laws. The spirituality of adherents is a critical component of religious ethos. As Crawford (2002: 194) notes, ‘the inner condition of the heart’ of those who profess a particular faith is of importance and as such should be factored into any definition that will pass as panoptic.

A *ritual* definition of religion derives from the performance of rites. Crawford (2002: 194) argues that a definition that encapsulates morality, law and rites would appear appropriate. But such a definition ignores one important aspect of religion – its institutional character by which is meant the grouping of people into differentiated religious clusters. The foregoing therefore underscores the imperative of a broad generalisation that takes cognisance of morality, law, rites and faith-driven social/institutional formations.

The above brings us to the *institutional* definition of religion. Crawford (2002: 195) notes that ‘many people cannot think about religion except in the institutional sense’. Although he does not elaborate this point, it is understandable in view of the fact that religion creates and sustains social identity often along organisational lines. Religion articulates and aggregates ideas that appeal to persons who in turn identify themselves with the group or institution, which propagates those ideas. Expressed differently, persons who profess a particular faith are almost always united under an institutional framework. Hence, Johnston (1994: 4) reckons, “the term religion is meant to imply an institutional framework within which specific theological doctrines and practices are advocated and pursued, usually among a community of like-minded believers.” However, a central institution could be lacking where there are different philosophical

perspectives (even) within the same faith. The institutional definition suffers a setback where an institution does not (exist to) coordinate the elements of morality, law and rites in the expression of spirituality.

Whereas institutions may not always be present, creed is the *sine qua non* of all religions. “All religions have beliefs” (Crawford, 2002: 196) hence the *credal* definition of religion. These beliefs are intended to provide overall guidance for adherents in both minuscule and fundamental matters. The issue of creed is so important that any adherent who intentionally deviates or undermines the system of beliefs incurs the charge of heresy. It should also be stated here that above all else, it is creed that distinguishes one faith from another, thus making it the one element that should come across in any definition of religion.

*Personal* definitions emphasize the experiences of individuals as opposed to institutional attributes. For instance, Alfred Whitehead (quoted in Crawford, 2002: 197) contends that religion is experienced in solitariness; it has to do with the individual rather than institutions. In a similar vein, James (1985) focuses on the personal dimension of religion as he argues that inner dispositions and conscience of the individual are the focal points of religion. On the strength of his convictions, James (1985: 26) defines religion as “the feelings, acts, experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine.” Clearly, it is necessary to reflect the experiences of the individual in any definition of religion. However, the problem with personal definitions is that they ignore institutions as crucial factors, which can give character and substance to their members’ religiosity. Indeed, more often than not, faith-based organisations are not only instrumental but also provide the context and transformative impulsion for their members’ spiritual metamorphoses and journey. This reality needs to be given expression in any definition or generalisation about religion.

Finally (and more importantly for the purpose of this study), there is the *political* definition, which derives from the functionalist theory of religion. Pieris’ definition

(quoted above, *supra*, p. 35) of religion as a “revolutionary urge [and] a psychological impulse to generate a new humanity” coheres with religion’s role in bringing about (either positive or negative) change in society. The performance of such role is essentially a political undertaking. Crawford (2002: 198) suggests that the political definition takes liberation theology as its point of departure since it emphasizes the involvement of religious actors in the affairs of the state. The reality is that organised religion has been involved in the politics of many states, even in the affairs of secular states. In view of the fact that religion permeates national life in many societies, the political facet of religion deserves mention in an all-embracing definition.

Having considered the various sub-thematic constructs under which the different definitions of religion could be placed, it is axiomatic that a working definition should be broad enough to reflect the totality of religious manifestations. Yet, arriving at such all-encompassing definition is difficult, if not impossible. The reason being that religion is a heterogeneous concept, which creates an analytical paradox. Against the backdrop of the paradox of religion, Davie (1990: 395) asserts that “it is difficult to imagine a field of enquiry containing a greater number of apparent contradictions.” Despite the contradictions within and between religions, Crawford (2002: 201-202) proffers a definition which he describes as ‘neither too broad nor too narrow, short, inclusive’ and applicable to all major religions: “[r]eligion is a belief in God, who is the unconditioned ground of all things, and in spiritual beings, resulting in personal experience of salvation or enlightenment, communities, scriptures, rituals, and a way of life.”

Crawford’s definition encapsulates not only the substantive and functional aspects of religion but also the ethical, ritual, credal and personal facets of religious expression. However, it is silent on the institutional aspect as well as the religious expression in the political realm. In view of the focus of this study – religion’s peacebuilding capacity in the public space – Crawford’s characterization is of limited applicability since it omits two critical dimensions of religious manifestation which are fundamental to this study. Although Johnston’s definition (quoted above, *supra*, p. 37) stresses the institutional element, it ignores the political. This study contends that the involvement of faith-based

institutions in the public space makes them religio-political movements and that this realisation should be reflected in a working definition.<sup>14</sup> The point here is that a definition – insofar as it relates to the subject-matter of this study – should (to a large extent, if not entirely) embrace all the attributes of religion as highlighted above.

Writing on the place of religion in Third World politics, Haynes (1993: 28) opines that the term ‘religion’ is “a multi-faceted concept with three distinct, yet interrelated, meanings.” In the first context, religion refers to “religious establishments (including priests and officials) and groups sponsored by religious organisations.” Second, religion “pertains to models of social and individual behaviour that help to organize everyday life; it is to do with the idea of *transcendence*, i.e. it is associated with supernatural realities; with *sacredness*, i.e. as a system of language and practice that organizes the world in terms of what is deemed sacred.” Finally, religion has to do with *ultimacy*, i.e. it “relates people to the ultimate conditions of their existence” (Haynes, 1993: 28) [emphasis original]. Haynes classification illuminates the definitions highlighted above and situates the concept of religion within discrete but related contexts. The usage of the term ‘religion’ to imply ‘religious establishments, groups sponsored by religious organisations, spiritual belief patterns and models of behaviour that help to organize everyday life’ is the most appropriate for this study.

Against this background, this study advances an operational definition of religion as an institutional framework through which like-minded believers are galvanised into action anchored in the idea of transcendence and in personal/social imperatives that express their spirituality. Such expression of spirituality could be geared towards improving existential realities or towards attaining/strengthening the bond between man and the supernatural force no matter how defined. This definition takes cognisance of the contemporary manifestation of religion as an ideological movement, which exerts considerable influence on social as well as political dynamics within and between nation-states. In addition, religion is not just an epiphenomenon whose domain is strictly in the

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<sup>14</sup> It should be stated here that while such a definition may suit the purpose of this study, it may prove inadequate or even inappropriate where religion is analysed in relation to other subject-matters.

subconscious of the individual; it is a potent factor that engenders group identity and mobilises people to action in fundamental ways be it in the instigation of violence, the resolution of conflicts, post-war reconstruction or the facilitation of sustainable development. In fact, religion features prominently in public life in relation to many social phenomena. For example, Wilson (1982: 34) aptly notes that religion often serves ‘to legitimise the purposes and procedures of society; sustain men in their struggle; justify wars; provide explanation for misfortunes; function as a platform for dispute resolution; and prescribe techniques with which people could undertake daily tasks or once-in-a-lifetime enterprise.’ One sphere of human activity where religion has featured prominently relates to the conduct of warfare; thus, it necessitates scholarly interest and analysis of the nexus between religion and conflict.

### **3.2 Contested ground: religion and conflict**

“[R]eligion appears in history both as a world-maintaining and as a world-shaking force” (Berger, 1969:100)

One of the significant motifs in conflict research is the role of religion in conflict. Has religion played a constructive (i.e. peacebuilding) or a destructive role in conflict? There are two schools of thought with regard to the analyses of this nexus in conflict discourse. On the one hand, it is argued that religion precipitates and exacerbates conflict. On the other hand, the positive role of faith-based networks in facilitating inter-faith dialogue, reconciliation, and development lends credence to the notion that religion is a resource for peace. The question of whether religion is inherently a source of conflict or whether it is a resource for peace remains a subject of intense debate among scholars and policy makers alike. As will be seen in this section, these two perspectives (and/or the debate itself) reflect the social ambivalence of religion. This study subsequently examines the premises and evidence adduced thereof to support the arguments of these diametrically opposed perspectives, starting with the analysis of the view that expresses religion’s culpability in the eruption and the perpetuation of conflict.

Reychler (1997: 21) writes that ‘wars have been fought in the name of different gods and goddesses’ since the awakening of religion. He adds: “[s]till today most violent conflicts

contain religious elements linked up with ethno-national, inter-state, economic, territorial, cultural and other issues.” M<sup>c</sup>Ternan (2003: ix) puts it succinctly as he argues that “[i]n the past twenty years the world has witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of conflicts where religion has become a salient factor.” The reality that there are (or have been) numerous conflicts in different parts of the world in which adherents of all the major world faiths can be found (or had been found) justifying atrocities on the grounds that their cause is righteous informed the title of M<sup>c</sup>Ternan’s book, *Violence in God’s Name: Religion in an Age of Conflict*. Similarly, Haught (1995) ‘offers a sobering chronicle of the many acts of cruelty, molestation, and slaughter of innocents that have been perpetrated in the name of one religion or another.’ His book, entitled *Holy Hatred: Religious Conflicts of the ’90s* gives details of religiously-motivated violence in twenty-five nations.<sup>15</sup> Haught’s reportage ranges from extra-judicial murders to large-scale conflicts, all of which have been carried out in the name of a holy cause. Table 1 below enumerates some of 20<sup>th</sup> century conflicts with a religious dimension:

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<sup>15</sup> Haught’s book highlights the incidents of violence with religious undertones in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cyprus, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Kuwait, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, Pakistan, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, the defunct Soviet Union, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey and the United States.

**Table 1: Conflicts with a religious dimension**

Country	Main Actors	Period	Casualties (estimates)
Myanmar/Burma	Buddhists vs. Christians	1948 – 1977	20,000 – 40,000
Israel/Palestine	Jews vs. Arabs; Muslims vs. Christians	1968; recurrent	25,000 – 36,000
Northern Ireland	Catholic vs. Protestants	1969; sporadic	7,000 – 10,000
Philippines (Mindanao)	Muslims vs. Christians (Catholics)	1970s	50,000 – 75,000
Bangladesh	Buddhists vs. Christians	1970s, 1980s	300,000
Lebanon	Syria-backed Shiites (Amal) vs. Iran-backed Shiites (Hezbollah)	1970s, 1980s	25,000 – 35,000
Ethiopia (Oromo)	Muslims vs. Central government	1976	N/A
Egypt	Muslims vs. Central government vs. Coptic Christians	1977	N/A
Tunisia	Muslims vs. Central government	1978	N/A
India (Punjab)	Sikhs vs. Central government	1982	16,000 – 20,000
Sri Lanka	Hindus vs. Muslims	1983	18,000+
Sudan	Muslims vs. Native religions	1983; sporadic	1,000,000 – 2,000,000
Algeria	Muslims vs. Central government	1988; sporadic	100,000+
Uzbekistan	Sunni Uzbeks vs. Shiite Meschetes	1989	N/A
Azerbaijan	Muslims vs. Christian Armenians	1990	25,000+
India (Kashmir)	Muslims vs. (Hindu-controlled) Central government	1990; sporadic	20,000 – 40,000
Indonesia (Aceh)	Muslims vs. Central government	1990	10,000 – 12,000
Nigeria	Muslims vs. Christians	1990s; recurrent	18,000 – 46,000
Iraq	Sunni Muslims vs. Shiite Muslims	1991 – 1992	40,000
Yugoslavia (Croatia)	Serbian Orthodox Christians vs. Roman Catholic Christians	1991 – 1992	25,000
Yugoslavia (Bosnia)	Orthodox Christians vs. Catholic vs. Muslims	1992 – 1995	175,000
Afghanistan	Fundamentalist Muslims vs. Moderate Muslims	1992	N/A
Tajikistan	Muslims vs. Orthodox Christians	1992	40,000 – 50,000
India (Uthar-Pradesh)	Hindus vs. Muslims	1992	3,000

Sources: Compiled by researcher and also adapted from Reyhler (1997).

The literature on religion and conflict is replete with copious scenarios in which “religious differences have often been a cause or a pretext for war” (Carter, 1994: vii). Expressed differently, religion has been adjudged as the leitmotif of war, genocide and terrorism (all the more so following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States). Historically and currently, religion has been implicated in numerous conflicts and, as such, it is not surprising that the literature on the culpability of religion in mass slaughter is extant and burgeoning. It is difficult to embark on a comprehensive review of such literature in this section, and in this study. For the want of time and space, therefore, this study highlights the scholarly works that have been published on this subject-matter rather than engage in an extensive review of the many cases of religious conflicts.

Drake (1998:53-85), Juergensmeyer (1997), Hoffman (1995), and Martin (1989) posit that religion is often used as a justification for terrorism. Other scholars such as Zitrin (1998) and Rapoport (1991) stretch the argument further by contending that violence is an intrinsic element of religion. Regardless of the veracity or mendacity of this claim, writes Fox (2004:58), there is ample evidence that “many religious groups see themselves at war with various enemies, be they secular or from another religion.” In another context, Fein (1990:49) posits that religion contributes to genocide. Fein’s argument is substantiated by the ignoble role of faith-based networks, for example, in the infamous Rwandan genocide in 1994. The works of McCullum (n.d.); Gourevitch (1998); Rittner, Roth and Whitworth (2004); Dallaire (2003); and Eltringham (2004) provide intriguing details of the culpability of churches in the Rwandan genocide.

Writing on the extent to which Christian churches were implicated in the Rwandan genocide, Longman (2001: 163) notes that ‘churches served as the country’s killing fields, were a major site for massacres, and many Christians participated in the slaughter, including church personnel and lay leaders.’ Whereas some pastors and priests participated in the slaughter, leading death squads, other church leaders failed to denounce the violence – thus giving it tacit support (Des Forges, 1999:245-248). A number of church leaders are standing trial or have been indicted for genocidal crimes at

the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in Arusha, Tanzania. Undoubtedly, the infamous episode in Rwanda is illustrative of religion's dark side.

Elsewhere, religion has been at the heart of, or at least has been implicated in, intermittent or intractable conflicts *vis-à-vis* the issues of ethnicity and resource distribution, including power. In the Sudan, for instance, 'religious differences have been imputed as a major factor in the wars between the Sudanese government and southern insurgents' (Assefa, 1990: 255). Apart from 'couching the north-south conflict in the Sudan in religious terms, northern soldiers have inflicted unrestrained cruelty on Southerners because they felt there was religious license for their behaviour', and vice versa (Assefa, 1990: 259). By and large, religious nationalism (mainly Muslim fundamentalism) in the Sudan has 'created a sense of incompatibility, has given license to behave inhumanely towards those who do not share the same religion and has thus exacerbated conflict' (Assefa, 1990: 261). It is instructive to note that while significant progress has been made towards the resolution of the conflict in the Sudan, the country is still grappling with the contradictions of the polarisation of its society along ethno-religious lines. In fact, Sudan's religious demography as well as the irreconcilability of different religious convictions (along the Christian/Animist-Muslim divide) has been a major impediment to the resolution of the country's conflict (Interview with a Sudanese student in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, 05 August 2005).

Further, religion has been implicated in several conflicts in Nigeria (Haynes, 1996: 212-15). However, it is trite to say that religion has often masked the deeper issues of skewed federalism, the citizenship question, and the struggle for power and resources in many of the conflicts in Nigeria. And whereas ethnic and regional antagonisms often overlap with religious strife, Nigeria, *stricto sensu*, has had a fair share of religiously-motivated violence. "Religion has remained a core, largely divisive part of the politics of regions and ethnicity" (Nwangwu, 2000: i.d.) and, as such, has fuelled civil strife in Nigeria. For instance, religious conflicts (among other factors) in the northern region of Nigeria, where thousands of Igbo and easterners (mainly Christians) were killed in 1966-1967, contributed to the declaration of the defunct Republic of Biafra (Nwangwu, 2000; i.d.)

which in turn plunged the country into a 30-month civil war. Moreover, Minchakpu (2000a: i.d.) reports:

[b]etween 1980 and 2000, over 30 major religious conflicts have been recorded between Christians and Muslims in northern Nigeria. During these conflicts, thousands of Christians and Muslims have been killed, and hundreds of church buildings have been destroyed.

Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, Nigeria has witnessed a bewildering profusion of religious conflicts, arising especially from the introduction or the implementation of Sharia law in most of the states in the north. Table 2 below profiles some of the cases of religiously-motivated violence in Nigeria since 1980:

**Table 2: Religious conflicts in Nigeria, 1982-2004**

<b>State</b>	<b>Conflict sketch</b>	<b>Casualty profile</b>
Borno	Christian-Muslim conflicts between 1982 and 2000	Hundreds of Christians and dozens of Muslims killed; over 200 churches destroyed.
Gombe	(i) Attack on Christian villages by Muslim bandits (1997) (ii) Attack on Christian villages by Muslim bandits (1999)  (iii) Sharia-related violence	(i) 16 persons killed. (ii) 36 persons killed; 42 injured; 433 Christian-owned houses destroyed. (iii) 25 persons killed.
Kaduna	Conflict over the adoption of Sharia (2000)	Resulted in the death of 609 persons; 1000 houses and 123 churches were destroyed. (Church leaders insisted that 875 Christians alone were killed and that 800 churches were destroyed. 20 pastors also lost their lives.
Kano	Several clashes between Christian and Muslims, the most recent (in May 2004) being Muslim attacks on Christians in retaliation for Christian attacks on Muslims in Yelwa, Plateau State.	Loss of thousands of lives and wanton destruction of property in these conflicts. Most recent (May 2004): 30 killed, 300 injured, 10,000 Christians displaced.
Kwara	(i) Attack on Christian students of the University of Ilorin (November 1998) (ii) Clashes between Christian and Muslims after the demolition of the Cathedral Church of God by Muslim fanatics (iii) Christian-Muslim conflict after Muslim leaders called for the relocation of Churches located in the state capital, Ilorin (1999)	(i) 20 injured. (ii) Casualty figure not available.  (iii) 18 churches burnt.
Plateau	(i) Attack by Muslims militants on the Church of Christ, Yelwa (February 2004) (ii) Seemingly retaliatory attack by (Christian militia) on Muslims (May 2004)	(i) A Pastor and 48 members of the Church killed.  (ii) Resulted in the death of 65 persons.

Source: Adapted from Minchakpu (2000a; 2000b)

Apart from the conflicts highlighted in Table 2, Muslim fundamentalists, who opposed the staging of the Miss World beauty pageant in Nigeria in November 2002, embarked on a violent protest which left at least 200 people dead and thousands injured. Twenty-two churches and mosques were destroyed (McCaughan, n.d., i.d.). A Christian mob retaliated before the crisis was brought under control.<sup>16</sup> The violence in Nigeria forced organisers of the pageant to move the event to London.

The conflict scenarios in the Middle East, the Sudan, Rwanda and Nigeria as well as in the countries listed in Table 1 point to the saliency or the exploitation of religion in the eruption and continuation of conflicts. Why does religion lend itself to such destructive end or provide justification for violence? The answer is because religion is inextricably bound up with all the different components of human identity, which if threatened, tends to justify or legitimise violence in the course of protecting that identity. Elaborating this point, Rosen (2005: i.d.) states:

Indeed because religion is so inextricably bound up with identity, religion itself acquires far greater prominence in times of threat and conflict, nurturing and strengthening the identity that senses itself as threatened, in opposition to that which is perceived as threatening it.

Rosen (2005: i.d.) further adds:

The character that religion assumes under such circumstances is often not just one of nurturing, but often one of self-preoccupation and paradoxically even one of self-righteousness, that disregards “the other” who is perceived as not part of one’s identity group and even demonizes that “other” who is perceived as hostile, often portraying the latter ... as ‘a perfect picture of malice’.

In essence, religion fuels or is implicated in conflict because it is exploited in ‘characterising one’s own cause as righteous while using religiously based enemy images which tend to demonise’ opponents as the “other” (Williamson, 1990: 246). Religion lends itself to the exacerbation of conflict as it is “associated more with partisan insularity

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<sup>16</sup> The crisis erupted after an article in a local newspaper, *Thisday*, speculated that the Islamic Prophet, Muhammad might have married one of the contestants if he were still alive and had laid eyes on the beauty queens. That was nothing but blasphemy from the point of view of Muslim fundamentalists.

if not downright hostility towards the ‘other’” (Rosen, 2005: i.d.) even when the issue in discord is not (strictly) about faith. This “us-against-them” characterisation is at the core of the hate language usually employed by religious fundamentalists (and sometimes, leaders) in the legitimisation and continuation of violence. For instance, such characterisation had been employed (albeit occasionally) in the personal disagreements that snowballed into ethno-religious crises in Nigeria.

What is more, religious conflicts – or conflicts in which religion plays even a minute role – are difficult to resolve. Why? Because religious conflicts are ‘transformed into value conflicts which have the tendency to become mutually exclusive or zero-sum issues’ (Assefa, 1990: 259). Thus, the “standard tools of diplomacy – willingness to compromise, for instance, and to forgive old grievances – can be more difficult to apply when combatants claim God is on their side” (*Awake!* 2003: 28). The foregoing suggests that apart from its conflict generating capacity, religion can also impede the resolution of conflicts. Given the deep-seated attachment to values on the part of religionists, it is little wonder that conflicts which prove the most difficult to resolve are those with a religious element.

Indeed, religion’s culpability in numerous murderous adventures has never been in doubt. Whereas some disputes are wrapped in religion, others are ignited by nationalism, grievance or resource scarcity but at times justified or fuelled by religion. Hence, a former president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D. C., Ernest Lefever (quoted in *The Watchtower* September 1, 1995: 7), concludes: “[f]rom ancient times to the present, very few wars have been fought in which religion has not played at least some part.” But what is the contention of the other school of thought vis-à-vis religion and conflict?

The literature on religion as the *leitmotif* for war ignores the potential and demonstrated capacity of religion to facilitate peacebuilding and sustainable development within and across societies. Put differently, the emphasis on religion ‘as the source of violent conflicts around the world obscures the positive role that religion *frequently* plays in

conflict transformation and peacebuilding' (Smith, n.d., i.d.) [Emphasis added]. Religion serves such a positive end by teaching adversaries to 'recognize the essential humanity of their political foes and to cultivate the spiritual values of compassion, forgiveness, self-examination and reconciliation' (Gottlieb, 2002: 74). These virtues, which are integral to conflict transformation, have always been projected by religious leaders during their facilitation of peace processes. Indeed, a number of scholarly works have been published in recognition of the positive role of religion in public life in general and in peacebuilding in particular. However, it must be acknowledged that the number of such scholarly efforts pales into insignificance when compared to those which mirror the reality that points in the opposite direction i.e. the perspective examined above. The reason is that 'the increasing role of religious leaders, religious institutions, and religiously motivated lay figures in conflict resolution is a recent phenomenon – a contradistinction to the millennial role of religion as a source of conflict' (Luttwak, 1994: 16). In addition, 'the role of religious leaders and institutions in peacebuilding has, until recently, been ignored, disregarded or treated as a marginal phenomenon hardly worth noting' (Luttwak, 1994: 9-10). This study deviates from this analytical trend as it next highlights case studies in the positive roles that religion has played in public life with reference to peacebuilding.

Nichols (1994: 65-87) depicts a fascinating example of successful faith-based intervention in the peace process in Nicaragua in the late 70s and in the 80s. The decade-long conflict was between the Sandinistas and the East Coast Indians over the issue of political autonomy for the latter. In an attempt to resolve the conflict, a 'Conciliation Commission, comprising a small group of Protestant Church leaders, became the moving force in push to bring the Sandinistas into negotiations with the Indian and Creole leaders' (Nichols, 1994: 65). The Conciliation Commission launched a series of extended negotiation sessions between the warring factions. Most of these sessions, which produced significant peace accords, were held in the Moravian Church of Managua. According to Nichols (1994: 81), the Conciliation Commission, over the course of a decade, helped the belligerents "to move from armed conflict to a cessation of hostilities". In 1988, the Commission mediated the accord which ushered in a climate of

peace. Nichols (1994: 83) submits that the Commission's success was attributable to "its perceived integrity and the trust generated among the participants" during the peace process.

