

THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN REGIONAL PEACE DIPLOMACY: THE CASE OF  
THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY, 2001-2020

by

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APPROVAL

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In Accordance with Daystar University Policies, this thesis is accepted in partial fulfilment  
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DECLARATION

THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN REGIONAL PEACE DIPLOMACY: THE CASE OF  
THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY, 2001-2020

I declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

EAC	East African Community
COMESA	The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
IRF	Inter-Religious Forum
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
NCCK	National Council of Churches of Kenya
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PROCMURA	Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## ABSTRACT

Despite its importance in promoting peace, religion has been overlooked in the promotion of regional peace diplomacy in East Africa. The study's objectives were as follows: to examine people's perceptions of religion's potential for regional peace diplomacy in the East African Community (EAC); evaluate areas in which religion has been applied in regional peace diplomacy; and assess the challenges religion faces in promoting peace diplomacy in the EAC region. Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and Sudan were among the six EAC countries studied. The study's main focus, however, was on the three founding states: Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, with Nairobi serving as the primary data collection location. Religious institutions, post-graduate students from private and public universities, and government leaders and policymakers comprised the target population. The EAC is an intergovernmental institution, and religion influences peace diplomacy in both active and passive ways. Religion, while playing a role in promoting peace, can also be a source of conflict, in line with the findings. As a result of the various beliefs and values that exist among religions, the business of fostering peace is the mandate of state governments in the EAC. The study recommended that religious leaders be trained in peace diplomacy and that more research be conducted into the influence of religion on local governance in the EAC block to ensure the sustainability of peace and conflict resolution.

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, who have been a constant source of support and encouragement.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

#### Introduction

This research examined the role of religion on regional peace diplomacy within the East African Community (EAC) from 2001-2020. Putting into consideration that war is inevitable in an anarchic international system, diplomacy is used as a tool to promote peace and stability between and among states. Additionally, diplomacy is still used to maintain peace and stability where the state is not necessarily considered as the unitary actor. Traditional theorists, such as the realists explain that the state is the rational and unitary actor within the international system and has absolute power over citizens.

Just as stated by Wellman (2004), states led by the evil nature of man aim at acquiring, retaining, and projecting power. Although this can make sense in explaining the economic and military competition and conflict among states, it leaves a gap in trying to explain identity-based politics, and social movements driven by religious cultures. To liberalists, the state is not the main actor as there are other important actors within the system, such as international organizations, multinational organizations, and individuals. Peace diplomacy, in this context, is a branch of diplomacy, and thus, a tool used to avoid and/or control war and conflict between and among states. Hence, religion has a great impact on peace diplomacy as it shapes the opinions and policies of states, thus affecting their foreign policies economically, socially, and politically.

The post-World War II period saw the creation of the United Nations (UN), an international institution on October 24, 1945, with the main objective being to maintain

peace and security using joint military, mediation, and negotiation processes. The organization was formed so that it could be a platform that provided a global forum where states would settle disputes (Peters, 2015). This has seen the international institutions, especially the UN Security Council, play a major role in global peace sustenance. However, despite its historical values and beliefs enshrined in its teachings advocating world peace, religion has received little attention.

Therefore, the chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives, research questions, justification, significance, assumptions, scope, limitations and delimitations of the study, and definition of terms.

### Background to the Study

The international system is multifaceted, and diplomacy is a major and important aspect in the international system as it is a tool that can either make or break relationships among international actors. Diplomatic missions are ways in which states develop and sustain relationships. Through diplomacy, states are able to pursue their interests. In agreement with Rathbun (2014), dialogue, coercive bargaining, and pragmatic statecraft are diplomatic styles applied by decision makers. These diplomatic styles are made up and chosen based on psychological motivations of decision makers' ideologies. Thus, the world will experience a state based on a combination of different diplomatic styles adopted by a particular state's leader. Diplomacy can only be a success if the outcome benefits the parties involved, and it can, therefore, frustrate or facilitate agreements. Parties involved can, in some cases, achieve unexpected outcomes and, at the same time, miss out on opportunities within their grasp.

Religion can be a source of war or peace, yet the role of religion tends to be neglected or downplayed in totality. The main canonical and new works on the subject of international relations still do not and have not integrated religion into their conceptual frameworks. Wellman (2004) stated that the analysis of religion in international relations explains the origins of nation-state behaviour. The policy formation of a state is most influenced by not just the institutions found within it, but also by its spiritual history and the beliefs of its people. Since the existence of mankind, religion, politics, and international relations have always been in existence.

Given the rich history of the international system, it is clear that these aspects are interconnected. At times, politics and religion were/are considered as factors that can never exist in the same room. As Sandal and James (2011) has stated, the separation of religion and politics is rooted in the Treaty of Westphalia (Gross, 1948) which marked the beginning of a contemporary state system, thus a strong secular world was formed. Historical events such as the two world wars and the Cold War suppressed the attention given to the role of religion in the international system.