Religiously motivated conciliation was equally attempted during the Nigerian civil war (1967-70). Sampson (1994: 89-118) notes Quaker Conciliation's efforts at brokering truce between the warring sides: the Federal Government and the secessionist Biafran forces. The Quaker Conciliation's role in the peace process consisted of the following: opening lines of communication (between General Yakubu Gowon, head of the Federal Government, and the Biafran leader, Odumegwu Ojukwu); reducing suspicions, misperceptions and fears; and advocating for a negotiated settlement while supporting official mediation efforts (Sampson, 1994: 94). Although the success recorded by the Quakers was quite limited (owing to the intransigence of the warring parties), they "won the trust, respect, and in some cases, the affection of the Nigerian and Biafran leaders" (Sampson, 1994: 106) and thus were able to open the lines of communication between the Federal Government and the Biafrans. Sampson (1994: 109-111) implies that the limited success of the Quakers, that is, their inability to bring about an end to the civil war, was not a failure of religiously motivated conciliation but a function of the interplay of economic and political factors within the context of *realpolitik*.

The positive role of religious institutions and religious leaders in facilitating peace processes also came to the fore during the conflicts in Mozambique and in Burundi. This is illustrated by the efforts of the Community of Sant' Egidio (a religious institution) and those of Monsignor Jaime Gonçalves (the Archbishop of Beira) as they facilitated the settlement of the Mozambique civil war (Hume, 1994: 3-4). These actors equally played a crucial role in the resolution of the Burundi conflict through the convocation of talks in Rome for the country's warring factions (as part of the Arusha peace process) which ultimately extricated Burundi from the throes of war and set it on the path towards peace (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1997). Elsewhere, the Churches have been actively involved in efforts at facilitating negotiations between the parties to the conflict in Northern Ireland (Falconer, 1990: 273-280).

Kraybill (1994: 209-257) notes that religious actors namely the Catholic Church and the Quakers played crucial peacebuilding roles during the crises of transition from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe. Although the Catholic Church had initially been implicated as the “sanctifier of the white-dominated status quo” (Kraybill, 1994: 212), it was to later (beginning in 1972), embark on peace advocacy through which it publicised the effects of racial injustice. The Church’s main channels of engagement were the Commission for Justice and Peace (CJP) and the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR). These two institutions lobbied the international community and proposed negotiations with a view to bringing the impasse in (the then) Rhodesia to a peaceful end. Further, they facilitated dialogue between the government and the liberation movements prior to the Lancaster House talks which culminated in the settlement of the Rhodesian question (Kraybill, 1994: 216-219).

Of all the intervenors in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, the Quakers “were the most strategically involved in negotiation efforts to end the war” (Kraybill, 1994: 233). As part of their efforts, the Quakers conducted four peace missions to Africa between 1972 and 1980. They also sent delegations to the Geneva and Lancaster House conferences. Their involvement revolved around: (i) establishing human solidarity with all parties to the conflict; (ii) opening channels of communication; (iii) supporting formal negotiations and; (iv) advocating policies and actions in support of reconciliation (Kraybill, 1994: 233-241). Kraybill’s analysis portrays the importance of religion in facilitating peace in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe with emphasis on Christian leaders and groups acting as peacemakers.

Even in the Sudan where religion has been implicated in the country’s conflicts, religious leaders and institutions have paradoxically been involved in efforts at building peace and offering succour to victims. According to Assefa (1990: 259), religion ‘has helped to minimize the pain and suffering’ resulting from Sudan’s conflicts:

During both civil wars, religious organizations have provided much-needed humanitarian assistance and relief to war victims ... the religious umbrella has been a very

effective mechanism to mobilize and channel life-saving resources.

In addition, the World Council of Churches (WCC), the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) and the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) have mediated in the conflicts in the Sudan with a view to finding amicable settlement (Assefa, 1990: 259). The roles of these religious actors and formal mediators were instrumental to the formalisation of the truce that terminated the first civil war in the Sudan. Elsewhere, the remarkable role of South Africa's Archbishop Desmond Tutu in the reconciliation process in South Africa (Reychler, 1997), the positive impact of church leaders on the conflict dynamic in the Sudan (Badal, 1990: 263-272), and the advocacy of non-violence by the Catholic Church in the Philippines are all illustrative of the positive role of religion in peacebuilding. The aforementioned case studies strengthen the veracity of the claim that faith-based networks often play "a reconciling role by inhibiting violence, lessening tensions, and contributing decisively to the resolution of conflicts" (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1997: i.d.).

Having considered these positive roles that religious leaders and institutions play in promoting peace, the question that follows is: what are the underpinnings or causalities of religiously motivated peacebuilding? In other words, what factors underlie the involvement of religious networks in conflict transformation?

A number of variables give religious networks comparative advantage in conflict transformation and development processes. For a certainty, religious institutions have the capacity to cultivate attitudes of forgiveness and reconciliation (Reychler, 1997). Faith-based organisations have extensive communication and infrastructural networks, enjoy the goodwill and allegiance of their members, and thus provide space for expression and for social mobilisation and empowerment especially when the legitimacy of the government, the state or international institutions is undermined (Reychler, 1997). The Commission for Africa (2005: 121) also notes that "[r]eligion provides the means by which to understand and adjust to conflict and tragedy...It provides language of hope and aspiration."

Religious actors also help to create environments conducive to negotiations since warring parties are almost always more likely to see them (faith-based actors) as non-political and humanitarian intervenors. As Assefa (1990: 260) aptly posits, “intermediaries were better off if they were considered as ‘people of religion’ rather than as politicians, even if they came from a different faith.” The questions of reconciliation, forgiveness and suffering – which religious actors often raise during negotiations – go beyond political considerations and, as such, are more appealing to warring parties. Assefa (1990: 260) concludes that religion’s comparative advantage in this regard derives from the expectation that religious actors would display such traits as ‘honesty, trustworthiness, evenhandedness, and a genuine concern for all the parties that are affected by the conflict thus enhancing religion’s credibility and the trust-base needed to undertake a peacemaking role’.

Bunting (2005) argues that the aforementioned attributes give religious groups advantages over the nation state in Africa in several spheres of public life, thus underscoring the success of religious organisations where politicians and the state have failed. Indeed, many African states have failed to fulfil the aspirations of their citizenry, thus necessitating the intervention of non-governmental entities in spheres where the state is found wanting.<sup>17</sup> This failure, which represents a decline in statecraft, creates a vacuum which religion is filling (Commission for Africa, 2005: 121) in several positive ways including the provision of social services and the facilitation of sustainable development.

In this section, the dark side of religion as well as its positive roles across societies has been brought to the fore. It has been established that religion is a source of conflict, that it justifies or legitimises violence and that it even hinders the resolution of conflicts in that primordial transcendental values become entrenched in one’s disagreements with the

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<sup>17</sup> This study does not advocate the take over of the functions which constitute the exclusive domain or preserve of states by non-state actors. Rather, it suggests partnership that emphasizes the complementarity between governmental and non-governmental structures in tasks that could be executed with minimal constraints while guaranteeing best results in the event of such collaboration.

“other”. Paradoxically, available evidence suggests that religion has functioned as a force for good. Religious actors have, on the strength of their moral character, played active roles in peacebuilding. Beyond peacemaking, historical and current realities (in Africa for instance) show that religious networks have in a number of cases (especially in the areas of provision of social services) excelled where the state has failed. The foregoing typifies the important positive contributions of religion in public life. But what conclusion should be reached on this premise of the socially ambivalent function of religion? The section that follows, on the strength of the evidence considered thus far, attempts to synthesize the contestations in the murky debate on religion and conflict.

### **3.3 Towards a synthesis of the debate**

One of the most important findings of cross-cultural conflict resolution research is that religion is a *perennial and perhaps inevitable factor in both conflict and conflict resolution* (Said & Funk, 2001: i.d.) [emphasis mine].

The above holistic assessment of the nexus between religion and conflict within historical and current contexts suggests that religion is a force for both good and bad. On the one hand, the cases in which religion has been employed for destructive ends are legion. There has been religious justification of such acts as terrorism, genocide and war. On the other hand, the positive roles of religion have been exemplified in the areas of social services delivery, conflict transformation, and developmental assistance. It is not uncommon for scholars of comparative religion as well as cognate sub-disciplines to align their research orientations and views to either of these two sides of the ‘religious coin’ – a stereotype which this study does not wholly conform to. Rather than align itself with either a sanctimonious or Mephistophelian view of religion, this study takes cognisance of the constructive and destructive manifestations of religion and, as such, argues for the recognition of religion along the lines of its socially ambivalent character.

While a further exposé on the destructive and positive roles of religion may not provide any new insights towards evolving a synthesis, it is apposite to critique the “religion-as-a-decisive-factor-in-conflict” paradigm. This study contends that a painstaking scrutiny of

some of the conflicts that are characterised as religious is more likely to confound analysts in that religion is often a façade for the underlying factors which precipitate or fuel conflict. In other words, the logic of ‘religion-as-a-source-of-war’ ignores the reality that religion often masks the salient economic, political and strategic elements in conflict. Thus, at best, such arguments are often simplistic or even erroneous at the extreme. In his commentary on the conflicts in the Sudan, for instance, Assefa (1990: 261) submits that ‘religion has been a code word or symbol that subsumed many different economic, political, and social motives and that it would be utterly simplistic to ascribe the religious toga to the civil wars in the Sudan’. Further, Omar (2004: i.d.) argues that the articulation of the nexus between religion and violence must be anchored in the understanding ‘that the religious legitimization of violence does not occur in a socio-historical or power vacuum but within concrete human setting in which power dynamics are paramount – a fact that the hegemonic discourse on religion and violence ignores’. Expressed differently, the social, cultural, territorial, economic and political contexts in which religion functions, rather than religion itself, are of greater importance in the comprehension of the role of religion in violence. What the foregoing suggests is the need to peer into underlying conflict causalities rather than play the often dubious religious card whenever there appears to be a religious dimension to a conflict.

If one were to stretch the above argument, then one would invariably strengthen Goldstein’s (2004: 204) contention that “[n]othing inherent in religion mandates conflict” and that as such there is no such thing as a religious conflict. I had, after contemplating the import of Goldstein’s argument as well as the motivation for it, concluded and argued at a forum that the *manipulation* of religion, not religion *per se*, is at the core of so many crises described as religious such as the Nigerian and Sudanese examples. Nevertheless, the fact that religion is susceptible to exploitation for destructive ends makes it a potentially dangerous element.<sup>18</sup> Little’s (2005: 20) informed opinion that ‘conflict is not all about religion but about politics, economics and nationalism and a whole range of things’, appears to lend credence to Goldstein’s but takes a detour when Little goes further to assert that ‘conflict is religiously influenced in a number of cases’. However, a

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<sup>18</sup> I am grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Ufo Okeke Uzodike for drawing my attention to this caveat.

former member of the U.S. Commission for Religious Freedom, Laila Al-Marayati (quoted in McCaughan, n.d., i.d.) tones down the religious factor as she argues that ‘religion plays just one and often irrelevant role in conflict’ while she stresses ‘the more important conflict causalities such as economics, politics, racism, greed, power and cultural context.’ What is more, the extent to which a typical conflict can be labelled as strictly religious is debatable. That said, this study takes the position that Marayati’s reference to the “cultural context” encapsulates a variety of human/social constructs and way(s) of life, which of course, includes religion. Thus, religion is implicated, at least to a miniscule extent.

It is apt to state at this juncture that the several case studies which point to the culpability of religion in a number of deadly conflicts need not engender a thesis that casts religion exclusively in bad light for there are many other instances that exemplify faith-based peacemaking and developmental assistance. In fact, a typical scenario where religion is implicated in conflict is counteracted by another in which faith-based actors are facilitating not only conflict resolution but also post-conflict healing, reconciliation and reconstruction. These contrasting realities thus task the researcher to do more than align themselves to either of the perspectives on the nexus between religion and conflict. Hence, this study transcends the frontiers of propositions, which see religion essentially as a source of conflict on the one hand and inherently as a force for good on the other. Consequently, it is argued here that the role of religion should be cast in the light of its contradictory manifestations in the public domain. In other words, the constructive as well as the destructive ends to which religion is applied should be evenly recognised, acknowledged, and apprised. It is vital to approximate all the fragments of evidence pertaining to religion’s role in conflict rather than to distort or conceal either of the critical expressions of religion in conflict situations.

As pointed out earlier, the perspective which implicates religion in war dominates the religion-violence nexus literature much to the non-recognition, suppression or exclusion of the “other” reality which points to the positive roles of faith-based actors in

peacebuilding.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the imperative of objectivity in conflict research (especially in relation to deductions about causalities, catalysts, actors and their roles) underscores ample representation of the pros and cons of the phenomenon and the variegated roles of faith in conflict situations. To this end, this study contends that although religion has caused or played a role in precipitating or fuelling some conflicts, it has facilitated the resolution of others. The preceding finds expression in Little's (2005: 20) observation: "[r]eligion plays a role in conflicts in these three ways: legitimization, recruitment, and peace settlement." It is possible to subsume these three modes under two parameters in which the role of religion in conflict can be interpreted: as a conflict trigger and/or as a contrivance for conflict transformation. As M<sup>c</sup>Ternan (2003: xii) maintains, "religion can be [and has been] as much a part of the problem as a part of the solution in resolving conflict". Existential realities prove that religion "is a powerful force that can recruit the faithful in support of either violent conflict or peacebuilding" (Smith, n.d., i.d.). By way of synthesis therefore, this study contextualises the role of religion in conflict paradoxically as a *source of conflict* and a *resource for peace*.

### 3.4 Liberation theology as a social construct

[Liberation theology aims at rousing] those on the margin of society to realize their own potentiality in envisaging social change and taking steps to bring it about; [thus stressing] that neutrality is impossible when considering social injustices; and that it is necessary to find the sufferings of others intolerable ... and to bear the toils and conflicts needed to remove them (Preston, 1975: 157).

The literature on the role of faith-based organisations in facilitating positive social change draws ideological insights from Latin American liberation theology. The theoretical and practical roots of religious networks' involvement in processes aimed at ending misery and facilitating transformation appeared in the cultural, historical, political and social context of Latin America (Tombs, 2002; Gutierrez, 1974) where the Roman Catholic

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<sup>19</sup> It is instructive to note that the awareness that religious networks can facilitate (and indeed are promoting) conflict resolution is gaining impetus in the analyses of conflict. The works of Coward & Smith (2004); Ariarajah (2004); Coffey & Mathewes (2002); Arinze (2002); Smock (1995); and Dear (1994) highlight religious networks' positive contributions to political development and peacebuilding in a manner that challenges the predominant or the hegemonic thesis on the nexus between religion and war.

Church, for instance, committed itself in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the emancipation of the oppressed and the afflicted. Although the ingredients of liberation theology are said to be European, its provenance essentially has been Latin American (Preston, 1975: 157).<sup>20</sup> The historical roots of liberation theology have been located in the prophetic tradition of religious leaders who decried the poverty, misery, suffering and injustice that the ordinary people of Latin American societies experienced in the 1950s, the 60s and the 70s. Gayarre (2004: 414) notes that the emergence of liberation theology as a revolutionary movement was largely a response to “the extreme social conditions endured by most of the population” of Latin America during these periods. In terms of the practical manifestation of this theological thought, church leaders transcended their mission of ministering to the spiritual needs of adherents by transforming their religious formations into social movements with a view to addressing the issues of poverty and underdevelopment. These religious leaders situated the need to liberate the people from the shackles of oppression and suffering within the context of the heritage of Christian commitment to individual/social emancipation.

Liberation theology as a theoretical construct derives from Gutierrez’s (1974) treatise wherein theology is conceptualised as “critical reflection on historical praxis.” The kernel of this definition is its emphasis on contemplation about social realities, arriving at a conclusion regarding the desirability or otherwise of the situation and taking necessary steps to remedy same if necessary. Hence, Ribeiro (1999: 304) describes the methodology of liberation theology as “see-judge-act.” It entails examining the social context and the main developments that characterise society with an eye to acting (based on Biblical reflection) for the sake of betterment. In performance of this role, the churches in Latin America operated like ‘ideological apparatuses and mediating structures’, gave expression to the plight of the oppressed and the poor thereby functioning as institutions which resonated within the social structure and responded to its demands (Torres, 1992: 110) as exemplified by its activities on behalf of the people in poor and rural communities.

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<sup>20</sup> The elements of liberation theology, which were essentially European, include the theology of earthly realities, humanism, social personalism, progressive evolutionism and the social dimension of dogma. See Boff and Boff (1987) for details.

Against the backdrop of the churches' intervention on behalf of the poor, Haynes (1993: 98) conceives of liberation theology as "an intensely political phenomenon, a response to the appalling social and political conditions of many poor people ... in (predominantly, but not exclusively) Roman Catholic Third World countries." Liberation theology drew insights from the class struggle perspective in its justification of political action on the part of religious leaders who believed that more than spirituality was needed in the form of 'socio-political conscientization' of man as well as direct involvement in the social development process. Expressed in other terms, liberation theology provided the ideological base for churches' 'direct involvement with the poor and for justifying some form of political action to ameliorate harsh conditions.' The churches, *inter alia*, embarked on mass literacy programmes, engaged the governments over openness, development and employment related issues, and galvanised the people into mass action for the purpose of actualising humane ends (Haynes, 1993: 98-109). In this regard, religious institutions became not only service providers but also forces for social and political mobilisation.

Foroohar (1989: 50) predicates such social action on the Church's interpretation of suffering as a "situation of sin" which puts 'pressure on the consciences of Christians, thus committing them to remedying the situation.' Moreover, Gayarre (2004: 414) notes that the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America, within the context of liberation theology, constituted itself into a social movement whose preoccupation was the transformation of the climate of (social and political) oppression and the elimination of structural injustice. A number of studies on liberation theology highlight the practical ways in which the religious networks have given expression to this eschatological construct in Latin America. For example, the Roman Catholic Church was instrumental in bringing democracy to Venezuela (Lynch, 1991: ix). In Guatemala, Peru and Puerto Rico, the Church facilitated negotiations to end political impasse and ethnic conflict (Alarcón, Comas-Dias & Lykes, 1998: 781). Liberation theology literature is also replete with instances of religious networks' involvement in peacebuilding beyond Latin

America. The case studies of faith-based conflict resolution initiatives highlighted in Section 3.2 of this study are a case in point.

It can be deduced from the above that although liberation theology is a construct, it is made apparent by *social action*. It is not restricted to one's consciousness but expressed in the form of social engagement. Gayarre (2004: 414) puts it succinctly when he argues that liberation theology "considers the promotion of the struggle for justice to be one of the cornerstones of the faith and that this is carried over to the *practical plane through opting for some political or social movement*" in an attempt to remedy a situation the church regards as untenable or as sinful from a Biblical viewpoint [emphasis mine]. Biblical reflection on inhumane conditions prompts the church to function as a social and political movement in the interest of the poor and those suffering the effects of man's inhumanity to man. It is not surprising that Ellacuria and Sobrino (1990) posit that liberation theology is directed to the social environment since the church's aim is to effect social change. Simply put, the commitment by churches to bring about change within the context of liberation theology finds expression in symbolic social action. Such action could be unilateral and unidirectional (whereby the churches act alone as benefactors and the people, recipients) or synergistic (whereby the churches act in collaboration with civil society groups and individuals).

The bedrock of liberation theology is that people of faith should not remain passive and indifferent to the suffering of others. Failure to act is sin and, as such, this realisation makes intervention in the social space through conscious, concerted and sustained action inevitable. The spirit of liberation theology places on religious actors a demand to work for the alleviation of suffering, for the attainment of humane conditions and for social transformation. It is this social and political engagement in the public space that underscores the definition of religion adopted in this study. This idea is premised on the fact that religious networks function as *social* and 'religio-political' movements *a la* Haynes (1993: 28-30) whenever they commit themselves to action intended to transform society. Although such action is anchored in Biblical reflection, its intent and goals are secular in that they go far beyond the canonic issue of spirituality to embrace social

transformation. Having said that, this study contends that since the justification for action is the prevalence of inhumane conditions, liberation theology – though an ecclesiastical rubric – is a construct whose utility depends on social realities. Thus, liberation theology is what I call the religious networks' *compass for social action*.

### **3.5 Conflict transformation: a paradigm shift in conflict analysis**

'Why *conflict transformation* as opposed to *conflict resolution*?' That was the question one of the respondents put to me during my field research. I had to justify my preference for the former rather than for the latter. It is apt to state here that the adoption of the notion of transformation is predicated on its very objectives and payoffs which encapsulate more elements than offered by the conflict resolution spectrum. Accordingly, this section seeks to accomplish at least two tasks: to identify the salient differences between both concepts; and to ascertain that the notion of transformation indicates a paradigm shift in conflict research.

Conflict is an ineluctable aspect of the human condition, or as Deutsch (1991: 1) notes, it "is an inevitable feature of all social relations." This is understandable given the differences in values, attitudes, interests, orientations and goals of persons, groups and nation-states. The inability of persons, groups and nation-states to reconcile their differences or the clash of these values – in essence, their incompatibility – is the underlying basis of all conflicts. Expressed differently, conflict – a phenomenon which is characterised by interaction at a level more intense than that of competition – results from the clash of values between individuals or groups. More often than not, it is the irreconcilability of divergent needs or objectives that leads to frustration or aggression, which in turn manifests in or leads ultimately (but not always or necessarily) to violence (Shelling, 1960).

Levels of conflict range from intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group to national and international levels. In this study, however, conflict is contextualised within the wider societal perspective and, as such, its definition applies to the group-international levels. It is instructive to note that the question of *differences* is common to all conflicts

regardless of their levels or the number of actors. Rubin et al (1994: 5) gives expression to the idea of divergence as a fundamental element of conflict in their definition: “[c]onflict means perceived divergence of interest, or a belief that the parties’ current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously”. In the words of Burton (1988: 11), “conflict describes a relationship in which each party perceives the other’s goals, values, interests or behaviour as antithetical to its own.” The social definition of conflict is given as ‘an interaction between actors ... in which at least one actor experiences differences in thinking/conception/perception and/or feeling and/or desire in relation to the other actor (actors), such that realization is hampered by another actor (the other actors)’ (Glasl, 1994: 14-15). In other words, conflict “is a difference of interests as perceived by at least one party in an area of joint social interaction, resulting in a situation where the aspirations of the various parties cannot be realized to an equal extent” (Ropers, 1995: 2-3). These definitions allude to the variables that characterise conflict: actors, relationship, incompatibility, and differences. However, they omit one important fact.

The fact that parties in conflict have definite goals, which they seek to achieve, is incontrovertible. This ultimate rationale for conflict is integral to every definition and the understanding of conflict. Accordingly, conflict refers to an interaction (that is a clash or struggle) between at least two actors arising from the incompatibility of values, ideas, preferences, and goals in which one actor seeks to neutralise, defeat or eliminate the other for the purpose of attaining (a) defined objective(s).<sup>21</sup> The goals, which a party seeks to achieve, could be tangible (such as the acquisition of territory or natural resources) or intangible (such as domination or control). With regard to social conflict, the actors use a combination of means including violence and propaganda to defeat the opponent and to achieve their aims. Throughout history, organised violence – the basic form in which

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<sup>21</sup> Although this study deals with a conflict that is destructive, it should be noted that conflict is not necessarily a negative dynamic for it can engender positive changes and development in a relationship or in a system. For instance, while arguing that conflict can be healthy, Anstey (1993: 17) reckons: “[c]onflict energises the problem-solving capacities of people, stimulates new ways of interacting, and promotes the engagement of parties around issues that might otherwise have been ignored or dealt with in a hostile manner”. However, it is important to add that conflict serves this “constructive” end *only if it is properly handled* lest it engenders the negative consequences often associated with it. Having said that, “[s]ocial scientists are [still] divided on the question of whether social conflict should be regarded as something rational, constructive, and socially functional or something irrational, pathological, and socially dysfunctional” (Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff, 1981: 187).

social conflict is manifested – has been known to unleash a plethora of deleterious consequences ranging from colossal losses of lives and the destruction of infrastructure to huge refugee flows, psychological trauma, and social dislocation. Often, warring parties, humanitarian activists, and other state/non-state actors realise the imperatives to stem the tide of conflict and to return to the *status quo ante bellum*. Such realisation stimulates actions intended to create an atmosphere of peace. *Conflict management*, *conflict resolution* and (more recently) *conflict transformation* are the main concepts that have been developed in conflict research to describe as well as to explain the combination of processes, methods and attempts to alter a conflict situation.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to differentiate the concepts of conflict resolution, conflict management, and conflict transformation with a view to laying bare their assumptions.

Bloomfield and Reilly (1998: 18) describe *conflict management* as:

the positive and constructive handling of difference and divergence. Rather than advocating methods for removing conflict, [it] addresses the more realistic question of managing conflict: how to deal with it in a constructive way, how to bring opposing sides together in a cooperative process, how to design a practical, achievable, cooperative system for the constructive management of difference.

“Conflict management correctly assumes that conflicts are long term processes that often cannot be quickly resolved” (Irish Peace Society, n.d., i.d.). It holds that conflicts are ineradicable and that resolving conflicts is unrealistic: “the best that can be done is to manage and to contain them, and occasionally to reach a historic compromise in which violence may be laid aside and normal politics resumed” (Miall, 2005: 3). Conflict management theorists argue that conflicts only become dysfunctional but are not resolved. Conflict is conceptualised as an ever-present phenomenon that spins in cycles but does not wither away. Often, powerful actors with enormous resources succeed in inducing warring parties to halt the spectre of violence (Miall, 2005: 3) but not with a view to addressing the underlying causes of the conflict or resolving the conflict. Hence, the “goal of management is to control volatility rather than to address the underlying source of the problem” (Irish Peace Society, n.d.). In other words, conflict should be

allowed to continue under as much fair 'management' as possible in the expectation that it could be resolved at a stage when it is 'ripe' for resolution.

The emphasis on the control of instability or the reduction of volatility as opposed to building sustainable peace presupposes that the factors which engender conflict are overlooked as the effects of conflict (economic and humanitarian) do not receive adequate attention. In addition, "the notion of [conflict] management suggests that people can be directed or controlled as though they were physical objects" (Irish Peace Society, n.d.). The assumption that it is always possible to manage parties and their differences so as to keep volatility at the barest minimum fails to acknowledge the complexity of human behaviour and the fact that humans are fundamentally different from apparatuses in the natural scientist's laboratory. That said, one is wont to argue (given the logic of conflict management) that it is foolhardy to deal with the effects of conflict during the peace process as the conflict is bound to recur sooner than later, thus necessitating its further management or attempts to check its volatility. Conflict management smacks of a stopgap measure in dealing with conflict; it does not offer a long-term, durable solution and, as such, it does not resonate easily among peacebuilding activists.

Perhaps the most popular concept in the analysis of conflict intervention is *conflict resolution*. Lederach and Maiese (2003: i.d.) states the obvious: the notion of conflict resolution is "more well-known and widely accepted in mainstream academic and political circles." Conflict resolution refers to the process of building bridges between warring parties, working to clarify issues in conflict, and creating opportunities for developing new relationships on the basis of peaceful change (International Alert, 1998: 28). The concept holds 'that it is possible to *transcend* conflicts if parties can be helped to explore, analyse, question and reframe their positions and interests with a view to ultimately assisting them to move from zero-sum, destructive patterns of conflict to positive-sum constructive outcomes' (Miall, 2005: 3) [emphasis original]. Conflict resolution is aimed at reaching a *win-win solution* that caters to the interests and aspirations of parties to the conflict. Bush and Folger (1994: 51) associates the process

with the manipulative search for an agreement that is acceptable to the warring parties, to the third party(ies), and to the latent interests all the actors represent. In the words of Burton (1991: 81) conflict resolution points to an outcome that the parties see as a permanent solution to the problem.

Conflict resolution has come under a barrage of criticisms in recent times. For instance, Lederach (1995) asserts that the term 'resolution' implies that conflict is bad and thus should be ended. Expressed in other words, it assumes that conflict is inherently negative. Besides, the conflict resolution perspective relies heavily on human rationality. Yet, it is irrefutable that humans rarely exhibit rationality during conflict situations or during peace processes. Also, conflict resolution theorists further assume that conflict is a short-term phenomenon that can be resolved permanently through intervention processes. Another major drawback of the concept is its emphasis on resolution, which often does not address the deep-seated, value-laden and relational aspects of conflict. Hence, the idea that conflicts can be resolved once and for all has been superseded (Rupesinghe, 1995) by one, which not only recognises the dialectical nature of conflict but also argues for the transformation of conflict while taking pertinent cognisance of personal, relational, structural and cultural factors in conflict.

The conflict transformation school contends that intervention in contemporary conflict situations "require[s] more than the reframing of positions and the identification of win-win outcomes" (Miall, 2005: 4). It is important for intervenors to seek constructive change rather than simply satisfy the demands of warring parties as there are causalities (in conflict) that are more fundamental and expressed than at the level of disputes (Auvinen & Kivimaki, 1996: 3). Thus, *conflict transformation* is "a process of engaging with and transforming the relationships, interests, discourses, and if necessary, the very constitution of society that supports the continuation of violent conflict" (Miall, 2005: 4). It is the process through which 'people change situations, relationships or structures so that they become less violent, less conflictual and less unjust by addressing the root causes of violent conflicts with a view to preventing their emergence or resurgence' (International Alert, 1998: 28). In the words of Spencer and Spencer (1995: 162) conflict

transformation “can be thought of as a redefinition of the dispute situation by the actors themselves, one that may lead to opening space for cooperation and peace”. The concept focuses on the ‘very structure of parties and relationships which are embedded in a pattern of conflictual relationships that extend beyond the particular site of conflict’ (Miall, 2005: 4). To the preceding must be added the philosophy behind this perspective, namely that structural causalities in conflict could be located in economic, political, cultural and social dynamics.

Conflict transformation – popularised by conflict research scholar John Paul Lederach – is both a descriptive and prescriptive concept. Lederach and Maiese (2003) posit that transformation as a concept *describes* conflict dynamics and *prescribes* the overall purpose of peacebuilding. Its descriptive element is seen in its recognition of the dialectical nature of conflict and its underlying philosophy that conflict is not necessarily a bad phenomenon.<sup>22</sup> At the prescriptive level, the concept emphasizes the need to change the perceptions of parties about not just the issue in dispute but the environment in which they interact. The focus of conflict transformation is long-term and broader than those of conflict management and conflict resolution given that its objective is not the containment or mitigation of conflict or the solving of immediate problems but the shifting of the attitudes of parties, and transforming structures and relationships for durable peace and harmonious coexistence. In the words of Wallensteen (1991: 130), “[a] successful case of conflict transformation is one where the parties, the issues and expectations are changed so that there is no longer a fear of war arising from the relationship”. As stated earlier (in the discourse on the nexus between religion and conflict), a party’s perception about the “other” is a critical element in conflict formation and perpetuation. Conflict transformation goes deep to promote a healthy view of the other as it transforms the structural conditions that trigger conflicts or bring about their recurrence. Table 3 below summarises our discussion thus far by juxtaposing the concepts of management, resolution and transformation:

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<sup>22</sup> The descriptive facet of the conflict transformation perspective draws from Galtung’s (1996: 90) analysis of the dialectics of conflict. He notes that conflicts undergo a variety of transformational processes ranging from articulation or disarticulation, conscientisation or de-conscientisation, complexification or simplification, to polarisation or depolarisation, and escalation or de-escalation.

**Table 3: Conflict Management, Resolution and Transformation: A Brief Comparison of Perspectives**

	<b>Conflict Management</b>	<b>Conflict Resolution</b>	<b>Conflict Transformation</b>
Framework	Realism	Idealism	Radicalism
Understanding of conflict	Power politics; inherent in man	Unsatisfied human needs	Structural inequalities
Actor and structure	Emphasis on actor from an objective perspective	Emphasis on actor from an inter-subjective perspective	Emphasis on structure from a holistic perspective
Change	Static	Linear	Dialectical
Process and strategy	Competitive	Problem-solving	Empowering
(Un)ending conflict	Unending conflict; balance of power; stability	Ending conflict; satisfying human needs	Open-ended; institutional/systemic change
The key question	How do we contain something inevitable?	How do we end something not desired?	How do we end something destructive and build something desired?
The focus	It is phenomenon-centred	It is content-centred	It is relationship-centred
The purpose	To mitigate, contain, or reduce volatility/crisis	To achieve an agreement and solution to the present problem creating the crisis	To promote constructive change processes, inclusive of – but not limited to – immediate solutions
The development process	It is built around the issue of volatility and its reduction	It is embedded and built around the immediacy of the relationship where the present problems appear	It is concerned with responding to symptoms and engaging the systems within which relationships are embedded
Time frame	The horizon is spasmodic and short-term	The horizon is short-term	The horizon is mid- to long-range
View of conflict	It is inevitable and unresolvable	It envisions the need to de-escalate conflict processes	It envisions conflict as a dynamic of ebb (conflict de-escalation to pursue constructive change) and flow (conflict escalation to pursue constructive change)
Lacunae	Lacks theoretical understanding of intra-state conflict, institutions, peacebuilding, culture	Lacks theoretical understanding of power asymmetry, institutions, peacebuilding, culture	Lacks theoretical understanding of actor, intentionality, strategic interaction

Sources: Adapted from Lederach and Maiese (2003); Aggestam (1999); and researcher's deductions from conflict literature.

It can be deduced from the analysis in this section that conflict transformation differs from both conflict management and conflict resolution in fundamental respects. It is the only perspective that takes a holistic view of conflict and seeks to transform not only the parties' perceptions but also the environment within which conflict occurs. According to Lederach and Maiese (2003: i.d.), there are four central modes which conflict transformation targets and impacts on in building sustainable peace: personal/actor transformation, relational transformation, cultural transformation, and structural transformation. Miall (2005: 10) modifies Lederach and Maiese's typology and adds context and issue transformations to the list.

Furthermore, the goal of conflict transformation is brought to the fore in each mode. At the personal level, conflict transformation seeks to "[m]inimise the destructive effects of conflict and maximise the potential for personal growth at physical, emotional and spiritual levels" (Lederach & Maiese, 2003: i.d.). Relational transformation deals with the 'minimisation of poorly functioning communication and the maximisation of understanding.' The structural mode underscores the 'understanding of and dealing with the root causes of violent conflict; the promotion of non-violent mechanisms; the minimisation of violence; and the fostering of structures that meet basic human needs as well as the maximisation of public participation.' The cultural dimension focuses on the 'identification and the understanding of the cultural patterns that contribute to the rise of violent expressions of conflict; and the identification of cultural resources for constructively handling conflict' (Lederach & Maiese, 2003: i.d.). Against the backdrop of these priorities, it is indisputable that conflict transformation targets the essentials in the human mosaic in its attempt to build sustainable peace. The foci of these modes are summarised in the table below:

**Table 4: Conflict Transformation Modes**

Mode	Focus
Context transformation	change in local, national, regional and international environment
Structure transformation	- change from asymmetric to symmetric relations - change in power structures - changes of markets of violence
Actor transformation	- changes of leadership - changes of goals - intra-party change - changes in party's constituencies - changing actors
Issue transformation	- transcendence of contested issues - constructive compromise - changing issues - de-linking or re-linking issues
Personal/elite transformation	- changes of perspective - changes of heart - changes of will - gestures of conciliation

Source: Miall (2005).

In the absence of a war, conflict transformation's commitment to long-term, structural and relational transformation translates to peacebuilding. Therefore, it is no surprise that the concept is often linked or equated with peacebuilding. In fact, the following elements are cardinal to both: identifying and dealing with fear, grief, and bitterness on the part of parties and rebuilding trust; reconciliation; developing a new perception of the "other"; demobilisation and demilitarisation; increasing justice and equality; equitable resource-sharing; reintegration of displaced populations; jump starting the economy; and reconstruction among others. Essentially, conflict transformation seeks to attain these objectives under the rubric of three components: (i) analysis of the present situation (ii) the mapping of the horizon of preferred future; and (iii) the development of change processes linking the two. It is all about *ending* something not desired (pain and suffering) and *building* something that is desired (sustainable peace) (Lederach & Maiese, 2003: i.d.). The factors that contribute to the success of this process include forgiveness, reconciliation, (re-)establishment of functional relationships and institutional capabilities as well as reconstruction (Rasmussen, 1997: 40).

In spite of its utility, the concept of conflict transformation has been criticised. For one thing, the concept overemphasizes structures and, as such, gives less attention to human personality and to strategic interaction. While noting that conflict transformation's emphasis on structures helps in the understanding of indirect violence, Aggestam (1999: 23) contends that 'it is an abstract notion as it tends to reduce individuals to the role of victims without revealing or attempting to analyse the more complex and contradictory understanding of the interplay between individuals and structures.' It should also be added that conflict transformation is too value-laden given the primacy of such notions as justice, mercy, compassion, empathy, breaking down the "us-versus-them" barrier, forgiveness and reconciliation – some or all of which do not necessarily exert influence on warring parties and profiteering networks in conflict situations and during peace processes. The question is, to what extent could these virtues/moral codes influence parties within a conflict environment that is basically driven by *realpolitik*?

The above shows that even though conflict transformation goes further and deeper than the other two perspectives, the fact that it has its own fair share of shortcomings is not in doubt. (Perhaps, it should be stated here that no human construct is flawless). In relation to the perspectives examined here, Nicholson (1992: 22) states that they are somewhat illusory and pretentious, focusing more on social engineering than on social science. Nevertheless, the adoption of the conflict transformation perspective derives from the fact that 'the goal of transformation is unique in that it involves a supreme value that the other concepts do not encompass' (Bush & Folger, 1994: 81). The strength of the concept of conflict transformation is its comprehensiveness in addition to addressing the root causes of conflict. In this regard, Väyrynen (1991: 23) reckons:

[v]iolence and conflicts may be managed by instrumental action, but they can be eliminated only by identifying their root causes. Those causes and their functions are, however, ever changing with the economic and social transformation of societies. That is why any argument that a conflict has been solved for good, that history has ended, is based on an ahistorical illusion. The only historically viable approach is to aim to eliminate the violence in present conflicts and to

trace the new socioeconomic transformations which create new sources of violence.

The conflict transformation perspective ‘addresses a range of dimensions largely ignored in the other schools of thought; it aims to develop capacity and to support structural change, rather than to facilitate outcomes or deliver settlements’. Conflict transformation ‘seeks to engage with conflict at the pre-violence and post-violence phases and with the causes and consequences of violent conflict, which usually extend beyond the site of crisis’ (Miall, 2005: 17). Therefore, this approach holds greater promise for altering the conflict scenario and for building sustainable peace. This realisation underscores the growing scholarly interest in the concept of conflict transformation. Although the concept of conflict resolution is still very much popular, the orientation towards the logic of transformation represents a paradigm shift in conflict research.

### **3.6 A review of literature on the conflict in the DRC**

Several scholarly works focus on the causal basis, the dynamics, the regionalisation/internationalisation and the implications of the conflict in the DRC. This section reviews some of these works. However, it should be borne in mind that almost all the published works on the DRC crisis “risk” being overtaken by new/unforeseen realities within a relatively short time given the celerity at which developments unfold in DR Congo (This thesis might as well suffer the same fate).

Ajibewa (1997) traces the pedigree of events that culminated in the DRC crisis. According to Ajibewa, the contradictions of colonialism and the foreign policy of the United States in Central Africa are significant underlying factors in moving DR Congo inexorably towards volatility. American foreign policy in the central African region, which was aimed at containing (the spread of) communism, bolstered Mobutu’s (mis)rule. Furthermore, such factors as nepotism, mismanagement of the economy, human rights abuses and the near-total shrinking of the political space – all associated with the Mobutu regime – engendered frustration and consequently, rebellion which ousted Mobutu and brought (the late) Laurent Kabila to power. Ajibewa notes that

regime change notwithstanding, the negative aspects of autocracy were still a feature of the Laurent Kabila regime in its early period.

Nzongola-Ntalaja (2004: 7), like Ajibewa, contends that the “past weighs heavily on the present in the [DR] Congo.” The legacies of colonialism and authoritarianism (*a la* Mobutu) lurk at the background of the DRC’s crisis. In addition, the fallout of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda was a defining factor of the conflict, not only in the DRC but also in the Great Lakes region as a whole. Mobutu’s support for the defeated *Forces Armées Rwandaises* (FAR – Armed Forces of Rwanda) and the *Interahamwe* militia – both perceived as responsible for the genocide – engendered tensions in the region and ultimately provided the new Rwandan government with a rationale for supporting Laurent Kabila’s insurgency which toppled Mobutu as well as underpinned Rwanda’s intervention in DR Congo afterwards. Nzongola-Ntalaja (2004: 15) describes the conflict in the DRC as ‘the war for the country’s natural resources’ – an allusion to the pillaging of DR Congo’s resources by invading armies of Rwanda and Uganda as well as other profiteering networks. In addition to Mobutu’s legacy of authoritarianism, Nzongola-Ntalaja (2004: 18-21) identifies the inability or unwillingness of Laurent Kabila to manage the political transition effectively and to undertake economic and social reconstruction as a factor that exacerbated the crisis. Nzongola-Ntalaja (2004: 21) concludes with a note on the implications of the DRC crisis for the region: “[t]he long term stability of the Great Lakes region cannot be sustained without a stable and effective government in the DRC.” This conclusion is not farfetched given the strategic importance of the DRC in the Great Lakes region.

Although Wamba-dia-Wamba’s work (1998) explores “Mobutuism” (the philosophy of Mobutu’s personality and leadership style as well as his legacy), he concurs with both Ajibewa and Nzongola-Ntalaja that Cold War politics, which underpinned Western complicity in the assassination of DR Congo’s first post-independence Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, and the support for Mobutu was significant in making DR Congo tempestuous. However, Wamba-dia-Wamba notes that the *conférence nationale souveraine* (CNS) – sovereign national conference – in 1991 and 1992 undermined

“Mobutuism” and that the end of the Cold War did weaken the external foundations of the philosophy. The crux of Wamba-dia-Wamba’s work is whether “Mobutuism” was completely eliminated after the demise of Mobutu’s regime to which he gives an answer in the negative. According to Wamba-dia-Wamba, Kabila’s regime was not free from such “Mobutuist” tendencies as patronage; expedited, militarist and non-consultative decision-making; and intolerance of criticism. The continuation of these tendencies during Laurent Kabila’s regime thus complicated the DRC crisis.

Rosenblum (1998: 193-200) argues that the culture of resistance, which the Congolese had developed overtime, undermined the authority of the “Mobutuist state” and was likely to do the same for Laurent Kabila given the latter’s attempt to consolidate his power like his predecessor. However, Rosenblum points out that Mobutu’s definition of political life for more than thirty years created problems for Kabila’s regime. In its bid to redress the situation, Kabila’s government made further mistakes: individuals with questionable characters occupied key government positions and the generality of Congolese felt alienated from the regime given that it was initially dominated by returning exiles that were not in tune with events in the country. This domestic discontent coalesced with security concerns in Bujumbura, Kampala and Kigali to undermine the (Kabila) regime’s foundations. The intensification of these factors ultimately precipitated the war against Kabila.

Reyntjens (1998: 10-13) discusses the DRC crisis within the broader regional context with reference to the conflicts in the Great Lakes region, in Sudan and in Angola. He argues that the proximity of these locations and the adoption of the “logic of ‘my enemy’s enemy is my friend’” by political actors have brought these conflicts together with concomitant implication for the geostrategic situation in the whole of central Africa. This is not farfetched given the regionalisation of the DRC crisis. Reyntjens further notes that the interests of members of Kabila’s alliance changed and clashed after the defeat of Mobutu and that the success of the rebellion (against Mobutu) did not resolve two fundamental problems that had precipitated the conflict: the status of the “populations of dubious nationality” (a reference to the “Rwandophones” in eastern DRC) and Rwanda’s

security problems which emanated from the cross border raids into Rwanda by the ex-FAR and the *Interahamwe* based in DR Congo. These unresolved issues provided some justification for unilateral intervention in the DRC by Rwanda in particular. But Reyntjens states that countries that invaded DR Congo have also made economic gains.

Reed (1998: 18-21) criticises works that focus on Kabila's persona and his rule but ignore the structural factors that underlie the war in the DRC. He contends (rather strongly) that the policy options of whoever occupied the presidential mansion in Kinshasa would be constrained by two structural factors which would not be products of the incumbent but inherited from the past. The first of the two factors is the protracted period of patronage bequeathed by Mobutu, one that has led to the emergence of structures opposed to the state but contemporaneously reduced the effectiveness of the state as a political base. The second factor is the truncated nature of the armed struggle of (Kabila's) *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaire* (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo – AFDL) that prevented it from developing a domestic or external base and effective institutional structures of its own. According to Reed, these two factors have combined to impede the process of political consolidation. The Kabila regime, on account of these factors, especially the first, had few resources and a few institutions through which it could operate. Hence, it became vulnerable and was forced to utilise the inherited administrative structures and personnel. In addition, ethnic and national interests with the AFDL made the alliance ill-suited to handle the task of political consolidation and state reconstruction in the post-Mobutu era. Reed posits that Kabila's rule and policies reflected the limited options that any successor to Mobutu would have confronted and that this realisation should inform a more balanced understanding of Kabila's regime predicament and of the overall Congolese situation.

Kabemba (1999) argues that the spiral of conflict in the DRC derives largely from the internal collapse of legitimate government rather than from the activities of external actors. It is the collapse of legitimate government that has allowed external powers to influence events in the DRC. Kabemba also identifies both remote and immediate causes of the DRC conflict. The remote factors include the legacies of colonialism, Cold War

politics, the failure of democratic transition, the unresolved “Banyamulenge question” (that is, the citizenship of the Congolese Tutsis). The immediate factors include the failure of the AFDL rebellion to transcend Mobutu’s legacies, the security concerns of Rwanda and Uganda, and external actors’ attraction to DR Congo’s resources (which partly accounted for the intervention by neighbouring countries). Kabemba posits that initiatives at resolving the crisis may not yield the desired results unless the conditions that led to the weakening of state were addressed. He also contends that building sustainable peace in the DRC will depend on the simultaneous resolution of all the conflicts in the Great Lakes region rather than on attempts to resolve the conflict in the DRC independently of other crises.

Although Owoeye and Amusan (2000: 172-188) focus on the sub-regionalisation of the DRC crisis, they attribute the conflict to (the legacies of) Belgian colonial policies and Mobutu’s misrule, including his “exportation” of crisis to neighbouring countries. After Mobutu, Laurent Kabila’s government continued, almost without significant variations, along “Mobutist” lines. Kabila favoured his close friends, relations and his Balubakati ethnic group whilst he became suspicious of the alliance that brought him to power. Owoeye and Amusan recall that Kabila’s anti-Tutsi stance and his decision to expel foreign troops, including those who helped him to oust Mobutu, led to the August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1998 rebellion against him. The Banyamulenge (Congolese Tutsis) began the rebellion and quickly got the support of Rwanda and Uganda. On the other hand, Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe took sides with Kabila. This scenario, according to Owoeye and Amusan, effectively internationalised the conflict. The authors also contend that the interlopers were drawn into the conflict primarily because of their economic interests. Furthermore, sub-regional initiatives (by the SADC) at defusing the crisis failed initially as a result of the confusion within the organisation – some member states favoured military intervention whilst others favoured a negotiated solution to the DRC conflict. The authors add that the (defunct) OAU [now the African Union – AU] could not secure an early resolution of the crisis because its efforts were confined to backing the SADC initiative.

Wolpe (2000: 27-42) notes that the DRC conflict has huge consequences for, not only the country itself, but also its nine (immediate) neighbours. According to Wolpe, the involvement of a number of state and non-state actors defines the complexity of the war. With regard to resolution, Wolpe posits that the Lusaka Peace Accord (LPA) provided a useful roadmap to ending the conflict in that the agreement addressed what was perceived as the immediate priorities of the belligerents, regional actors and the international community. He however argued that the LPA was not the only ace to resolving the conflict but that building regional peace and security required the concerted efforts of parties to the conflict mutually reinforced by a strong commitment on the part of the international community. (It should be stated here that other initiatives and agreements, mainly the Sun City agreement later superseded the LPA).

Geldenhuis' work (2000: 43-50) focuses on the process of rebuilding the DRC. He agrees with Wolpe that the LPA was just the first phase of the implementation of the DRC's peace process. Moreover, Geldenhuis asserts that rebuilding the DRC goes beyond the issue of peacekeeping which the LPA subscribed to overwhelmingly. Although peacekeeping, peace enforcement and the provision of humanitarian assistance ought to be crucial imperatives in the DRC's peacebuilding process, Geldenhuis identifies two key aspects to the process of state reconstruction: the restoration and improvement of state institutions and state functions that have deteriorated or collapsed altogether; and the overhauling of state structures that had operated in an authoritarian climate so as to function in a democratic environment. He identifies the key elements in this process of structural and institutional transformation as good governance, democracy-building, reconciliation (which does not obviate the need for justice) and tremendous support from the international community.

Ibeike-Jonah (2001: 1-6), like other scholars mentioned above, posits that the war in the DRC is part of the country's woes and that its causal basis are to be located in its colonial legacy, the politics of the Cold War, Mobutu's (mis)rule and Laurent Kabila's malfeasance which was not significantly different from his predecessor's *modus operandi*. Kabila's antics alienated him from the Congolese and spawned more

opponents within the ranks of his former allies. Ibeike-Jonah argues that Laurent Kabila was part of the problem in that he blocked almost all, if not all the initiatives aimed at ending the crisis. It was not until after his assassination in 2001 that the peace process seemed to move forward. According to Ibeike-Jonah, the accession of Joseph Kabila to the presidency of the DRC – following the assassination of his father – brought about a new climate in DR Congo as the younger Kabila was more conciliatory towards parties opposed to the government in Kinshasa. Yet, Ibeike-Jonah states that the success of the peace process depends on a number of key factors: addressing the legitimate grievances of the warring parties; [the ability and willingness to make] compromises; reconstruction with spatial balance in mind; support from the international community; the resolution of the refugee problem; and justice.

Lumumba-Kasongo (2001) launches a staunch defence of Laurent Kabila and his regime whilst denouncing his/its critics. Lumumba-Kasongo views the assassination of Laurent Kabila as part of the conspiracy by the West against the struggle for genuine Congolese independence. He seeks to buttress this argument by juxtaposing Kabila's assassination with that of DR Congo's first Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba. Lumumba-Kasongo traces the historic revolutionary struggles by Laurent Kabila against Western imperialism and its agents within the Congolese society. Lumumba-Kasongo is of the opinion that Laurent Kabila's struggle against Mobutu in the heydays of the Cold War was invariably a fight against the West and that the latter never liked Kabila for that. By and large, Lumumba-Kasongo rationalises Laurent Kabila's actions as DR Congo's president as part of attempts to 'adjust to the political realities in Kinshasa.'

On the other hand, Lumumba-Kasongo criticises writers who contend that Laurent Kabila stood in the way of the implementation of the peace process (mainly the LPA). According to Lumumba-Kasongo, the United Nations (not Laurent Kabila) was to blame for its lack of seriousness vis-à-vis the implementation of the LPA. Major powers (namely the United States, France and Great Britain) were also to blame for their lack of support and commitment to troop deployment as part of the implementation of the LPA. In his spirited defence of Laurent Kabila, Lumumba-Kasongo argued against the

assessment of Kabila's *achievements* but his *process*. According to him, Laurent Kabila tried to solve the Congolese problem but was constrained by such difficulties as the lack of ideological cadres within Kabila's alliance; the overwhelming task of reinventing governmental institutions; high expectations in the DR Congo but non-existent means to satisfy them; and Western opposition to Kabila (which was second to opposition to Cuba's Fidel Castro). The DRC's travails notwithstanding, Lumumba-Kasongo envisions the consolidation of Laurent Kabila's philosophy which ultimately will free the country from the shackles of Western imperialism in order to promote the pan-African agenda. Suffice it to say that the distinguishing feature of Lumumba-Kasongo's article is its Marxist orientation.

This section has highlighted the salient issues in DR Congo's war through a review of the relevant works on the conflict. A separate section (see Section 2.2 above) gives an overview of the conflict and depicts its dynamics as well as its consequences, some of which the Congolese and third party intervenors are still grappling with. Having said that, there have been concerted efforts by the international community and Congolese civil society with regard to building sustainable peace in the war-torn country. The next chapter examines such efforts by faith-based organisations in the process of building peace in the DRC.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN DR CONGO'S CONFLICT ENVIRONMENT

Since the Second World War, peace has been the subject of several studies in almost all [religions]. [Most religions recognise] the necessity of commitment to attempt to establish and maintain peace. But such awareness sometimes gives rise to the question of knowing what would be the specific contributions of [religious groups] to establish peace in a geographically and historically precise context (Ngangura, 2004: 98).

#### 4.1 The role of religious networks in DR Congo's conflict transformation process

A significant dimension to the conflict in the DRC – prior to the phased withdrawal of foreign forces – had been the occupation of strategic parts of the country's territory by rebel forces and the invading armies of Rwanda and Uganda (the anti-government elements) as well as by the troops of Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe (Kinshasa's allies). It goes without saying that military intervention by countries opposed to the regime in Kinshasa and their occupation of parts of DRC's territory presupposed that the government was not in control of the entire country. The government had to deal with the invasion and the occupation of the DRC by foreign forces and, as such, could not fulfil (or work towards fulfilling) its responsibilities towards its people, typifying the failure of governmental authority and portraying a semblance of state collapse.

A typically complex conflict scenario characterised by the implosion of state authority over national territory (such as that in the DRC) understandably gives non-governmental, religious, and international organisations comparative advantage in assisting the affected to adjust to conflict as well as to stimulate and facilitate the search for peace. In addition, it is apposite to recall that non-governmental civil society organisations and religious networks had been active in DR Congo even before the onset of war. For instance, they had channelled their energies towards expanding the country's political space through activism, which was intended to emasculate Mobutu's authoritarianism (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 244). The eruption of conflict, no doubt, necessitated increased activism by these organisations, not least in the sphere of peacebuilding. Against the backdrop of the war in the DRC and the failure of the state to meet the expectations of the people, the

pivotal role of religious groups in social services delivery, development processes and peacebuilding has become more salient and needs to be explicated. Accordingly, this chapter explores the specific interventionist measures that have been undertaken by faith-based actors within the context of transforming the conflict and building sustainable peace in the DRC.

#### **4.1.1 The role of the Roman Catholic Church in DR Congo's peace process**

The Catholic Church, regarded as a *proto state* by many a Congolese on account of its immense influence in DR Congo, has been the foremost non-governmental intermediary in the peacebuilding process. Its moral and spiritual authority has provided it with leverage to play pivotal social and political roles, including social service delivery and political activism. Prior to the eruption of conflict in the DRC, the Roman Catholic Church – given its superior logistical infrastructure – had been at the forefront of the provision of services that fall within the purview of the state such as education, health care, and postal services. On the basis of the preceding, Prunier (2001: 139) aptly notes that the ‘Catholic Church has come to wield enormous influence in the DRC, particularly in the context of a declining state or in the quasi-absence of a disintegrating state’. Therefore, it is only logical that the Roman Catholic Church would play prominent roles in the gamut of processes and initiatives aimed at attenuating the conflict as well as providing succour to the affected.

The performance of such role was at first exemplified by the Church's disposition towards the AFDL rebellion that toppled Mobutu. The Church, apparently taking cognisance of, or identifying with, the general understanding within civil society of the liberating mission/character of the AFDL rebellion, did not denounce the attempt at unseating Mobutu. What is remarkable, however, is the Church's position on the *modus operandi*, strategies, and the demeanour of AFDL troops. The Roman Catholic Church, at the onset of the insurgency, had called on Kabila's forces to respect the fundamental rights of civilians as well as to allow the delivery of humanitarian services in the areas under the control of the forces (Interview with SKN, Kinshasa, 08 November 2005). It is worth noting that the church denounced human rights abuses perpetrated by AFDL troops

during their *blitzkrieg* campaign such as the alleged massacre of Rwandan (Hutu) refugees in camps within DR Congo (Interview with BSN, Bandundu, 10 November 2005). Apart from denouncing such atrocities, the Roman Catholic Church provided trauma counselling, medical services and relief supplies to victims of the conflict in Katanga, the Kivu areas, Kenge, Kisangani and Lubumbashi (Interview with BSN, Bandundu, 10 November 2005).

The Roman Catholic Church's involvement in DR Congo's peace process assumed greater saliency in the wake of the Rwandan and Ugandan-backed insurgency against Kabila. In the view of many church leaders, the rebellion was nothing but the invasion of DR Congo's territory by Rwanda and Uganda, not to emancipate the Congolese but to further their own (Rwanda and Uganda's) private agendas. Hence, the church's initial reaction to the conflict was that of condemnation, followed by an appeal to the international community to exert pressure on the governments of Rwanda and Uganda to withdraw their forces from the DRC. It is also instructive to note that the Roman Catholic Church was consistent in its decriing of the invasion and occupation of DR Congo by Rwandan and Ugandan troops. In addition, the church rallied and/or collaborated with sections of Congolese civil society in its advocacy for the pulling out of foreign troops. Within this context, the Roman Catholic Church did denounce the "unholy alliance" between (foreign) occupation forces, informal (patron-client) networks, and a few Congolese elite who profited from the war (Interview with Reverend Father FGM, Katanga, 18 November 2005). As far as the church was concerned, the key motivation for foreign occupation of Congolese territory was economic, thus lending credence to the characterization of the war as one of plunder. In a specific instance in 2000, Archbishop Emmanuel Kataliko of the Roman Catholic Church in (then rebel-held) Bukavu criticised "foreign powers, together with some Congolese, [who were waging war, using the DR Congo's] resources" (Internet 12). The rebels of the *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* (RCD - Congolese Rally for Democracy) reacted by 'declaring Monsignor Kataliko *persona non grata* in Bukavu and prevented him from returning to his diocese' for some time (Simpson, 2000: i.d.). It should be stated that the anti-Kabila movement construed the church's role at this time as siding with Kinshasa

(Interview with Reverend Father FGM, Katanga, 18 November 2005). No doubt, the rebels' perception of the Roman Catholic Church as pro-Kabila (or pro-Kinshasa) did pose enormous problems for – and, more importantly risks to – church leaders.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, the church's neutral disposition was exemplified by its call on the Congolese government to honour its own commitments as enshrined in the Lusaka Peace Accord, including dealing with the issue of the Rwandan *génocidaires* in DR Congo.

Beyond moralism, criticisms and denunciations, the Roman Catholic Church's involvement in the DRC peace process came to be action-oriented. A major peacebuilding initiative by the church, aimed at transforming the attitudes of the Congolese as well as notions that engender discord within Congolese society, was peace education. In other words, the church's country-wide advocacy in the wake of the conflict underscored the imperative of peace, one that could be attained only on the basis of honest self-examination, attitudinal change/change of heart and the "rehumanisation" of the "other". This message of peace was a focal point of sermons in parishes across DR Congo. But the message was not confined to religious sermons as the church (whilst providing amenities in local communities) preached a message of peace and hope, stating that peace was *sine qua non* for efficient service delivery and sustainable development. Expectedly, this message of peace resonated in local communities inhabited mostly by war-weary beneficiaries of church aid (Interviews with Pastor JPM, Kinshasa, 30 March 2006; Mr. ANK of the CJPC, Kinshasa, 9 February 2006; Reverend Father FGM, Katanga, 18 November 2005). Although church leaders played prominent roles in peace advocacy within church circles and outside it, the Roman Catholic Church's engagement for peace was carried out under the aegis of the church's main community-oriented

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<sup>23</sup> It is instructive to note here that religious actors in the DRC have engaged in conflict transformation work at great cost to themselves. It is on record that some religious leaders and workers have been killed or have had their fundamental rights curtailed while implementing peacebuilding programmes. A case in point in 2000 pertains to the murder of Remis Pepe, a Catholic priest and two of his parishioners, 'at the Roman Catholic Church parish in Kiliba, north of the [then] rebel-held city of Uvira in eastern DR Congo'. Conflicting sources blamed rebels, militia groups and rebels' allies for the murder of the religious actors (Simpson, 2000: i.d.). In August 2005, Reverend François Djikulo of the Diocese of Manono 'on his own initiative went on a peace mission to try to convince the rebel leader – Kyungu Kyungu, also known as Gedeon – to disarm and to stop terrorising the local people' but "[f]or months nothing was heard of his whereabouts. Only in November was it known that Fr Djikulo and his companion Simon Kayimbi had been savagely mutilated and then burned alive in Mutendele, district of Pweto, about 75 km from the parish of Dubie diocese of Kilwa Kasenga." (Fidei Voces, 2005: i.d.)

institutional framework, the *Commission Justice et Paix Congo* (the Justice and Peace Commission of the Congo – CJPC). A respondent did posit (while I was doing field research) that the CJPC engaged with local communities and civil society in the promotion of the ideas of human dignity and solidarity and justice by way of consultations, workshops, campaigns and lobbying with a view to mobilising the Congolese for peace (Interview with AP [Civil Society], Likasi, 25 November 2005).

A logical corollary of the church's peace advocacy efforts was its prominent role in the conception, nurturing and the concretisation of the notion of a national dialogue to resolve the issues that were not only at the core of the DRC conflict but those that would define DR Congo's future. It is apparent that the Roman Catholic Church's role in this regard was predicated on the belief that solutions to DR Congo's problems could only be generated by the Congolese themselves through an all-inclusive, consensus-building and participatory mechanism of dialogue. The foregoing brings to mind the church's overwhelming support for the CNS held in 1991-92. In a similar vein, several church leaders had expressed the need to have a clean break from the politics of the past (for instance, "Mobutuism" or politics *à la* Mobutu) in the aftermath of Laurent Kabila's assumption of power (Interview with AP [Civil Society], Likasi 25 November 2005).

The church not only identified with the initiatives that culminated in the Lusaka peace deal but also endorsed the agreement as the essential compass for addressing the concerns of warring parties and for ultimately attenuating the conflict. (But Laurent Kabila's rejection of the Lusaka Accord undermined the peace process and necessitated the intensification of efforts at resolving the issues – both national and regional – that precipitated the conflict in the first place and those that were subsequent to it). Within this milieu, the Roman Catholic Church (in collaboration with non-religious actors in civil society) mounted a vigorous campaign for the convocation of the ICD at a time that Kabila was not favourably disposed towards the idea (Interview with AP [Civil Society], Likasi 25 November 2005). Their efforts yielded the desired fruits (but only after Kabila's death) as the ICD convened at Sun City, South Africa in April 2003. It is worth noting that the Roman Catholic Church not only sponsored a number of delegates to the

ICD, it had ample representation at that forum and at the consultative meetings that preceded the ICD (Interview with a Congolese journalist, Kinshasa, 22 November 2005); thus underlining the church's commitment to peace as well as giving expression to its constructive role in DR Congo's public space.

Perhaps the foremost initiative by the Roman Catholic Church during the war has been the provision of humanitarian and development assistance to the affected in consonance with Catholic social teaching that emphasizes the alleviation of human suffering. In terms of humanitarian assistance, the Roman Catholic Church in the DRC has been engaged in the provision of basic items (including offering shelter) and health care to IDPs in Bukavu, Goma, Ituri, Katanga, Kinshasa, the Kivu areas and Uvira. Also, the church has had to establish nutritional feeding centres in some areas that have long been "safe havens" for IDPs. In November 2005 for instance, the Roman Catholic Church had to open a nutritional feeding centre for some 60,000 people in Dubie in the Katanga province after they had been 'uprooted' by fighting between the Congolese army and local Mayi-Mayi (or Mai-Mai) militiamen resisting demobilisation. Bishop Fulgence Muteba (Interview with IRIN, Lubumbashi, 23 November 2005, received via e-mail) stated that the IDPs who arrived at the centre in Dubie were 'totally destitute and almost naked' thus potentially stretching the capacity of the Roman Catholic Church to deliver humanitarian services to the tethers. It should be added that, in a number of instances, the Roman Catholic Church in the DRC has collaborated with the Church's main international aid agency, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in the provision of humanitarian assistance to IDPs. Also worthy of note is that such assistance has been broadened to encapsulate helping victims to adjust to conflict through psychological support.

Furthermore, the Roman Catholic Church has been involved in another aspect of humanitarian assistance – the relocation of IDPs and other vulnerable persons. The reality in the DR Congo is that refugees and IDPs are vulnerable and constantly under threat arising from ethnic and political cleavages. In part, the alleged massacre of the Banyamulenge in refugee camps in the 1996-97 AFDL insurgency against Mobutu as well as the fratricidal/genocidal character of the Hema-Lendu war illustrate the

vulnerability of the Congolese and foreigners in those camps. It should be said that the church takes cognisance of the implications of ethnic cleavages in the DRC and, as such, has (in the recent past) taken steps to protect those susceptible to attack by ethnic militiamen. In this regard, the Roman Catholic Church operates an early warning “radar”, one through which church leaders and workers conduct periodic “risk assessment” to ascertain the extent of the vulnerability of refugees and IDPs. The use of “hate language” or the eruption of ethnic tension often suggests that a target group is vulnerable and that prompt action is needed to avert fratricide/genocide. Usually, the Roman Catholic Church responds by relocating refugees and/or IDPs at risk. For instance, between 1999 and 2001, the church moved hundreds of refugees and IDPs under threat from volatile areas to (relatively) safer Rutshuru territory during one of its operations in Goma (Interview with AP [Civil Society], Likasi, 25 November 2005). Having said that, it is not unusual for the church to provide social and nutritional support to transferred refugees and IDPs.

Against the backdrop of the realisation that conflict transformation entails the fundamental alteration of actors’ attitudes and behaviours as well as the (re)imagining and (re)making of structures/realities that undergird social interaction (including those that fuel conflict), the Roman Catholic Church has undertaken the task of reinserting former combatants into society. Although the church lacks the (military) capacity to demobilise militiamen, it has demonstrated its commitment to disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration by extending opportunities for vocational training to (ex-)combatants. In addition, the church provides micro-finance to former combatants so that they could start small scale businesses thus creating the incentive for militiamen to return to normal life rather than resist demobilisation (Interview with Reverend Father FGM, Katanga, 18 November 2005). As is common to almost all conflicts in Africa, the war in the DRC has been characterised by the involvement of child soldiers in combat operations. Accordingly, there has been a “child soldiers’ reintegration” component to the Roman Catholic Church’s peacebuilding role vis-à-vis creating the ambience for demobilisation. The church has been at the forefront of the (re)integration of former child soldiers into the formal school system while peace education has been built into the

curricula of its educational institutions. This initiative, in the view of church leaders, has been undertaken with a view to changing the hearts of the youth and nurturing the desire for peace (Interview with Reverend Father FGM, Katanga, 18 November 2005). It can be said that this initiative aims at transforming individuals and their social realities while building up local capacity for constructive activities.

More importantly, a measure of political stability in the DRC has enabled the Roman Catholic Church to extend its activities to reconstruction and the rebuilding of infrastructure. In the quasi-absence of a state or in view of declining statecraft and state authority, the church has had to play a major social and economic role in Congolese society. Even after the successful completion of the ICD, the relative political stability in the DRC has yet to translate to improved state authority, especially over the entire country. In fact, the eastern region has remained volatile and state control over this area has been almost non-existent as a handful of rebel and militia groups have been battling for the control of towns and villages in order to access resources. Moreover, skirmishes between the Hema and the Lendu have continued in the region. Government and MONUC troops have had to fight fierce battles with armed gangs in eastern DRC in recent times (Interview with ZF, Kisangani, 6 February 2006). The logical consequence of the situation in the eastern region is that the government could not do much (if anything at all) in terms of reconstruction when it has had to fight time and again in order to establish control over all of its territory. Within this milieu, the roles of the Roman Catholic Church and other religious networks, in reconstruction and development assume greater significance. [See Table 5]

Apart from the sporadic conflagrations in the eastern region, the DRC has enjoyed relative political stability since mid-2003. This much-improved political situation is a function of MONUC's peacekeeping operations, the successful conclusion of the ICD, the formation of the transitional government, and the willingness of some rebel leaders to serve in the government. Relative peace in the DRC has enabled the Roman Catholic Church to embark on reconstruction and social service delivery in Bandundu, Katanga, Kinshasa, and in parts of North and South Kivu. Among others, the church has renovated

schools, hospitals and communications equipment in the aforementioned areas (Interview with ANK of the CJPC, Kinshasa, 9 February 2006). Although the task of reconstruction seems overwhelming for the Roman Catholic Church, it has demonstrated that it can provide efficient social services given adequate resources and manpower which are accorded it by its extensive international connections (Callaghy 1984: 176). Its effort in terms of providing communications services in the absence of a national postal system illustrates the foregoing. In this regard, the Commission for Africa (2005: 120) reports that the ‘Catholic Church is the only reasonable coherent organisation in the country and functions as a post office in the absence of a national postal service’. I learnt during my field research that all that was needed to post a letter within the DRC was to go to the nearest Catholic Church. This point reflects the extent to which DR Congolese state has failed and underscores the constructive role of the Roman Catholic Church in the reconstruction of the DRC.

DR Congo took a significant step towards political stability and state resuscitation in December 2005 when it organised a referendum on a new constitution. Roman Catholic Church leaders played a vital role in the processes leading to the drafting of the new constitution and the holding of the referendum through the sensitisation of its members. It is worth noting that prior to the referendum, the church “played an important part in making sure voters, many of whom are illiterate, were properly informed and able to vote according to their conscience” (Internet 13). The overwhelming 84 percent “yes” vote in the referendum bolstered efforts to ensure that the Congolese supported other aspects of the democratisation process, including the elections that were to follow. Following the successful holding of the referendum, Church leaders continued their country-wide sensitisation campaigns around electoral issues. For instance, the Archbishop of Kinshasa, Cardinal Frédéric Nzambi Bamungwabi Etsou, indicated in a pastoral letter dated January 8, 2006 that the Roman Catholic Church intended to “promote civic education ahead of the country’s first multi-party poll in 40 years” (Internet 13).

It is apt to add here that the Catholic Church undertook the promotion of voter education in local communities (Interview with returning Congolese student, Pietermaritzburg,

South Africa, 10 February 2006) until the final stages of the democratic transition which culminated in the presidential run-off on 29 October 2006, after the first round of presidential elections held on 21 August failed to produce an outright winner with fifty percent plus one vote (50% + 1). And following the violent clashes (between the supporters of the two presidential candidates, (incumbent) President Joseph Kabila and opposition leader Jean Pierre Bemba) in Kinshasa after the release of the results of the first round of the presidential elections, “[t]he Catholic bishops ... called for vigilance and respect for the rule of law as the country [prepared] for the second round of presidential and provincial elections” (Internet 14). Although tension prevailed before both the first and second round of the elections, the Roman Catholic Church appealed to all parties to support the transition process, highlighting the significance of the elections for the future of the country. The Catholic bishops also “expressed appreciation to all who took part in the civic and electoral education which enabled [Congolese] to vote with responsibility” during the first round of the presidential elections and “invite[d] the national and international communities ... to help [the Democratic Republic of] Congo avoid further harm” (Internet 14). One of the positive elements of the elections was the “participation of the people *en masse*” (Internet 14), a feat that could not have been achieved without the mobilisation of Congolese by civil society actors, including the country’s religious groups. Besides, it is worth noting that the country’s electoral commission (which comprises church members) in conjunction with MONUC ran an effective voter education campaign and electoral sensitisation process across DR Congo during the period leading to the elections.

Empirical evidence presented thus far highlights the crucial roles of the Catholic Church in transforming a belligerent DR Congo. Suffice it to say that the involvement of the church in such activities typify the important influences of religious networks in transforming conflict situations with a view to engendering sustainable peace and development. In the case of the Roman Catholic Church, its involvement in the peace process goes beyond addressing the immediate needs of those affected by the conflict but extends to the range of activities that falls under the rubric of conflict transformation.

#### **4.1.2 Pentecostal Churches and the search for peace in the DRC**

Like the Roman Catholic Church, Pentecostal churches in the DRC have played equally crucial roles in the process of extricating the country from the throes of conflict and putting it on the path to recovery and sustainable development. Pentecostal churches have proliferated in DR Congo as elsewhere in Africa, a significant development that typifies resurgent religiosity in the wake of state incapacitation as well as social and economic pressures. Given their sheer number, divergent leanings and relative/differentiated influence within the Congolese society, it is impossible to undertake an exhaustive analysis of all the Pentecostal churches vis-à-vis their role in the DRC's peace process. That said, the aggregation of DR Congo's Pentecostal churches under one umbrella, namely *Eglise du Christ au Congo* (the Church of Christ in the Congo - ECC), is of utility in the study of DRC's religious networks. Sixty-two Pentecostal churches make up the ECC. 'Within the DRC, the ECC is popularly referred to as *The Protestant Church*, as it federates the vast majority of the Protestants in the country' (Internet 15). Historically, the government has always reached out to Pentecostal churches through the ECC. Currently, the ECC represents DR Congo's Pentecostal constituency. Hence, the involvement of Pentecostal churches in the DRC's peace process is analysed against the backdrop of the ECC's peacebuilding initiatives. Although the ECC has collaborated with other religious networks and non-religious actors in the conflict transformation process, there are specific region or province-based efforts that it has undertaken in the period that falls within the scope of this study.

A significant programme of action by the ECC since 2002 has been the alleviation of the suffering of war affected people in the provinces that have been epicentres of the war. In North Kivu, Manirema, and Orientale provinces, ECC member churches have been involved in the provision of relief and humanitarian assistance to IDPs. For example, the ECC has been at the forefront of providing essential materials such as tents, blankets as well as food items and medication for IDPs in these provinces. In addition, IDPs – those uprooted by war and victims of natural disasters – in Goma have benefited from the ECC's programme on trauma counselling. Victims of gender-based violence (females who have been sexually abused) have been the primary beneficiaries under the

programme. The humanitarian assistance component of ECC's peace work is similar to that of the Roman Catholic Church in one important regard: the establishment and operation of nutritional support centres. ECC had at least an average of three nutritional feeding centres in Goma and Beni (North Kivu Province), Kisangani and Bunia (Orientale Province) between 2002 and 2004 (Interview with a Congolese journalist, Kinshasa, 22 November 2005). The essence of the programme was to curtail mortality (especially that of infants) while helping victims to adjust to conflict.

Another activity covered by ECC's relief assistance programme was the rehabilitation of educational institutions. Its school rehabilitation project was conceived to complement the humanitarian component. It was reckoned that reintegrating children (uprooted by war) into the formal school system would help them to adjust to conflict and speed up the healing of trauma. Thus, humanitarian assistance to IDPs was undertaken simultaneously with the enrolment of children in schools. But some of the schools in both North Kivu and Orientale provinces had to be rehabilitated before pupils' enrolment as they had been destroyed during the war. Apart from renovating school buildings (including supplying desks and benches), the ECC gave out school kits to thousands of students and teacher kits to about two hundred teachers (Interview with ECC member, Kisangani, 12 January 2006). In addition, the ECC has had to sustain its commitment to the process of rebuilding and running the school system through the emplacement of *school management committees* in its areas of operations in Beni, Bunia, Goma and Kisangani. To a remarkable extent, the role of the ECC vis-à-vis the rehabilitation of educational institutions has helped to bring about a semblance of normality in those areas. However, a major drawback of the programme is that rehabilitation and reconstruction has been restricted to educational institutions owned by ECC member churches in the identified provinces. Therefore, ECC's programme of action in this regard has had a lesser impact on the Congolese when juxtaposed with the Roman Catholic Church's interventions that tend to reach more people. The reason for this is not farfetched as the Roman Catholic Church is the single largest religious denomination in the DRC, followed by the agglomeration of Protestant churches that make up the ECC.

ECC has equally played a leading role in peace and reconciliation in North Kivu and Oriental Provinces. Prior to the eruption of the (receding?) conflict in DR Congo, these two provinces had been plagued with communal/ethnic conflicts that have disrupted livelihoods and intensified ethnic antagonisms. As Prunier (2001: 139) observes, the Kivu areas in particular 'have been the theatre of an almost separate conflict that fed the greater DR Congo war and partly (but not completely) blended into it.' The conflict, described by Prunier (2001: 139) "as simultaneously regional, ethnic, national and international", had erupted and had been blended into the DR Congo war 'because of the problem of "dubious nationality" as it still relates to the status of the Kinyarwanda-speaking minorities in the Kivus'. A war within a war situation (as one would characterise the Kivu conflict) provided an outlet for the expression of hatred by ethnic chauvinists in the provinces. It is within this context that one could understand the role of the ECC with reference to peace and reconciliation in North Kivu and Orientale Provinces. In its attempt at promoting ethnic harmony, peace, and reconciliation, the ECC established peace support committees in its member churches in the provinces. Peace support committees played the role of mediators in local conflicts and organised training programmes in negotiation and mediation for church members. Their interventions as neutral panel mediators or peacemakers have helped to foster peace and reconciliation in a number of places such as Ituri. There is an ongoing ECC peace and reconciliation initiative in Bunia as at the time of writing (Interview with ECC member, Kisangani, 12 January 2006).

ECC's commitment to fostering dialogue has not been restricted to North Kivu and Orientale Provinces. It has played vital roles in promoting national reconciliation and peace. A case in point was the ECC Secretariat's support for the convocation of the ICD. ECC, through its ICD sensitisation committee, mobilised church members for this all-important national consultation through awareness raising regarding the critical issues of the DR Congo war, the objective criteria for its settlement, the question of nationality, the future of the DRC, and the role of the individual in the promotion of peace, forgiveness, national reconciliation, and stability. Given the historical synergy between religious networks and the non-religious constituency of civil society (especially regarding

democratisation in the DRC), the ECC Secretariat held consultations with civil society organisations (CSOs) in the weeks leading up to the final leg of the ICD at Sun City, South Africa. With the successful conclusion of the ICD and the formation of a transitional government of national unity, the ECC has (since 2003) focused on political education vis-à-vis the other aspects of the democratic transition process (Interview with ECC member, Kisangani, 12 January 2006) leading to the general elections in 2006.<sup>24</sup>

Human security has been a significant component of the ECC's peacebuilding programme since 2002. It was the view of the ECC Secretariat staff that dealing with the issues of national security without paying proportionate attention to the satisfaction of human basic needs would compromise (the prospects of) peace and stability. The ECC in its wisdom identified vulnerable groups namely IDPs, refugees, and (ex-)combatants as the primary beneficiaries of its human security development initiative. This was done against the realisation that such people were at risk of endangering the peace process if their needs were not addressed or more importantly, satisfied. Therefore, ECC's human security initiative entailed the provision of family support services that could engender long-term personal security. Although the ECC lacked the wherewithal to provide employment for persons uprooted by conflict, it embarked on an ambitious programme aimed at ensuring food security in the Kivus and the Orientale Province. As part of its food security programme, the ECC organised vocational training in farming for displaced IDPs, distributed seeds and agricultural tools to them (Interview with FK, Lomami, 18 April 2006).

Overall, the aim of the programme was to make vulnerable persons self-reliant, albeit at the level of subsistence. A secondary motivation was to forestall their mobilisation for destructive ends by engaging them in productive/constructive activities. In this regard, ECC's human security programme ultimately transforms individuals and their perceptions about their own mobilisation for destructive activities. According to a

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<sup>24</sup> It is instructive to note that ECC members are playing prominent roles in DR Congo's political space in other significant ways. And their co-optation into structures of governance is an interesting case in point. For example, Monsignor Marini Bodho, the President of the Senate (as the upper house of the Congolese Parliament is known), and the vice president of the independent electoral commission are ECC leaders (Interviews with AP [Civil Society], Likasi, 25 November 2005 and FN, Kinshasa, 22 December 2005).

member of the ECC (Interview Kisangani, 12 January 2006), beneficiaries of ECC's agricultural and food supply assistance have "have renounced violence, turned a new lease of life and now yearn to live in peace since they could now do something productive and enriching with their lives." The ECC is of the conviction that such individuals hold the ace to building sustainable peace in the DRC. On the other hand, vulnerable persons that have not been assisted as such – for instance, to acquire vocational skills – are at risk of becoming tools for further destabilisation of the country as politicians and militia leaders may choose to deploy this category of persons in furtherance of parochial/sectional interests. This potential risk is further heightened by the possible frustration that the recently concluded elections might spawn.

Apart from implementing its action plan on human security, the ECC has lent its support to localised peacebuilding efforts. For instance, the ECC (between 2002 and 2003) organised training programmes in conflict resolution for members of village peace committees in Bandundu, Goma, and Kisangani. The village peace committees have demonstrated enthusiasm for conflict resolution in local communities torn apart by ethnic strife. While acknowledging and appreciating the commitment of members of the committees to peace, the ECC identified the lack of expertise as one of the problems that undermined the success of their efforts. Hence, the ECC organised a series of training programmes intended to build local capacity for conflict transformation. Training programmes focused on sundry issues of conflict mapping, identifying the (unspoken) fears of parties, dealing with emotions, fears and frustrations, and building consensus. As at the end of 2004, a few members of the village peace committees had been co-opted into the ECC's peacebuilding programme (Interview with ECC member, Kisangani, 12 January 2006); thus, making its intervention more community-centred or community-driven. In fact, it is not uncommon for people seeking assistance to knock at the church's door.

#### **4.1.3 The Kimbanguist Church in the DRC's peace process**

The involvement of the Kimbanguist Church – the third largest religious network in the DRC – in the conflict transformation process has been as multifaceted as those of the

Roman Catholic Church and the ECC. The difference, however, is that unlike the country-wide intervention of the Roman Catholic Church and (to a large extent) of the ECC, the peacebuilding efforts of the Kimbanguist church have been restricted (for the most part) to the Bas-Congo region which *apropos* is its “stronghold” in the DRC. Research findings indicate that the Kimbanguist Church’s involvement in DR Congo’s peace process comprised four cardinal initiatives: *humanitarian assistance*; *mediation*; *peace education*; and *reconstruction*. The activities, which the church embarked on in the Bas-Congo region between 1999 and 2004, constitute its peacebuilding role in Congolese society, one that replicates but (more importantly) complements the constructive efforts of other religious networks. A brief narrative on each of the church’s peacebuilding activities is pertinent at this juncture.

*Humanitarian assistance*: As has been the case with other religious networks, the provision of humanitarian aid has been the foremost initiative in the Kimbanguist Church’s peacebuilding profile. Hence, the church has had to deploy field workers to implement its humanitarian assistance programme in the Bas-Congo region. Humanitarian (church) workers distributed such items as blankets, food and medication to alleviate the suffering of those that had been displaced by the war. Besides, the church provided shelter for persons that had to flee their homes on account of violence. More often than not, many IDPs arrived at the church-designated “safe havens” without any personal effects, including clothing. In such instances, the church and non-religious humanitarian organisations (working either independently or in collaboration) have had to supply clothing and other basic items to IDPs. The Kimbanguist Church has also assisted households by distributing agricultural equipment to them in an effort to improve food supply and to revive the agrarian economy in parts of Bas-Congo (Interview with JPK, Muanda, 16 March 2006). In delivering humanitarian assistance, the Kimbanguist Church has gone a step further by rehabilitating the homes of its members affected by the war, thus helping them to live reasonably normal lives. The foregoing has been accompanied by the provision of such services as trauma counselling and psychological support to people in need. Where relevant, rape victims and former child soldiers have received help from the church (Interview with TMW, Bas-Congo, 8 February 2006). By

and large, its humanitarian assistance programme has helped to restore and improve livelihoods in Bas-Congo.

*Mediation and peace education:* The Kimbanguist Church has played the role of a mediator by facilitating negotiation and consensus building between its members that are of different ethnic backgrounds. Church leaders have had to sponsor or organise talking and reconciliation groups in their local congregations in order to douse ethnic tension or hatred and, more importantly, to promote peaceful coexistence. Leaders of the Kimbanguist church have also organised public meetings that have brought non-Kimbanguists together to discuss issues of forgiveness and reconciliation. In this capacity, the church has trained leaders at the grassroots level in the art of negotiation and mediation. Reportedly, during their consultations with community and ethnic leaders and members of the public, trainers (mostly Kimbanguists and a few from non-governmental organisations – NGOs) always emphasised the non-violent approach to dealing with frustration, rather than recourse to aggressive behaviour (Interview with TMW, Bas-Congo, 8 February 2006). In 1999, 2001 and 2003, the Kimbanguist Church – in what it termed “gospel-based non-violence crusade” – undertook special campaigns to raise awareness about non-violence and the need to promote peaceful coexistence amongst ethnic groups in Bas-Congo. In addition, the church has continued to educate the people about peace through both the radio and printed materials (Interview with TMW, Bas-Congo, 8 February 2006).

Given the vital historical role of the Kimbanguist Church in promoting nationalism in DR Congo and in entrenching same in the citizens’ political consciousness, it is not illogical that the church has broadened its political engagement in the aftermath of the (official declaration of the) cessation of conflict. Since 2003, the church has been raising awareness around key political issues that impinge on the country’s future. Cases in point include its church and community-based campaigns on the ICD, the voter registration exercise, the national referendum on a new constitution, and the 2006 general elections. The Kimbanguist Church did mobilise its members in particular and the Bas-Congo populace in general to take part in these civic activities. Issues of human rights,

rule of law, and justice have also been integrated into the church's peace and good governance advocacy efforts (Interview with a Congolese journalist, Kinshasa, 22 November 2005).

*Reconstruction:* Given that state bureaucracy has existed in name alone for most of DR Congo's post-independence epoch, faith-based organisations have had to develop social infrastructure in addition to meeting the spiritual needs of their members. And the onset of war necessitated greater involvement of religious networks in the provision of basic services. More than that, the cessation of conflict called for monumental reconstruction and social rebirth. Since 2003, the Kimbanguist Church has been playing a prominent role in the reconstruction of the Bas-Congo region. For example, the church has embarked on the rehabilitation of health clinics, schools, roads, city halls, and parks (Interview with TMW, Bas-Congo, 8 February 2006). Initially, the church directed its reconstruction efforts at its own properties and those of its members. However, its activities were subsequently expanded to the rebuilding of non-church social infrastructure. In 2005, the Kimbanguist Church's peacebuilding role vis-à-vis the reconstruction of Bas-Congo took the added dimension of building (local) capacity for self-help projects at the grassroots level. In this regard, the church organised workshops and training programmes for its members, community and youth leaders and social workers on how to pool efforts and resources – human and material – at the local level for the purpose of building, maintaining, and rebuilding social infrastructure (Interview with TMW, Bas-Congo, 8 February 2006). However, it must be noted that the Kimbanguist Church's efforts in the reconstruction of Bas-Congo have been impeded by inadequate financial resources and the paucity of raw materials.

#### 4.1.4 DR Congo's peace process: The Islamic perspective

Muslim peace-building organisations are relatively difficult to identify. This seems to result from a lack of institutionalization. Peace-building activities are undertaken by individual actors (such as imams and sheikhs) in their personal capacity, often in an ad hoc and informal manner (Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana & Abu-Nimer, 2005: ix).

As far as the involvement of the Islamic community in DRC's peace process was concerned, my experience during fieldwork validates the observation above. Apart from the "lack of institutionalisation," which is cited as a reason for the relative imperceptibility of Muslim-based peacebuilding, the scenario in DR Congo is a peculiar case study in that 'Islam has not yet been officially recognized in spite of its [reported] large number of adherents' (Hassan, 2003: i.d.). As a matter of fact, the position and roles of Islam in DR Congo's public space are relatively obscure. This stems partly from the reality that Muslims are poorly represented in DRC's political institutions and decision-making structures. Take for instance, the report that "Muslims are ... all but poorly represented in the Congolese Parliament, with only three members of 450 MPs in the legislature ... no Muslims occupy posts of ministers, deputy ministers or governors" (Hassan, 2003: i.d.). Besides, "Congolese Muslims do not own any of the infrastructural facilities, such as hospitals, health centers, universities, schools, and ... the few they have are not up to par" (Hassan, 2003: i.d.). And it was not until 2003 that the National Islamic Council (NIC) was established to represent the collective interests of Muslims in DR Congo. All of these factors put together underlines the limited role (if any) of Islam in Congo's social and political space.

Nevertheless, the involvement of Muslims in DR Congo's peace process has not been nil. Although they lack(ed) the sophistication or extensiveness that other faith-based organisations (such as the Roman Catholic Church, the ECC and the Kimbanguist Church) possess, Muslims in the DRC have not hidden their preference for a state at peace with itself and with its neighbours. Hence, the Islamic community since 2003 has played certain constructive but minimal roles in the DRC's peace process under the aegis of the NIC. For example, the 'NIC has held courses for Imams and offered relief supplies to Muslims stricken by tribal disturbances that have beset DR Congo' (Hassan, 2003: i.d.). The courses that have been held focused on humanitarian activities, conflict transformation and inter-faith/inter-religious cooperation. Furthermore, the NIC (working through imams and sheikhs at the local mosques and at larger Muslim

gatherings) has been involved in community-based peace education in Kinshasa since 2000 (Interview with AP [Civil Society], Likasi, 25 November 2005).

More importantly, the limited roles of DR Congo's Islamic community in the country's peace process have been exemplified by its collaborative efforts within the framework of the Inter-religious Council of the Democratic Republic of Congo (IRC-DRC). Yet, it is remarkable that the IRC-DRC had been involved in the DRC's peace process prior to its official inauguration on November 12, 2005.<sup>25</sup> Hence, the Islamic community has been part of the country's peacebuilding efforts for (as long as) the period that the IRC-DRC's conflict transformation initiative has been on course. Indeed, there are interesting cases in point that highlight the Islamic community's collaborative efforts with other religious networks in promoting peace under the auspices of the IRC-DRC. For instance, the Islamic community was part of the following peacebuilding initiatives: peace workshops in Lusaka (September and October 1998), Harare (June 1999), Kinshasa (October 1999); national consultations and dialogue initiated by religious leaders in November 1999 and between February 24 and March 11, 2000; and a peacebuilding seminar in Kinshasa, December 5-10, 2004 (Internet 17). In addition, the NIC was a major participant in the IRC-DRC's peace advocacy visits to the United Nations, New York and to Brussels, Belgium in January and February 2000 respectively (Internet 18). Nevertheless, my research findings did not indicate the Islamic community's involvement in DR Congo's peace process in ways other than those identified in this section, thus illustrating the limited but constructive role of Islam in the conflict (transformation process).

#### **4.1.5 Other/Minority religious networks in DR Congo's peace process**

Research findings indicate that apart from the religious networks identified above, there are other faith-based actors that have played significant roles in the domain of conflict transformation in the DRC. In this category are internationally operating faith-based organisations as well as multi-faith actors. This section highlights the activities of a few

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<sup>25</sup> The IRC-DRC comprises the Roman Catholic Church, Protestant Churches [represented by the ECC], the Kimbanguist church, the Methodist Church, the Mokichi Okada Association Congo (MOA), the Presbyterian Church, the Unification Church, the Islamic Council, African Traditional Religions and the Church of Light (Internet 16).

of these actors, beginning with the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC).<sup>26</sup> In 2002-2003, the MCC lent its support to village peace committees in the localities affected by conflicts. The geographical scope of its operations in this regard included Bandundu, Goma, Kinshasa, and the Kivus. During the same period, it developed the peace education curriculum for primary schools across DR Congo as part of an effort to inculcate the notion and value of peace in young minds. Moreover, the MCC funded peace theology training programmes for 30 local peace organisations in Bandundu, Goma, Kinshasa, and the Kivus. And it was not left out of the processes that led up to the convocation of the ICD. What is noteworthy, however, is that the MCC sponsored four delegates to the ICD held at Sun City, South Africa in 2003 (Internet 20).

IDPs in Kinshasa and the Kivus have been receiving humanitarian assistance since 1999 through a collaborative engagement between the Salvation Army and Christian Aid in the DRC. Both organisations have also provided funds for civic education and for the teaching of peacemaking skills in Kinshasa. They have also opened field offices in Kinshasa and in the Kivus for the purpose of implementing their programmes on food security, health education, HIV/AIDS counselling, and human rights education. The Salvation Army and Christian Aid have also imported health equipment into DR Congo to meet the health needs of IDPs and others affected by the conflict. These organisations have deployed field staff in the aforementioned areas of operations in the DRC for the purpose of administering medical treatment and giving nutritional support to children in particular (Internet 21). There is no gainsaying the fact that their humanitarian and peace support operations have gone a long way to giving succour to those affected by the war.

In line with its tradition of peacebuilding through mediation in societies torn apart by strife, the Community of Sant' Egidio (beginning in 2005) has played the role of a neutral mediator in the DRC crisis. It has been working 'behind the scenes in DR Congo' to nurture peace and reconciliation. Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana and Abu-Nimer (2005: 73) report that the Community of Sant' Egidio's initiative in the DRC was aimed at

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<sup>26</sup> The MCC is a 'relief, service, development, and peace agency of the North American Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches' (Internet 19).

facilitating the return of the Interahamwe/ex-FAR to Rwanda, thus guaranteeing Rwanda's national security and ultimately restoring peaceful relations between DR Congo and Rwanda.

A fairly extensive engagement for peace in DR Congo on the part of the United Methodist Church (UMC) also deserves mention here. In 2002, the UMC organised a conference in Kinshasa to discuss the imperative and modalities for building sustainable peace in the DRC. Two years later, the UMC moderated a number of peace accords with a view to resolving local conflicts in Katanga and parts of eastern DRC (Interview with a Congolese journalist, Kinshasa, 22 November 2005). The humanitarian assistance component of UMC's peacebuilding programme has been coordinated in DR Congo by the United Methodist Church Committee on Relief (UMCOR). UMCOR launched its operations in the DRC in October 2002 and has since been working primarily in Katanga province. In addition to opening a food security office in Pweto, UMCOR has assisted in the rehabilitation of the agricultural economy in the region by providing farm implements to families. UMCOR has also been implementing 'programmes in the areas of reconstruction of roads, bridges and public buildings as well as the reintegration of ex-combatants' in Katanga (Internet 22). In October 2003, UMCOR distributed essential items such as food, mosquito nets and agricultural equipment to IDPs and returnee refugees (previously in Angola) accommodated at the Kasapa camp in Lubumbashi. Moreover, children of school age in the camp have been assisted by UMCOR through its Education for Development and Democracy Initiative (EDDI). Such assistance has been in the form of payment of pupils' tuition and the provision of school materials including uniforms (Internet 23). [Photos of a few of UMCOR's operations are attached to the appendix].

At this juncture, it is apposite to state that the initiatives by faith-based actors in DR Congo illustrate the constructive role(s) of religious networks in public life. In this chapter, roles of religious networks in transforming the conflict situation in DR Congo have been brought to the fore. Remarkably, these roles have overlapped or coalesced at times and have been undertaken independently or collaboratively. In addition, some

religious networks have implemented their peacebuilding initiatives across DR Congo while others have had theirs geographically-confined. By way of summary, the table below highlights the specific roles of faith-based organisations vis-à-vis the conflict transformation process in DR Congo:

**Table 5: Religious networks' peacebuilding initiatives in DR Congo**

Religious network	Activity	Geographical Scope	Period
The Roman Catholic Church	Health care delivery (health clinics, hospitals and pharmaceutical services)	Country-wide	1990s – date
	Creation of charity and development offices	Country-wide (but pre-eminently in North Kivu)	1990s – date
	Networking with civil society organisations for peaceful settlement of the conflict	North Kivu	2001
	Censure of activities of interlopers, including war-related human rights abuses	North Kivu	2001
	Moving refugees under threat to safety	Goma	1999 – 2001
	Voter education	Country-wide	2004 – 2006
<i>Eglise du Christ au Congo</i> [ECC] i.e. the Church of Christ in the Congo	Provision of humanitarian relief to IDPs	North Kivu, Manirema, Orientale	2002 – 2005
	Trauma counselling for victims of violence	Goma	2002
	Rehabilitation of educational institutions	Orientale	2002 – 2003
	Mediation and reconciliation	North Kivu, Orientale	1999 – 2001
The Kimbanguist Church	Humanitarian assistance	Bas-Congo	1999 – 2004
	Mediation	Bas-Congo	1999 – 2004
	Peace education	Bas-Congo	1999 – 2004
	Reconstruction	Bas-Congo	1999 – 2004
Inter-religious Council of DR Congo (which includes the National Islamic Council)	Peacebuilding seminar	Kinshasa	5 - 10 December 2004
	Peace advocacy visit to the United Nations	New York	January 2000
	Peace advocacy visit	Brussels, Belgium	February 2000
	Consultative forums on justice, peace, unity, reconciliation and democracy in the DRC	Kinshasa	2000 – 2004
	Churches-civil society forum within the framework of the Lusaka Peace Accord	Kinshasa	4 – 9 October 1999

Table 5 (continued)

Religious network	Activity	Geographical Scope	Period
Mennonite Central Committee	Support for village peace committees engaged in conflict transformation	Bandundu, Goma, Kinshasa, Kivu province	2002 – 2003
	Peace education curriculum for primary schools	Country-wide	2002 – 2003
	Sponsored four delegates to the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, Sun City, South Africa		2003
	Support for a mission and peace project	Eastern province of South Kivu	2002 – 2003
	Funding for 30 local peace organisations vis-à-vis peace theology training	Bandundu, Goma, Kinshasa, Kivu province	2002 – 2003
Christian Aid and The Salvation Army	Field offices focusing on: (i) food security (ii) health education, HIV/AIDS counselling and treatment (iii) emergency assistance to internally displaced persons (iv) peacebuilding and human rights programme (v) funding for civic education and peacemaking	Kinshasa, the Kivu region	1999 – date
The United Methodist Church	One-day conference on peace prospects in DRC.	Kinshasa	2002
	Emergency relief, food aid, spiritual comfort.	Kinshasa, Katanga, eastern DRC	2000-2004
	Coordination of the national consultation for peace	Kinshasa	February 24 – March 11, 2000
	Moderation of peace accord, settlement of local conflict	Katanga	2004
	Scholarship and educational support to 1500 indigent primary school girls	Kinshasa, Katanga, eastern DRC	2003
	Farmers' support programme	Kinshasa, Katanga, eastern DRC	2003
All Africa Council of Churches (AACC)	National consultations on the peace process	Kinshasa	2000 – 2004
	Capacity building for local groups working for peace	Bukavu, Bandundu provinces	2000 – 2004
CBCN <sup>27</sup> , CELPA <sup>28</sup> and CEPAC <sup>29</sup> [with the Norwegian Baptist Union, the Pentecostal Mission of Norway and the Christian Relief Network]	Provision of health care services.  Health equipment worth US\$17 million (19 complete surgery units, 45 hospital units and 16 nursing units) shipped to the DRC	Country-wide	November 2004

<sup>27</sup> *Communauté Baptiste du Congo Nord* i.e. the Baptist Community of Northern Congo.

<sup>28</sup> *La Communauté des Églises Libres de Pentecôte en Afrique* i.e. the Community of the Free Churches of Pentecost in Africa

<sup>29</sup> *Communauté des Églises de Pentecôte en Afrique Centrale* i.e. the Community of the Churches of Pentecost in Central Africa.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**RELIGION AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN DR CONGO:**  
**AN APPRAISAL**

**5.1 Local responses to religious networks' role in the peace process**

People and government [appreciate] the involvement of religious [groups] in [the] peacebuilding process (AP, interview: Likasi, 25 November 2005).

There have been diverse reactions to the involvement of faith-based organisations in the DRC's peace process. Local responses to faith-based initiatives aimed at building sustainable peace have ranged from utter condemnation and cynicism to gratitude. Not a few Congolese were sceptical about the rationale, justification, efficacy, and benefits of religious networks' involvement in the peacebuilding process against the backdrop of the complicity of the churches during the 1994 genocide in neighbouring Rwanda. In fact, during my fieldwork, some Congolese had – at the outset of faith actors' intervention – drawn parallels between religious groups and politicians and had been of the view that the interests of the ordinary citizens had always been subordinated to those of religious leaders and politicians (E-mail from ZF in Matadi, DR Congo, 24 December 2005). In other words, national interest – or put differently, the public good – has been undermined on those occasions when the material interests and personal ambitions of both church leaders and politicians have coalesced. The import of AP's (Interview: Likasi, 25 November 2005) opinion rather than grammatical expressions is of relevance here:

Even though some time people have the impression that religious group are (sic)... playing the game of politician, the[y] some time forget the population considering their own interest, some religious leaders are not constant; some of them seem to be corrupted. Some people begin to lose confidence to the religious group (sic), their role being very dark. As soon as they have a politic (sic) responsibility, they forget [the] people, they are getting far from people.

Given this mindset, a few Congolese were cynical about, or in fact were critical of, faith-based intervention in the conflict transformation process. Not to be overlooked was the 'risk' of proselytism, which the activities of faith-based organisations posed. Nevertheless, the fact that state bureaucracy was almost non-existent in most parts of DR

Congo compelled even those critical of religiously motivated peacebuilding initiatives to accept help from the religious constituency.

At another level, a number of community leaders and a few politicians had deemed faith-based peacebuilding as being of little value given the fact that religious networks lack(ed) the ability to *enforce* peace and to undertake demilitarisation and demobilisation unilaterally. Apart from their moral and spiritual influence over adherents and within the communities in which they enjoy support, religious groups generally do not possess the capacity to enforce compliance with their whims let alone impose a settlement in the event of the eruption of conflict. To some politicians and belligerents who had expected a zero-sum military solution to the conflict, the involvement of faith actors in peacebuilding, or more broadly, a peaceful resolution of the conflict, was not an attractive option. Until the convocation of the ICD, each of the parties to the conflict had believed that it could secure “victory” through the use of force. Therefore, the intervention of religious groups, which is usually premised on morality and other humane considerations (outside the realm of *realpolitik*), was bound to undermine the prospect(s) of armed victory. It was not until the warring parties realised the impossibility of military conquest that they readily accepted the option of peaceful settlement, which involved third party intervenors. Furthermore, the realisation on the part of many Congolese that politicians had fared badly in areas where the churches had succeeded (such as the provision of education or health care) engendered a positive attitude towards faith-based intervention in the peace process (Interview with ANK of the CJPC, Kinshasa, 9 February 2006).

Sections of Congolese civil society and political class have criticised the restriction of humanitarian services to church members by a few faith-based organisations or actors. It seems that a number of denominations (though mainly in the minority) had, for undisclosed reasons, limited their humanitarian activities (including the provision of relief materials) to their members or, at best, given preference to their members over and above other Congolese (Interview with ZF, Kisangani, 6 February 2006). The foregoing engendered disappointment and the feeling of alienation on the part of individuals so excluded, and cynicism from many observers. To these persons, the intervention of faith-

based organisations in the conflict transformation process in the form of denominationally-confined initiatives inadvertently ‘opens new wounds’ while trying to deal with conflict and its effects on the people. In this regard, the inclination to focus on their own members (as opposed to all persons) on the part of these religious groups raises a question about the overall benefit of faith-based initiatives to the community. Critics of these religious networks, namely those excluded by faith actors, had argued that while some religious groups discriminate in terms of service delivery, non-religious NGOs’ programmes are more likely to promote the public good by targeting and providing benefits to all and sundry irrespective of their religious affiliations (Interview with ZF, Kisangani, 6 February 2006). Although this reaction to faith-based intervention in the peacebuilding process was neither strident nor pervasive, it nonetheless highlighted the potential pitfall of religious networks’ involvement in the public domain. But generally speaking, reactions to religious networks’ intervention in the conflict transformation process have been overwhelmingly positive rather than negative or scathing.

The fact that “[p]eople really wanted religious [groups] to be involved in the peacebuilding process” (Interview with BSN, Bandundu, 10 November 2005) underscored the widespread positive response to their intervention. Most Congolese have not only witnessed the invaluable contributions of faith-based networks to education, health care, and infrastructure development but also have been beneficiaries of these services. Over time, the generality of Congolese have been confronted by the reality of state failure while contemporaneously the churches have demonstrated their capacity to ‘fill the vacuum’ through the provision of social services. Perhaps the churches’ reputation in this regard did underlie the expectation on the part of the people regarding the intervention of faith actors in the conflict transformation process. If religious networks had played prominent roles in social service delivery while relative peace prevailed in the DRC, then their involvement for the sake of promoting peace assumed saliency in the wake of the conflict that undermined state authority. In fact, “many people knocked on the doors of the churches for help” during the conflict and “had to rely on the churches for daily supplies without which they could not survive” (Interview with PA, Manirema, 29 November 2005). Given this scenario, the majority of Congolese not

only viewed the intervention by religious networks as an absolute necessity but also appreciated their specific roles aimed at alleviating war-related suffering as well as attenuating the conflict.

It is instructive to note that no respondent described the involvement of faith-based organisations in the peacebuilding process as *negative*. Twenty five percent of respondents posited that religious networks' role in the peace process was *somewhat positive* whilst seventy five percent stated that faith-based peacebuilding in the DRC was *extremely positive*. According to a respondent (Interview with TWM, Kinshasa, 22 November 2005),

the churches, mainly the Catholic Church and the *Eglise du Christ au Congo*, played the social, political and economic roles that were expected of the government before, during and after the war. Add to that, the intervention of the churches did save lives that otherwise would have been lost. Many children are now going to schools owned by the churches; the parents of these children have also been assisted to support their families. *The people of [DR] Congo are therefore grateful to the churches for their help during the difficult period* [emphasis added].

Given that religious networks apparently filled the vacuum created by state failure, many Congolese did not have reservations about expressing their gratitude for the positive contributions of faith-based organisations towards peacebuilding as well as the improvement of human security. Furthermore, the impact of faith-based initiatives no doubt engendered positive response as could be deduced from the activities of the ECC in Kisangani. Tygesen (2000: i.d.) reported that the 'ECC had been supporting 15 health centres which provided basic care for 920,000 persons who had no one else [but the church] to turn to.' In an interview in Kisangani, one of the beneficiaries of ECC's initiative, Jeanette (quoted in Tygesen, 2000: i.d.) explained: "[w]e only find hope in the church, and we are praying every day for the world to hear us" [emphasis mine]. Having 'found hope in the church' in the face of the international community's inaction and/or belated intervention, it was/is not surprising that the intervention of religious networks in the peacebuilding process has engendered positive responses from many Congolese.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to highlight the government's responses to religious networks' intervention in the conflict transformation process. A striking feature of Kinshasa's disposition towards religiously motivated peacebuilding initiatives in DR Congo was its ambivalence. At the onset of the rebellion against the government of President Joseph Kabila, the Congolese government had misgivings about the activities of religious groups in rebel-held areas. At a largely superficial level, government officials were wont to believe that faith-based actors could not operate effectively in rebel-controlled areas if they were not in accord with the insurgents. On the other hand, Kinshasa did not have any apprehensions about the peacebuilding activities of religious actors in government-controlled areas (Kinshasa in particular) as it could monitor their operations. However, this ambivalence soon gave way to a wholly positive official disposition towards faith-based peacebuilding before the convocation of the ICD as the people, community leaders, religious leaders, and civil society groups began to censure the activities of (Rwandan and Ugandan-backed) rebels in territories that the latter controlled. Religious leaders and civil society groups in rebel-dominated eastern DRC called for the withdrawal of foreign forces and the demobilisation of militias (Interview with MK, Lubumbashi, 25 November 2006). Government officials could not be more pleased with such denunciation of "external aggression." Religious groups' mobilisation of the Congolese for popular and effective participation in the ICD apparently gave the government an added reason to endorse the intervention of faith actors in the peace process.

Furthermore, evidence from the DRC points in the direction of government's positive appreciation of religious networks' peacebuilding role. Respondents allude to the appointment of religious leaders into senior government positions as a mark of official endorsement of the constructive roles by Congolese religious networks. Cases in point include the appointments of ECC leaders – Monsignor Marini Bodho, an ECC bishop, as president of the Senate (the upper house of the Congolese parliament), and another ECC leader as the vice president of the *Commission Electorale Indépendante* (CEI – the Independent Electoral Commission) (Interviews with AP [Civil Society], Likasi, 25 November 2005 and FN, Kinshasa, 22 December 2005). On occasions, a number of

politicians, including President Joseph Kabila, have commended religious groups for their constructive roles which have been “complementing the efforts of government in building a peaceful and prosperous [DR] Congo” (Interview with Reverend Father FGM, Katanga, 18 November 2005). A meeting between President Kabila and bishops of the United Methodist Church (in Washington, D.C., USA in November 2003) during which the President commended the church for its efforts in promoting peace and rebuilding the state (Internet 24) also underscored the official endorsement of faith-based peacebuilding in DR Congo.

Apart from the government, local and international (non-)governmental and non-religious organisations have expressed positive sentiments, at various times, regarding the peacebuilding role of religious networks in the DRC, especially in the area of collaboration between faith actors and other civil society groups. It is impossible to give expression to the sundry dispositions of all non-religious actors in this section of this study. However, it is apt to note that international non-governmental actors working in DR Congo (such as the International Rescue Committee – IRC, Oxfam, Human Rights Watch – Africa, and the International Crisis Group – ICG) have published reports, periodically, of their activities which not only highlight the roles of faith actors in conflict transformation but also applaud such constructive efforts.<sup>30</sup> The foregoing implies that positive reactions to religious networks’ peacebuilding role have not been entirely localised; sections of the international community have also endorsed the intervention of faith actors in the conflict transformation process while noting the actual and potential benefits of such involvement. But how can one contextualise the involvement of religious groups in DR Congo’s peacebuilding process? To what extent has their intervention facilitated social services delivery and peacebuilding? Put differently, what are the effects of their peacebuilding efforts? And what are the strengths and weaknesses of religious peacebuilding in the DRC? The next section provides empirical answers to these questions that probe the overall profile of religious actors’ intervention in what has been labelled ‘Africa’s First World War’.

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<sup>30</sup> Details of the engagement by these international non-governmental organisations in DR Congo (and elsewhere) could be accessed on their websites.

## 5.2 Assessment of religious networks' roles in the conflict transformation process

... assessing the impact of [religious networks'] peacebuilding initiatives continues to be a challenge (Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana & Abu-Nimer, 2005: 38).

Having noted what is clearly an obvious difficulty, Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana and Abu-Nimer (2005: 38) proffer two approaches to measuring the effect of faith-based peacebuilding: (i) assessing “the impact through narrative evaluations in which the activities at stake are described along with events or processes that followed on the activity” and; (ii) “strategically [integrating] ... peacebuilding activities into relief and development programs, to which relatively common monitoring and evaluation tools could be applied.” This study synthesizes these two approaches in the effort to surmount the challenge of measuring the impact of religious networks' peacebuilding efforts in the DRC. Such synthesis is required in that the activities of faith actors in DR Congo could be simultaneously “described along with events and processes that followed” and situated within the context of ‘relief and development programmes’. In doing this, this study first of all contextualises the involvement of faith-based organisations in the DRC's peace process. So, what are the plausible reasons for the intervention by religious actors in the conflict transformation process?

It should be stated at the outset that several reasons account for faith actors' involvement in the DRC's peace process. According to respondents interviewed during my field work, one significant motivation for peacebuilding by religious networks – including the implementation of ‘relief and development programmes’ – was the pleas by the war-weary and beleaguered people of DR Congo for religious networks to get involved in the alleviation of war-related suffering. For many years, most Congolese have had to hinge their hope for a better future in the religious constituency. And the outbreak of war underscored the need to cling to hope amidst despair – a “therapy” that is often provided by religion. Besides, DR Congo's religious networks had demonstrated their capacity to perform social, economic, and political functions for the sake of the people. Hence, people's recourse to the religious constituency in order to adjust to the conflict and to

build peace was not only considered absolutely necessary but also expedient. A report by the United Methodist Church implied that the people wanted religious networks to get involved in DR Congo's peacebuilding process as President Kabila reportedly requested the church's assistance in transforming the country:

The 32-year old president of [DR] Congo is *asking* the United Methodist bishops to help his impoverished and war-torn nation as he moves to bring peace and, eventually, free elections to his people (Internet 24) [emphasis added].

Clearly, in asking the church for help President Kabila not only accentuated an awareness of the peacebuilding potential of religious networks but also acknowledged them as major actors in society and as agents of (positive) social change. It is also apt to recall that "many people [had] knocked on the doors of the churches for help" during the conflict and "had to rely on the churches for daily supplies without which they could not survive" (Interview with PA, Manirema, 29 November 2005). Having been "invited" to facilitate the peacebuilding process, it was/is not surprising that the involvement of religious groups has attracted positive local responses. The point being made here is that the request by the Congolese (for the involvement of faith actors) provides a significant justification for the involvement of religious networks in the conflict transformation process.

More importantly, there are reasons that border on the unique character of faith-based organisations as catalysts for peace. In other words, certain factors give religious networks comparative advantage (over other civil society groups) in the peacebuilding process. One of these is the logic of *liberation theology* which emphasizes the absolute necessity for social action by religious actors in order to alleviate suffering. By implication, failure to act – by way of preventing or stemming injustice and suffering – constitutes a sin. Expressed differently, religious actors are impelled by the obligatory mission of liberation theology in the performance of roles aimed at bringing about positive social change. As far as DR Congo's religious networks were concerned, neutrality or inaction was not only impossible in the face of the extensive suffering caused by the war but also may be regarded as tantamount to complicity or transgression.

According to a Roman Catholic priest (Interview with Reverend Father FGM, Katanga, 18 November 2005), the roles of the churches in attenuating the conflict and providing succour to Congolese were a replication of the churches' mission as underscored by the gospel of Christ. His view harmonises with the "see-judge-act" essence of liberation theology (Ribeiro, 1999: 304) which provides the ideological base for religious actors' involvement in peacebuilding. Therefore, one cogent reason for religious groups' engagement for peace in DR Congo was the dictate of liberation theology which puts 'pressures on the consciences of religious actors and commits them to remedying undesirable situations' (Foroohar, 1989: 50).

In its assessment of faith-based peacebuilding in the DRC, this study draws from the empirical analysis by Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana and Abu-Nimer (2005: 143-146) regarding certain "contextual, institutional and personal factors" that give religious networks comparative advantage in the peacebuilding process. With respect to the contextual dimension, the authors note that in "various conflict-affected areas the state apparatus is weak or is absent and religious structures are some of the strongest institutions in place". In addition, "religion is, on a wide base, deeply rooted in society" (Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana & Abu-Nimer, 2005: 143). It is possible to extrapolate the authors' submissions to assess faith-based peacebuilding in DR Congo. This study's profiling of DR Congo's religious demography reveals that religious networks are the strongest institutions in the country and have been the most prominent civil society actors in the face of state deflation or (near) collapse. DR Congo's religious groups also wield extensive influence over the population and, as such, religion is deeply rooted in Congolese society. These factors make religious actors visible and necessitate their involvement in activities that touch on the lives of Congolese. The non-involvement of faith-based organisations in DR Congo's peacebuilding would have meant the exclusion of the strongest constituency from the processes that impinged on the lives and future of the majority.

Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana and Abu-Nimer (2005: 144) identify the institutional factors on which faith-based peacebuilding is predicated. They include: (i) religious actors are

regarded as moral beacon; (ii) religious networks' presence before, during and after conflict; (iii) political leverage; (iv) international network or alliances, and; (v) adequate organisational structure. In the DRC, faith-based organisations are generally perceived as a "moral beacon" and 'oasis of integrity in the desert of corruption'. Hence, their reputation did enhance their capacity as facilitators of the peacebuilding process in contradistinction to politicians. The long presence of religious networks in DR Congo's society and the political leverage they have in the eyes of the country's politicians also lend credence to their involvement in the conflict transformation process. Moreover, DR Congo's religious groups possess adequate organisational structure and extensive infrastructure as well as international connections that typically promote faith-based peacebuilding.

At the personal level, Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana and Abu-Nimer (2005: 144-5) identify indispensable attributes that give religious actors an edge in peacebuilding. These include their spiritual authority, their ability to persevere against overwhelming odds, and their commitment to principles or values such as truth, justice, respect, tolerance, humility and reconciliation. The spiritual authority which religious leaders enjoy "either through their ties with a religious institution or through the trust evoked by a personal spiritual charisma" (Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana & Abu-Nimer, 2005: 145) has been replicated in DR Congo's peace process even at great costs – thereby underscoring the need for perseverance. Religious networks in the DRC have demonstrated by their prominent roles in the conflict transformation process that, indeed, they possess considerable authority that cannot be ignored. Having highlighted the rationale for faith-based intervention in DR Congo, this study, against the backdrop of one of its research questions, next evaluates the extent to which the activities of faith actors have facilitated peacebuilding within the context of 'relief and development programmes'.

"Religious [networks'] involvement in the conflict transformation process has contributed significantly to the creation of peace in [DR] Congo" (Interview with JTK, Kisangani, 28 November 2005). In its assessment of the roles of faith-based organisations in the DRC's peace process, this study aligns itself with the dominant view

in Congolese society to the effect that religious groups have been appreciably instrumental to the attenuation of conflict and the building of peace in the country. Faith actors' involvement in the form of mediation, facilitation of the ICD, peace education, demobilisation (and reintegration of ex-combatants), humanitarian assistance and reconstruction has contributed to the transformation of the conflict. As noted earlier in this study, each of these peace supporting activities (undertaken by DR Congo's religious networks) is integral to the conflict transformation process. In sum, faith actors' engagement in the aforementioned activities has helped (to a large extent) to transform individuals, structures and situations that engendered conflict in the DRC to the extent that it triggered local and international optimism regarding the successful conduct of 2006 general elections. The elections, held in July (first round) and October 2006 (second round), were generally peaceful, except for the clashes between supporters of President Joseph Kabila and opposition leader, Jean Pierre Bemba, in Kinshasa after the declaration of the results of the first round of voting which did not produce a winner with absolute majority of votes.

Religious groups' intervention in the DRC crisis went beyond providing relief assistance or assisting the people to adjust to conflict; it embraced the transformative potential and intent of faith-based peacebuilding by way of reconstruction, infrastructural development and economic empowerment. These efforts, no doubt, typically create disincentive for post-conflict violent behaviour (on the part of previously excluded persons or groups) and promote an atmosphere conducive to the consolidation of peace. In other words, DR Congo's religious networks' peacebuilding initiatives have been devised and implemented with a view to addressing people's fears and the structural underpinnings of conflict as illustrated by their efforts in terms of peace education (including the attempt to rehumanise the "other") as well as their facilitation of the ICD. Drawing from the foregoing, the evaluation of faith-based peacebuilding in the DRC against the backdrop of components of conflict transformation ineluctably underscores the conclusion by many Congolese that religious networks have made significant contributions to peacebuilding.

However, an objective assessment necessarily illustrates the inherent limitations or shortcomings of religiously motivated peacebuilding. Although DR Congo's religious networks have responded to the crisis in the country without being politically encumbered, their apparent lack of coherence or unanimity in terms of efforts, strategies, and their focus groups resonated in some of the responses to my research questions. Furthermore, a few Congolese do not readily acknowledge the contributions of religious networks to peacebuilding. Others are wont to argue that faith-based organisations have embarked on humanitarian activities in order to attain certain benefits including growing the number of adherents. This point is illustrated, for instance, by the distribution of essential items in churches after religious services. I gathered during field research that minority religious networks in DR Congo (in certain isolated instances though) had rendered humanitarian services in a way that exemplified partisan social action. Owing to the preceding, religious networks' initiatives potentially discriminate against non-members in such a manner that could reinforce differences in belief systems. By implication, efforts that are intended to build sustainable peace inadvertently foster alienation and disenchantment which could lead (inexorably) to aggressive behaviour. Paradoxically, faith-based peacebuilding potentially counteracts conflict transformation as it unwittingly exacerbates differences that engender conflict. For faith-based peacebuilding to succeed, religious actors need to promote non-partisan social action as they harness the potential benefits of religiously motivated peacebuilding.

Apart from the issue of partisanship, faith-based peacebuilding in DR Congo has been undermined by the lack of resources and expertise. DRC's religious networks have had to rely on other actors such as (secular) local and international non-governmental organisations for the provision of services and the implementation of initiatives aimed at attenuating the conflict. At the height of the conflict and its attendant humanitarian crisis, it was not unusual for the churches in particular to appeal for external financial and logistical assistance in providing services to those affected by the war. Generally, religious leaders undertook peacebuilding initiatives such as mediation, demobilisation, peace education, and reconstruction on the basis of their religious mandate, not necessarily because they possess(ed) the requisite skills or expertise. The apparent lack

of professionalism in faith-based peacebuilding in the DRC underscored the need for significant support both from other actors in civil society and from international humanitarian and development agencies. But rather than constitute a criticism of religious networks' roles in DR Congo *stricto sensu*, support from non-religious communities demonstrates the complementarity between faith-based and secular peacebuilding. The reality that DR Congo's religious networks have facilitated peacebuilding, as opposed to inaction or indifference in the face of war-related suffering, lends credence to the positive role of religion in public life. What next for faith actors in post-conflict DRC?

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Religious networks in post-conflict DRC

...for many years, the Church has had to take the role of the state... [and the performance of that role represents] a moral obligation (Iyananio Molingi of the Diocese of Kasongo, Manirema Province, quoted in e-mail from IRIN News, 29 March 2006: "Civic education crucial ahead of poll, officials says").

As noted earlier, religious networks had been engaged in public service delivery prior to the eruption of conflict in the DRC. Further, the onset of war did make religious groups' constructive intervention in public life absolutely imperative. And the formal declaration regarding the end of hostilities (or the end of the transition process) does not obviate the need for faith-based social action as the Congolese government is still struggling to establish state authority across the country as at the time of writing in 2006 (and probably in the foreseeable future). Government's control over Congolese territory has been hampered in the not-too-distant past by the military operations and atrocities on the part of the Mayi-Mayi and other militias in the eastern part of DR Congo. However, in recent times, the Kabila administration and MONUC have been making efforts to deal with the security situation in the east. Overall, all the provinces of the DRC were made (relatively) safe for the general elections that were held in August 2006 (the first round) and in October 2006 (the second round). Given the relative peace (or the cessation of pervasive hostilities) in DR Congo and the successful conclusion of the elections, the focus of peacebuilding initiatives by religious networks and other civil society organisations will (expectedly) shift to (medium to long term initiatives at) promoting reconciliation and fostering national unity as well creating the ambience conducive to reconstruction and the resuscitation and/or overhauling of state institutions.

The first half of 2006 was marked by an increased national awareness campaign intended to sensitise voters about the 2006 elections. Against the backdrop of an obvious realisation of the powerful influence of religious groups, the *Commission Electorale Indépendante* (CEI – or the Independent Electoral Commission) co-opted faith-based

organisations into its preparations for the elections. The CEI equally carried along other non-religious civil society actors in the implementation of its mandate. While launching its voter education campaign in April 2006, the CEI distributed sensitisation materials and presented its operational plan for civic action and electoral education to civil society actors including DR Congo's religious organisations. The CEI's operational plan underscored "the participation of multiple actors in the campaign, including the media, non-state actors, civil society organisations, such as *churches*, syndicates and other traditional leaders" (Wisniewska/MONUC, 2006: i.d.) in the political process [emphasis mine]. Specifically, the CEI trained religious leaders and other civil society actors as part of its capacity-building efforts that would enable them to promote awareness about the elections.

At another level, the United Nations also held consultations with non-state actors with a view to promoting their participation in the electoral process. For instance, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, the Under-Secretary General for UN Peacekeeping Operations, visited the DR Congo in March 2006 to consolidate the collaboration between the UN and other stakeholders in the political process. Alwira/MONUC (2006: i.d.) reported that "Mr. Guéhenno met Archbishop Laurent Monsengwo, Chairman of the Episcopal Conference in the DR Congo to promote civil society involvement in the [2006 general] elections." On that occasion, Archbishop Monsengwo had "told the media that civil society networks would do all they [could] to discourage and appease those trying to create tension in the democratic process in the DRC" (Alwira/MONUC, 2006: i.d.). Archbishop Monsengwo's statement lends credence to the capacity of DR Congo's religious groups, as well as other civil society groups, to promote a culture of peace and to mobilise citizens towards massive participation in constructive national processes.

Accordingly, religious groups in DR Congo's post-conflict epoch have intensified peace education and electoral sensitisation campaigns within their constituencies and in local communities at large. This initiative was undertaken against the realisation that a peaceful and stable DRC – in essence, the country's future – will be determined by the successful conduct of the 2006 general elections and, more importantly, the people's

acceptance of outcomes of the process (Interview with JDK, Pietermaritzburg, 30 April 2006). Therefore, the task before religious groups in the aftermath of the elections is to foster reconciliation (first between aggrieved politicians) and to intensify peace advocacy in communities where the recourse to violence – perhaps due to disappointment at the outcomes of the democratic transition – is likely.

However, the success of the elections and post-transition peace is being threatened by a number of factors: the resistance to disarmament and demobilisation and, more significantly, the threat of violence by some supporters of defeated presidential candidate, Jean Pierre Bemba.<sup>31</sup> The significance of these factors brings the implications of the elections to the fore. Although elections *per se* do not automatically translate to stability, the successful conclusion of the DRC elections – described as “the most significant in Africa since Nelson Mandela was elected as South Africa’s president in 1994” (Internet 11) – offers Congolese a window of opportunity to build sustainable peace. The elections hold the potential to help establish the framework for a legitimate government in which case the (elected) leaders could count on the people’s support for reconstruction and rebuilding efforts in the post-transition period. It can be said that the elections can create the ambience for stability, which the DRC needs in order to put itself on the path to sustainable development. The success of the elections is also crucial for central Africa: a peaceful DRC is *sine qua non* for a stable regional neighbourhood. Indeed, a peaceful DRC stood the chance of becoming an economic powerhouse in central Africa and this should give impetus to the process of regional integration and development.

However, harnessing these (potential) positive gains of a successful democratic transition will depend on the acceptability of the election results by losers (and their supporters). The fact that some Congolese were disinclined towards a Kabila victory (and consequently, a Kabila presidency) which they view as a recipe for chaos, does not bode

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<sup>31</sup> The results of the second round of the presidential elections, as announced by the CEI on November 15, 2006, showed that incumbent president, Joseph Kabila, had won 58.05 percent of the vote and opposition leader Jean Pierre Bemba, 41.95 percent. However, Bemba’s camp immediately denounced the results, alleging vote rigging by Kabila, thereby heightening fears of possible post-election violence (Internet 11).

well for the DRC.<sup>32</sup> Notable political figures opposed to Kabila (Jean Pierre Bemba and Etienne Tshisekedi being the prominent ones) enjoy massive support across the country (Interview with JDK, Pietermaritzburg, 30 April 2006) and their supporters might seek to undermine the authority of the new government unless these political leaders demonstrate a strong commitment otherwise. In fact, the DRC may lapse into crisis or slide back into the throes of another war if the frustration arising from electoral defeat was not satisfactorily addressed. The contestations of the post-transition epoch might become new sources of tensions that could undermine the success of the elections and consequently threaten the relative but fragile peace and stability that the country enjoys at the moment. Abbe Paulin Kalala, a Roman Catholic Church priest in Mbuji Mayi, puts it poignantly: “[i]t is possible and even probable that after the elections there will be conflict and even war, unless we enter into the process of negotiation [to deal with the issues in contention]” (quoted in e-mail from IRIN News, 08 June 2006: “To vote, or not to vote”). It is also “feared that the]... warlords [might] go back to fighting [in which case the] failure [of the elections] will be so catastrophic, [with the possibility that] the country [might] be divided up like Yugoslavia...” (E-mail from IRIN News, 08 June 2006: “To vote, or not to vote”). In view of the foregoing, religious leaders have a role to play in “healing the wounds” of the democratic transition. In view of these implications, one may conclude reasonably that the prospect for peace in the DRC is either sound or parlous, depending on the commitment of political actors and continuous support from the international community.

The recent intervention by religious groups in terms of defusing tensions prior to the presidential elections provides a pointer to continuous faith-based engagement for peace in the future. Even before the release of the second round of presidential election results, DR Congo’s religious groups have been emphasizing the need for the political class to act responsibly and to put the country first, rather than to allow parochial interests to scuttle the democratic transition (Interview with a Congolese student, School of Theology,

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<sup>32</sup> A cross section of Congolese society has consistently questioned Joseph Kabila’s nationality. This group of people alleges that Kabila is not Congolese, that he is a puppet of the international community (read, the West) and that his election to DR Congo’s presidency will further divide the country and exacerbate the crisis (Internet 25).

University of KwaZulu-Natal, 06 November 2006). This is not unprecedented, for the Roman Catholic Church, for instance, through its Pastoral Letters, had stressed the absolute necessity for politicians to build bridges of understanding as the democratic transition neared its terminal stages (Interview with a university professor, Lubumbashi, 14 May 2006). Moreover, Laurent Monsengwo – the Archbishop of Kisangani, the president of the *Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo* (CENCO) [the National Episcopal Conference of Congo] and head of the Roman Catholic Church in the DR Congo – a key political mediator in the country since the time of the late president, Mobutu Sese Seko, envisions a greater role for religious groups in promoting sustainable peace and facilitating the collaborative approach towards handling differences arising from the democratic transition. As at the time of completing this thesis, the Roman Catholic Church, in collaboration with other faith-based networks and civil society actors, is contemplating the convocation of consultative forums for the reconciliation of political differences and for consensus-building which, of course, is germane to creating the conditions necessary for long-term stability and economic prosperity in the DRC (Interview with a Congolese student, School of Theology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 06 November 2006). In the light of the foregoing, Congolese can look forward to increasing civil society engagement (including religious networks' involvement) in DR Congo's public sphere with a view to building on the potential gains of a successful (at least so far and barring recourse to war) democratic transition.

It is worth noting that the international community has supported the people of the DRC in their efforts to build peace. Apart from the peacekeeping role of the United Nations, regional and global actors were also instrumental in giving impetus to the democratic transition. Suffice it to say that the international community's engagement has taken cognisance of the need to collaborate with DR Congo's civil society actors. The United Nations Security Council's "whirlwind working tour" of the DRC in mid-June 2006 is a case in point. In an apparent recognition of the role of faith-based networks in the (post-conflict) democratic transition process, the UN Security Council delegation's itinerary included "a meeting with the heads of the various religious organisations in the DRC" which have been recognised as one of the "many important actors in the Congolese

election process” (Young/MONUC, 2006: i.d.). Such engagement by the international community, one which lends critical support to local initiatives, assumes greater significance in view of the massive challenges facing the Congolese state in terms of sustaining peace after the elections, reconstruction and asserting state authority over the entire DR Congo territory. In fact, it would be illogical for the international community to disengage precipitately after the elections (or after the inauguration of the new government) as that would be a recipe for crisis.

Against this backdrop, the international community has an all-important role to play in building sustainable peace in the DRC. The main role of the international community in the short, medium and long-term periods should be to lend critical support to initiatives by the Congolese people to foster reconciliation, rebuild infrastructure and resuscitate state institutions. The United Nations in particular, through MONUC, will have to sustain the process of demobilisation of (ex-)combatants and militias especially in eastern DRC. The people of DR Congo require sustained, active and even greater engagement by international actors on the long road to recovery and stability. The new government will need the assistance of the international community in resolving the crisis of governance, reviving the health and education systems and creating conditions necessary for investment and for economic growth. It is in these areas that the specialised agencies of the UN will have to play vital roles. In the long-term, the international community (in collaboration with local actors) will have to assist the Congolese to nurture a culture of (unwavering commitment to) peace. Within this context, one can envision sustained commitment on the part of all actors, including the United Nations and indeed, religious networks, to the peacebuilding process in the DRC.

By and large, DR Congo’s religious groups in the post-conflict period have focused on supporting the democratic transition through civic education and advocating responsibility by the political class. The import of their role in the post-conflict epoch has been the nurturing of an environment within which a successful transition may be conducted. This role is underscored by the realisation that the recently concluded elections were crucial to the future stability of the Congolese state. The successful

conduct of the elections and (hopefully) the parties' deference to the wishes of the electorate as expressed during the polls, will open a peaceful, stable, and prosperous post-transition chapter in the DRC's history. Hence, one may ask, 'what will be the role(s) of DR Congo's faith-based networks after the democratic transition'? Would the cessation of conflict, the successful conduct of elections and the subsequent inauguration of a democratically elected government (buoyed by the people's mandate) obviate the involvement of religious networks in DR Congo's social and political space? The next section conjectures the roles of religious actors in the post-transition epoch and thereafter concludes with recommendations that should inform faith-based peacebuilding. These recommendations will draw from the empirical findings (of this study) on religiously motivated peacebuilding in the DRC.

## **6.2 Religious networks and the future of DR Congo**

An accurate prognostication about the future of a phenomenon in the social sciences is very difficult. Expressed differently, it is difficult to predict with absolute certainty what future trends or situations will be. This *problématique* arises *inter alia*, from the complexities of social science phenomena, the limitation of human episteme and the fact that events do not necessarily follow linear or unidimensional logic. This prognostic complexity notwithstanding, the predictive facet of social science research remains an important element in empirical scholarly inquiry. As a matter of fact, it is the element of prognostication that often provides the background or justification for further research as it provokes 'new' thinking or the 'other' view, which may lead to the substantiation, or revision, or invalidation of theories, for instance.<sup>33</sup> However, it is apt to add that the "fear" of being confuted has not been and should not be too strong to deter scholars from embarking on prognostic analysis of social science phenomena. Here too, this study undertakes a futuristic analysis, but of the roles of faith-based actors in the DRC. Suffice it to note that prognostication is often based on the objective interpretation of, and deductions or inferences from, past and current realities. In other words, past and present scenarios tend to define the future, and scholars often draw from these scenarios when

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<sup>33</sup> Take for example, Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" prognostic thesis (as it then was), which subsequently engendered a robust scholarly engagement vis-à-vis the main factors that would precipitate conflict in the post-Cold War international system.

making predictions, albeit with due recourse to the *ceteris paribus* caveat. In line with this 'tradition', this section forecasts the expected roles of religious networks in the post-transition period in the DRC.

The analysis in this section derives from the incontrovertible conception that state deflation or state collapse incapacitates institutions of governance. Typically, a post-conflict environment creates the necessary imperative to reconstitute the state or rebuild its institutions as the case may be. And the advent of a new administration in the aftermath of a successful post-conflict transition process is more often than not accompanied by multifarious challenges, which the new regime may not be (adequately) equipped to surmount. A new regime may be faced with the tasks of establishing and/or consolidating its authority, reforming the security sector, reconstruction, national reconciliation, and the provision of basic social services. The enormity of these challenges may even overwhelm the new regime such that this state of affairs gives civil society actors comparative advantage in the public sphere. Posner (2004: 239-240) posits that state collapse (or deflation) undergirds civil society's role in governance in which case non-state actors provide public goods and substitute for a state that cannot yet fully function. In the case of the DRC, not even the expected inauguration of a new democratically elected government would obviate religious actors' engagement in the delivery of 'public goods'. As a matter of fact, insufficient state capacity will underpin the continued provision of social services by religious networks, which represent the foremost collective in DR Congo's civil society constituency.

In conjunction with other non-state actors, faith-based organisations will, for the foreseeable future, play pivotal roles in the public sphere. There is little or no doubt that a future post-transition regime in Kinshasa would be constrained by challenges to its authority from various quarters. Within this context for instance, the reluctance or, more significantly, the resistance to demobilisation and disarmament by some militias, especially in the eastern part of the DRC will present future challenges for security sector reform and for DR Congo's long-term stability. It can be reasonably forecast that the new government would have its hands full vis-à-vis the containment of violence and the

maintenance of security. Civil society actors or (as the case may be) the most powerful non-state actors such as religious networks would then have to step in to perform certain public functions that otherwise should have been the preserve of the government.

As the future government tries to consolidate its authority and build security (in the eastern part of the DRC in particular), faith-based organisations would find themselves, perhaps, as the only actors that are capable to deliver 'public goods'.<sup>34</sup> In fact, DR Congo's religious networks have a rich reservoir of history and experience to tap from as far as the performance of social and political roles is concerned. It is predicted that faith-based actors would be involved in the rehabilitation of public infrastructure such as roads, hospitals, and schools (Interview with Pastor JPM, Kinshasa, 30 March 2006) in DR Congo's post-transition period. In addition, the churches, in collaboration with both local and international non-governmental and governmental organisations – as at the time of writing – have been implementing an ambitious programme that supports former combatants (those who have been demobilised or disarmed) in order to prevent their recourse to violence. This role is expected to continue even after the inauguration of the new administration, thus laying credence to the conflict transformational role of religious actors. More than that, the performance of the aforementioned functions by religious and non-religious civil society actors compensates for insufficient state capacity.

Another pointer to the anticipated continued performance of pivotal roles by DR Congo's religious groups in the post-transition period came in March 2006 during the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's visit to the country. While in Kinshasa, Annan held talks with a number of stakeholders in the DRC's peace and transition processes, including religious leaders. On that occasion, Laurent Monsengwo, the President of the country's Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Archbishop of Kisangani presented a request to the UN to the effect that an International Criminal Court (ICC) be set up for the DRC to try perpetrators of war crimes not just for the sake of retributive justice but to

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<sup>34</sup> It is however necessary to point out that the extent to which religious networks (and other civil society actors) could function in this regard would depend partly on the level of security or stability in the DRC. There is no gainsaying the fact that non-state actors cannot function effectively where the necessary prerequisites of stability and security are lacking in the polity (Posner, 2004: 247).

also ensure that compensation is paid to victims, 'individual families and the Catholic archdiocese alike' (Internet 26). Having made the request for a tribunal for DR Congo, it is anticipated that the country's religious groups would play a prominent role in the processes that would culminate in the prosecution of perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity even though the ICC at The Hague has jurisdiction to entertain such cases – a factor that might render the setting up of an ICC for the DRC a duplication of efforts by the international community. Whether or not an ICC is set up specifically for DR Congo, one can foresee a role for DRC's religious groups in the process of accounting for the past and forging reconciliation. This brings us to another hoped-for pivotal engagement by DR Congo's religious actors in the post-transition period – serving as catalysts for national reconciliation.

Faith-based actors in the DRC are convinced of the need for national reconciliation after the 2006 elections. Ex-fighters and even politicians (especially those who might lose out in the ongoing transition process) need to be reconciled. Religious leaders recognise this imperative and are therefore bracing up to handle this task. At this moment, religious leaders are working behind the scenes to galvanise public interest in the national reconciliation process. Besides, faith-based actors have been holding consultations with other civil society actors in order to establish the modalities for a post-transition country-wide process of reconciling aggrieved parties (Interview with Pastor JPM, Kinshasa, 30 March 2006). Hence, it is anticipated that in the foreseeable future, perhaps shortly after the inauguration of the new government, religious groups would be actively involved in the national reconciliation process either as its custodians (one primarily driven by them) or as facilitators (one in which they support the government's reconciliation efforts).

There is no doubt that the conflict in the DRC has had a concomitant deleterious effect on not only physical infrastructure but also the country's human resources. So many Congolese, including the country's "best brains", are outside of the shores of the DRC. The new regime would sorely need the best human resources possible in order to deliver 'public goods' and promote sustainable development. Even when some Congolese abroad do return home, the core of the country's public service would consist of those

who had remained in the DRC. It is most likely that the regime would have to work through a civil service that is heavily disoriented, de-motivated and emasculated by autocracy and corruption – some of the infamous legacies of ‘Mobutuism’. This challenge, if the new administration were to surmount it, would necessitate considerable reform in public service in terms of orientation and service delivery.

One can safely prognosticate that the success of the regime, say with regard to good governance and social service delivery, will depend to a large extent on individual and institutional capacity building. Here again, civil society, which embraces DRC’s religious networks, will play a role in building the capacities of public servants towards promoting good governance and effective social service delivery. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, has demonstrated its ability to lend support to capacity building for good governance in many African countries through its Justice, Development and Peace Commissions. In the DRC, Roman Catholic Church leaders are not oblivious of the need to do the same in the post-transition epoch (Interview with Reverend Father FGM, Katanga, 18 November 2005). Its extensive international connections give the Roman Catholic Church considerable leverage to implement capacity building programmes for political leaders and public servants. The Church could collaborate with both local and international (non-)governmental organisations for the sake of bringing this idea to fruition. Given religious groups’ antecedents, therefore, one can expect to see the Roman Catholic Church – just one of the faith-based actors in the DRC – embark on political conscientisation and activism in some way similar to its advocacy in the Mobutu era. Such engagement, it should be noted, would be geared towards ensuring good governance on the part of the new government that derives its mandate from the people.

Against the backdrop of the pivotal place of religious networks in the DRC and their strategic leverage as agents of social mobilisation, it can be said that they are important stakeholders in the project of charting the DRC’s future. Although DR Congo’s religious groups do not, *stricto sensu*, measure up to groups that have the means to precipitate violence on a massive scale or the means to subdue it (such as militias, the national army, MONUC), the country’s faith-based organisations hold the allegiance of the generality of

Congolese. Hence, religious networks have the capacity – no matter how minuscule – to either promote stability or subvert the peace process and, ultimately, jeopardise the country’s future depending on what they “feed” their members with. As has been highlighted in this study, religious groups can mobilise their members for both constructive and destructive ends. Therefore, the end to which DR Congo’s faith-based organisations mobilise their members will impinge on the country’s future. Should religious networks continue with their constructive roles in the post-transition period, they would be contributing to the building of a sustainable climate of peace which, in turn, would guarantee a stable and secure future for the DRC. Suffice it to add that Africa’s renaissance agenda needs a DRC that is at peace with itself and its neighbours.

Religious groups have made immense positive contributions to the conflict transformation process and it is inconceivable that they would turn around in the future to undermine their own efforts at building sustainable peace by mobilising their members or deploying their resources for destructive ends as that would be most illogical. In fact, it is only their sustained preoccupation with building sustainable peace that can guarantee their continued existence which, in turn, promotes the realisation of their own objective to “save souls”. For now, it can be safely prognosticated that religious networks would continue to make decisive positive contributions to the social, economic and political development of the DRC. Having said that, this study next concludes with logical inferences from its empirical findings vis-à-vis religious networks’ role in the DRC’s conflict transformation process.

### **6.3 Concluding remarks**

This study has explored the positive roles of faith-based organisations in the DRC’s conflict transformation process. The performance of such crucial peacebuilding roles by religious actors typifies the constructive element inherent in religion. However, this study equally acknowledges that religion could be a contrivance for destructiveness, especially when it is used to legitimise or justify violence. Recourse to empiricism in establishing the opposite ends that religion potentially serves illustrates the ambivalence of religion. Hence, it does not come as a surprise that the role of religion in conflict is

still a contested terrain within the academic community. That said, most scholarly analyses of the nexus between religion and conflict present an overarching bias, which essentially “demonises” religion by conceiving it, fundamentally, as a hue in the human mosaic that triggers and exacerbates conflict. The potential and actual (established) constructive roles of religion in conflict situations, more often than not, is marginalised or ignored in conflict analyses. But the reality of the positive roles of faith-based actors in conflict transformation processes (including more significantly when and where state actors are not trusted) underscores the need to rethink the role of religion in conflict, if only to give expression to its ambivalence. This study gives cogent representation to the “other” side of religion that has long been ignored in conflict discourse – the constructive roles of religion building sustainable peace in societies torn apart by the spectre of violence.

In its exploration of the conflict transformation role of religious actors in the DRC, this study predicates the performance of positive social, economic and political functions by faith-based groups on the notion of *liberation theology*. Although having eschatological foundations, liberation theology is essentially a social construct that underscores positive collective action towards alleviating pain and suffering. For DR Congo’s religious networks, inaction in the face of untold suffering (caused by war) was not only unthinkable but also a sin against the Supreme Being. This study posits that the involvement of the DRC’s faith-based organisations in the public domain (either as agents of development in the pre-war years or as facilitators of the peacebuilding process during the conflict period) speaks to the intent and spirit of liberation theology. Other underlying causalities in the involvement of DR Congo’s religious actors in the conflict transformation process have also been identified in this study. For a certainty, religious networks in the DRC have comparative advantage in the performance of functions that otherwise should constitute the government’s core mandate. In a country where state bureaucracy exists only in name (except for Kinshasa, perhaps), the majority of Congolese have had to rely on non-state actors in the area of provision of social and other crucial life-support services. The onset of conflict in the DRC, this study contends, deepened the imperative for religiously motivated social action for peace and

development. In fact, it is apt to recall here that even war-weary Congolese citizens craved for the involvement of faith-based actors in the peacebuilding process.

The peacebuilding initiatives undertaken by DR Congo's religious networks can be aptly situated within the context of *conflict transformation*. Rather than conducting a manipulative search for an agreement that is acceptable to the warring parties or one that merely satisfies the interests of the parties to the conflict, DRC's religious networks' have undertaken roles intended to generate the cumulative effect of shifting the attitudes of parties, transforming structures as well as relationships for durable peace and harmonious coexistence. The country's faith-based actors have been seeking to transform not only the parties' perceptions but also the environment within which the DRC conflict has occurred. Conflict transformation speaks to a long-term commitment to peace. Such commitment is exemplified by the deconstruction of structures and attitudes that engender violence and the nurturing of 'new' attitudes and modes of organisation, interaction, and social cohesion which promote sustainable peace. Therefore, it is only logical that the involvement of DR Congo's religious networks in the country's conflict has taken on added significance in the post-conflict period. Since the conclusion of the ICD, religious groups' initiatives have been directed more at the nurturing of a climate that is conducive to sustainable peace. One reality that illustrates the foregoing is their efforts at facilitating the country's democratic transition, promoting national reconciliation and undertaking infrastructural reconstruction. It is this study's submission that the performance of such roles with the goal of enduring social transformation in mind, and the increasing attention to it in scholarly discourse, represent a paradigm shift in conflict analysis.

It is apposite to state at this juncture that the saliency of religious networks' positive roles in the DRC's conflict transformation process is underscored by state deflation/collapse (or what may be referred to as declining statecraft). In fact, the scenario in the DRC exemplifies the increasing socio-political role of religion within the context of declining statecraft in Africa's conflict zones. It is indisputable that faith-based actors have made (and are making) significant contributions to the peacebuilding and development

processes in the DRC. And local and international reactions to religious networks' roles in the public domain have been overwhelmingly positive, albeit a few respondents are cynical of religiously motivated peacebuilding. These divergent responses have been highlighted in this study. Granted, an objective assessment of faith-based actors' involvement in peacebuilding indicates that religious organisations have given momentous impetus to the peace and development processes in the DRC. However, it is noted that some religious institutions target only their members in terms of provision of humanitarian assistance in which case such intervention inadvertently alienates those who profess other faiths thus deepening divisions in society. Suffice it to add that those who have been marginalised in this regard have been "compensated" by non-religious civil society actors (whose assistance to war-weary Congolese has not been defined by such factors as creed or religious affiliation), thereby mitigating the frustration and aggression that might have resulted from religiously motivated parochial or partisan assistance.

As a corollary of the foregoing, this study acknowledges that a number of non-religious civil society actors as well as international donor or humanitarian and governmental agencies have made vital contributions to the process of building peace in the DRC. In some way, the preceding speaks to the complementarity of the peacebuilding efforts by DR Congo's religious networks and local or international non-religious civil society actors. However, this study has focused primarily on the roles of faith-based actors in the DRC's conflict transformation process. In tackling its essential concern as described above, the study recognises that faith-based peacebuilding in the DRC has not been without its drawbacks and, therefore, concludes with recommendations that should underpin religiously motivated efforts at building sustainable peace in societies torn apart by conflict.

The first recommendation draws from a significant drawback in faith-based peacebuilding. As noted in this study, some of DR Congo's religious networks have embarked on peacebuilding initiatives that can be described as partisan in that their programmes do not address the needs of the wider society but those of their members only. The implication of this is the alienation of those excluded in the communities in

which case the actions of religious networks, albeit potentially, inadvertently engender divisions and ultimately conflict. In such instance, faith-based actors might contribute to the intensification of factors that precipitate conflict rather than create the conditions for unity or social cohesion and peace. Having said that, one has to acknowledge that religious organisations have a primary obligation to undertake programmes that target their followers at particular times. But given the inadvertent consequences of partisan faith-based social and engagement, this study recommends that religious networks focus on high profile projects that show them as having the capacity and interest to look beyond denominations and religion. For a certainty, the implementation of high profile non-partisan conflict transformation initiatives by DR Congo's religious networks will contribute to fostering reconciliation and social cohesion.

Research findings suggest that many of DR Congo's religious actors, especially religious leaders, have been implementing peacebuilding initiatives in their personal capacities. Besides, their performance of peacebuilding functions has been predicated on the "social mission" drawn from religious convictions rather than professionally enabled or enhanced personal capacities. In other words, religious actors lack the professionalism required in conflict transformation processes. Hence, there is the need to build the capacities of DRC's religious actors to complement the theological underpinnings of faith-based conflict transformation work. In so doing, faith-based actors can anticipate the replication of successes attained by other (professionally) trained civil society actors involved in peacebuilding.

A corollary of the foregoing is the need to separate religiously motivated social action (in this case peacebuilding) from a purely religious mission such as proselytizing. Some Congolese are critical of faith-based organisations' involvement in public life as churches often provide social services in order to induce conversion. In fact, some are unreservedly cynical of (the motivations for) faith-based peacebuilding. Although the underlying basis for faith-based social action is religious (as it derives from liberation theology), the goal of such involvement should not be the conversion of persons but

rather to complement the efforts of local and international (non-)governmental agencies in alleviating the effects of political instability.

Research findings indicate that DR Congo's religious groups have broadened their peacebuilding initiatives to embrace several processes in the conflict transformation spectrum. For instance, it is not uncommon to find that a faith-based organisation is involved in several processes (such as peace advocacy; humanitarian or relief services; negotiation, mediation, or reconciliation; demobilisation or reintegration of ex-combatants; and reconstruction) at the same time, in which case its efforts are dispersed and do not yield homogeneous results. Therefore, it is necessary that religious groups identify areas of comparative advantage and competence in the realm of conflict transformation. This will make for thorough involvement and deeper engagement in which case the benefits of intervention can be harnessed and enjoyed more fully.

Respondents during my field research attested to the positive results of religious networks' peacebuilding efforts. Indeed, DR Congo's faith-based organisations have undertaken some of these initiatives on their own – more often than not without the involvement of other religious groups or civil society actors – and thereby limiting the extent to which they could impact on the broader or national conflict transformation process. Although some of the DRC's faith-based organisations have been collaborating with other stakeholders in the peacebuilding process, it is noted that the opportunities for effective synergy have not been fully harnessed. Hence, this study advocates the integration of religiously motivated and secular peacebuilding efforts for far-reaching results. This recommendation is premised on the benefits derivable from the complementarity of secular and faith-based initiatives. That said, the constructive roles of religious networks in the DRC's public sphere, particularly their involvement in the conflict transformation process, lends credence to the fact that religion does not always have to be a negative factor in society.

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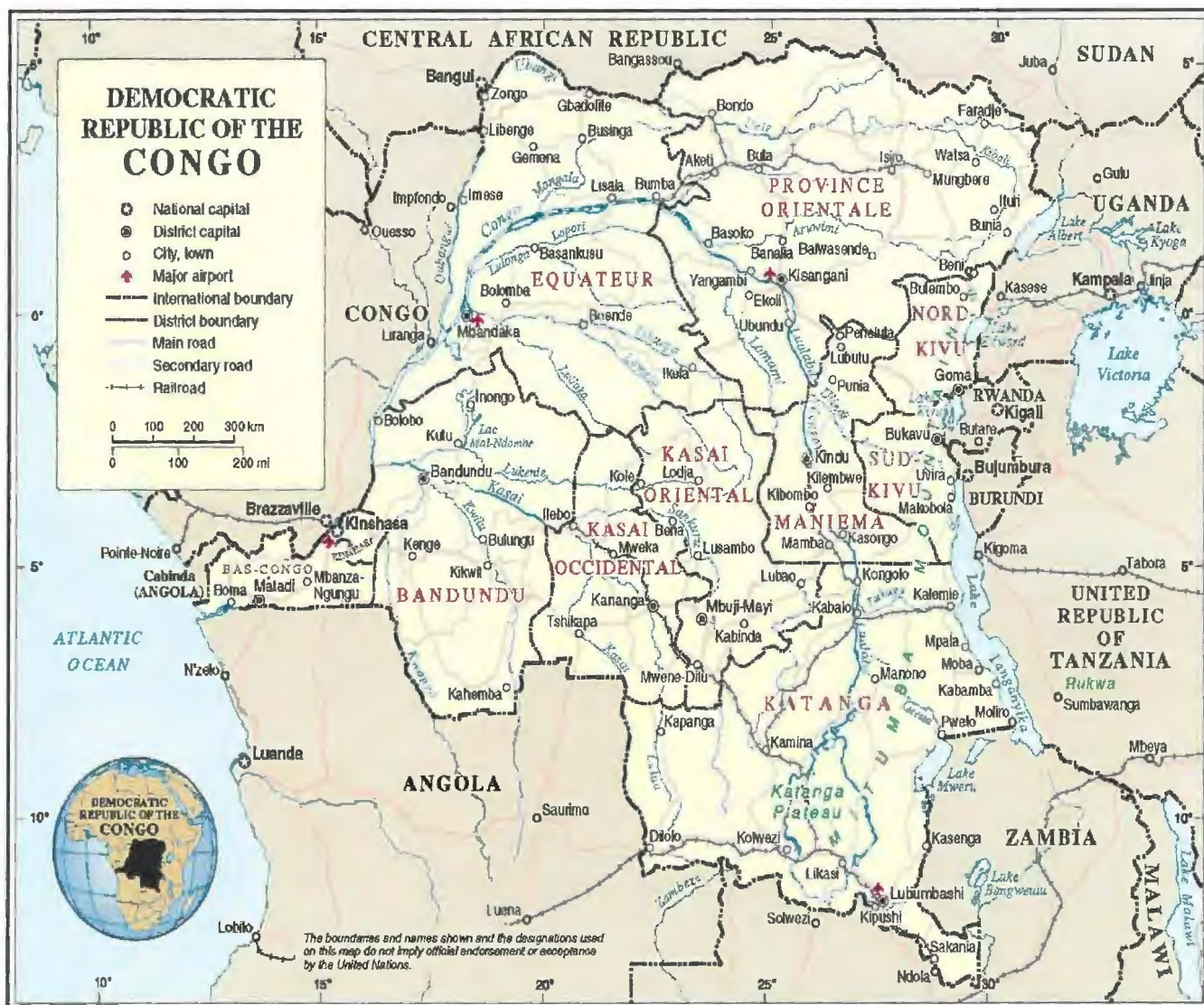
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Interview with TWM, Kinshasa, 22 November 2005.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Map of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

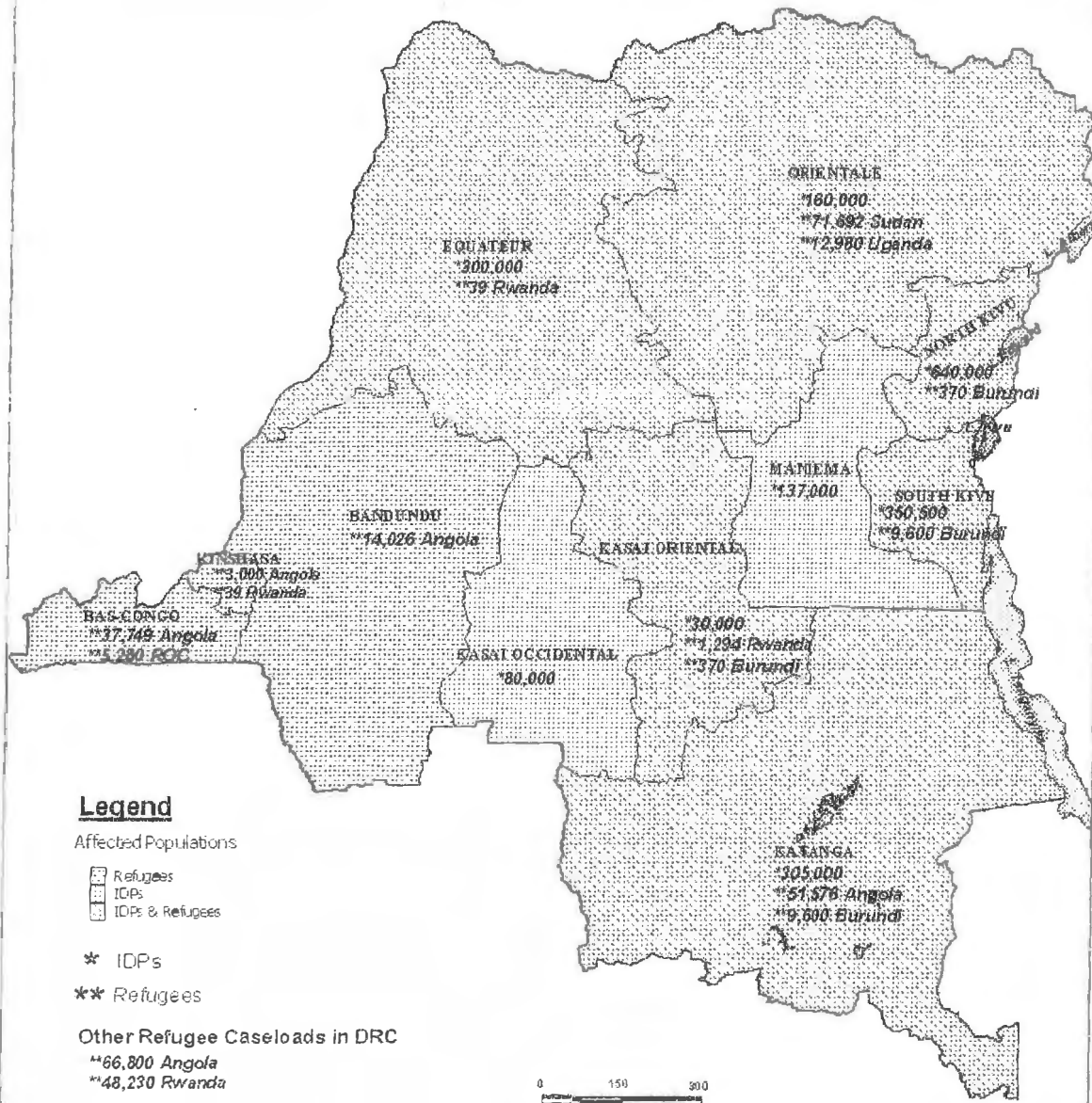


Map No. 4607 Rev 8 UNITED NATIONS  
January 2004

Department of Peacekeeping Operations  
Cartographic Section

Source: International Crisis Group (ICG), 2006.

# DRC Affected Populations by Province Refugees and Internally Displaced (December 2000)



Prepared by OCHA, Great Lakes Regional Office, Nairobi

The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations

**Appendix 3: UMCOR supported health clinic for IDPs in Kinshasa**



Photo credit: Central Conference, UMC, DR Congo (2001).

**Appendix 4: UMCOR distributes mosquito nets at Kasapa camp for IDPs in Lubumbashi**



Photo credit: UMCOR, DR Congo (2003)

**Appendix 5: UMCOR school enrolment programme for children of IDPs at Kasapa camp, Lubumbashi**



Photo credit: UMCOR, DR Congo (2003)

**Appendix 6: UMCOR food security programme in Pweto**



Photo credit: UMCOR, DR Congo (2003)

**Appendix 7: UMC Bishops meet, pray with Kabila for peace in the DRC**



Photo credit: UMC (2003)

### **Appendix 8: Archbishop Monsengwo works for peace**

Archbishop Laurent Monsengwo urges Congolese to shun violence; seeks to promote civil society involvement in peacebuilding and the democratic transition



Photo credit: MONUC (2006)

**Appendix 9: UN appreciates religious networks' role in the DRC's peacebuilding process**

UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan meets with Archbishop Monsengwo in Kisangani where he (Kofi Annan) thanked the Archbishop for his support for the peace process.



Photo credit: MONUC (2006)

## Appendix 10: Research tool - Questionnaire

### Questionnaire

Dear respondent, I am doing Research Masters (Political Science) on the topic "Religion and Conflict Transformation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1999-2004" at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. The main objective of the research is to investigate the roles of various religious groups in the peacebuilding process in the DRC. Your responses to the questions that follow will be highly appreciated. **All your answers will be kept COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL.** Very many thanks!

- A. Age** [Please indicate into which of the following age ranges you belong.]  
 18-25                       26-30                       31-35                       36-40   
 41-45                       46-50                       51-55                       56-60+
- B. Gender** [Please check the box which describes your gender]  
 Male                       Female
- C. Education** [Please indicate the highest level of education you have attained.]  
 None                       Primary                       Secondary                       Tertiary
- D. Home region in DR Congo** [Please check the region you come from in the DRC.]  
 Bandundu                       Bas-Congo                       Equateur                       Kasai-Occidental   
 Kasai-Oriental                       Katanga                       Kinshasa                       Manirema                       Nord-Kivu   
 Orientale                       Sud-Kivu                       Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- E. Occupation** [Please choose the occupational group to which you belong.]  
 Civil Servant                       Non-governmental                       Self-employed                       Religious leader   
 Unemployed                       Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- F. Religious affiliation** [Could you please tell me which of the following describes your religious denomination? Please remember that all responses are totally **confidential**.]  
 None                       Roman Catholic                       Pentecostal/ECC                       Kimbanguist   
 Islam                       Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- G. Cause(s) of the conflict in DR Congo** [There are different views about the cause(s) of the conflict in the DRC. Please indicate which ones you consider to be 'Very Significant', 'Significant', 'Of Some Significance', 'Of Little Significance' or 'Of No Significance' at all.]

Causes of Conflict	Very Significant	Significant	Of Some Significance	Of Little Significance	Of No Significance
Colonial legacies					
Ethnicity					
Natural resources					
Bad governance					

Imperialist/Territorial ambitions on the part of neighbours					
Other causes; please specify					

**H. Reasons for continued conflict in the DRC**

Reasons	Very Significant	Significant	Of Some Significance	Of Little Significance	Of No Significance
The failure of politicians to build consensus around key national issues					
Funding of insurgents by foreign states					
The allure of natural resources					
The failure to resolve the "ethnic question"					
Instability in Central Africa					
Proliferation of arms in the Great Lakes region					
Other reasons; please specify					

**I. Consequence(s) of conflict in DR Congo**

Consequences	Very Significant	Significant	Of Some Significance	Of Little Significance	Of No Significance
Massive loss of lives					
Destruction of infrastructure					
Displacement of people (including internally displaced persons and refugees)					
Widespread/deepening poverty					
Psychological depression					
Other consequences; please specify					

**J. The role of religious groups in peacebuilding**

Please indicate the extent of your awareness about the involvement of religious networks in the conflict resolution process?

Very Well  Moderately Well  Not at all well  Not familiar

Could you please tell me what you consider as the underlying reason(s) for religious networks' involvement in the DRC's peace process?

Reasons	Very Significant	Significant	Of Some Significance	Of Little Significance	Of No Significance
The incapacitation of state structures					
The lack of political will to effect change on the part of politicians					
The failure of the international community in providing succour					
Religious groups' high moral ground, huge support base, divine calling and social commitment					
Request by the war-weary and beleaguered population					
Other reasons; please specify					

Please indicate below the religious groups, their specific peacebuilding activities, their areas of operations and periods covered by activities.

Religious network (e.g. ECC, Catholic Church, Islamic Organisations, Methodist Church, Kimbanguist etc)	Activities (e.g. peace education, negotiation, humanitarian assistance, reconstruction etc)	Region (e.g. Bandundu, Equateur, Kinshasa, Nord-Kivu, Orientale, Sud-Kivu etc)	Period covered (e.g. 1999-2001, 2004, 2000, May-August 2000 etc)

How would you describe the effect(s) of religious networks' involvement in the DRC's peace process?

Extremely negative  Somewhat negative  No impact  Somewhat positive   
 Extremely positive

[Thank you].

## Appendix 11: Research tool – Interview questions

### Interview

#### Research topic

“Religion and Conflict Transformation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1999-2004”

#### Interview opening statement:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. I do hereby provide assurances of confidentiality and anonymity regarding your participation and responses to the following questions.

Respondent's home region in DR Congo: \_\_\_\_\_

Respondent's occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Interview questions

1. What is/are the underlying cause(s) of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?
2. What are the factors that have most influenced the continuation of conflict in the DRC?
3. What would you say are the political, social and economic effects of the conflict in DR Congo?
4. What is/are the plausible reason(s) for the involvement of religious networks in the peacebuilding process in the DRC?
5. What are the specific interventionist measures that religious groups have undertaken in the conflict resolution process? Where and when?
6. What do you think are the benefits and constraints/drawbacks of religious networks' involvement in peacebuilding in DR Congo?
7. What has been the response of both the people and the government to the involvement of religious groups in the conflict transformation process? Does the government see their involvement as a usurpation of its functions?
8. To what extent has the engagement of faith-based networks in conflict transformation and social services delivery facilitated peacebuilding in the DRC?
9. What do you envisage as future role(s) for religious groups in post-conflict DR Congo?