The 1950s and 1960s in the United States of America saw key religious leaders, such as Martin Luther King Jr. (Christian) and Malcom X (Muslim) among other leaders, engage in the civil rights movement to advocate for equality and justice for African Americans via the constitution, opening up democratic participation of the black race in the country (Ornek & Ultan, 2014). Gandhi's input on peace through advocating for Sarvadharmā Sambhav (secularism and peaceful co-existence of all religions), has been identified, by Sen and Wagner (2009) noting that this is the only means which can bring

peace in the world, and thus promotes the Vedantic approach of unity, noting that God is morality and ethics.

In the West, there has been an ongoing war between America's foreign policy and the Middle East. Quandt (2005) stated that the term peace process began to be globally used to explain American-led efforts to promote and bring about peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours sometime in the mid-1970s. During the Cold War, little attention was given to the relationship between politics and religion. In the West, its foreign policy was secularized as religion was viewed as an irrational and backward school of thought. However, after the event of September 11, the narrative changed, and it was evident that religion was a concept that could not be ignored. Snyder (2011) stated that since the September 11, 2001, terror event religion has started to become a central topic where discussions on international politics, conflict, and war are held.

The world is faced with challenges associated with religious extremism and attacks carried out between religious groupings, especially between two or more of the Abrahamic faiths: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. In Europe, there is a great interaction between politics and Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church, to be specific, led by the Pope, has a great influence on the European Union. Religious actors in the contemporary conflict arena have become increasingly engaged in active and efficient tasks as advocates, educators, observers, pursuers, and intermediaries of transitional justice (Kadayifci, 2009). "Religion," as noted by Quandt (2005) "is a major source of soft power and can, either, be used or misused by religious and governmental organizations to pursue their interests" (Quandt, 2005, p. 21).

The element of religion's contribution to peacemaking platforms, as a contrasting face of religious conflict, has shallowly been researched and explicated by various actors in peacemaking processes. As reported by Smock (2006) the three Abrahamic faith-based communities have a strong faith-basis foundation that supports peacemaking processes. In this context, there are past incidences of peacemaking and mediation pursued by different religious institutions and leaders. This is reflected in "the World Council of Churches and the All Africa Conference of Churches mediating on the short-lived 1972 peace agreement in Sudan" (Smock, 2006, p. 1). Additionally, in South Africa, different churches engaged in the struggle against the apartheid movement and supported the peaceful transition. Hume (1994) appointed the dramatic case and most cited successful mediation phenomenon of the Rome-based Sant Egidio Community in assisting to end civil conflict in 1992 in Mozambique. There are still uncertainties and sensitivities that frequently surround religion's capability in contemporary peace diplomacy. The motivation behind this study was that the potential of religion to promote peace has been given little attention, if not ignored and neglected.

#### Statement of the Problem

The role of religion tends to be neglected or downplayed in totality. The main canonical and new works on the subject of international relations still do not and have not integrated religion into their conceptual frameworks. Indeed, Kadayifci (2009) claimed that secular, rational problem-solving approaches and methodological and epistemological perspectives undermine the impact of religion in solving conflicts.

Religion presents certain dimensions such as the content of belief, religious values and practices, and the social organization of religious communities that have the potential

for peacebuilding and peaceful coexistence. Religion has been overlooked and/or considered as a silent factor that has little or no influence in the decision-making processes that take place within the borders of a state and beyond. However, this potential has been exploited in furthering regional peace diplomacy. It has been either neglected or misunderstood. There is therefore a need to explore this potential in peace diplomacy. This study therefore looked into the role of religion in regional peace diplomacy, to bring a better understanding of the subject so that it can be integrated more fully than it already is.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of religion in peace diplomacy in the EAC regional states.

#### Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to establish the role of religion in regional peace diplomacy within the EAC. The specific objectives were:

1. To examine people's perceptions of the potential of religion in regional peace diplomacy,
2. To establish areas in which religion can be employed towards regional peace diplomacy in the EAC region.
3. To assess the challenges faced by religion in promoting regional peace diplomacy in the EAC region.

## Research Questions

The main question for this study was, “what is the role of religion in regional peace diplomacy within the EAC?” The specific research questions were:

1. What is the people’s perception of the potential of religion in regional peace diplomacy in the EAC?
2. In what areas has religion been employed towards regional peace diplomacy in the EAC region?
3. What challenges does religion face in promoting regional peace diplomacy in the EAC?

## Justification for the Study

Sustaining relationships between states involves ensuring that there is peace, in the absence of war. Waltz (2001) was of the opinion that that there are various ways in which peace is sought by states under varying conditions. One aspect to consider while applying any diplomatic style is religion. Through diplomacy, a state can frustrate and/or facilitate agreements by ignoring and/or acknowledging the role of religion during state interactions, respectively. By understanding the concept of religion and engaging religious actors within the international system, the more effective diplomacy will be, thus promoting the interest of the state.

As claimed by Kadayifci (2009), religious actors have been historically engaged in transforming attitudes, behaviours, and negative stereotypes by providing awareness, healing trauma. Moreover, they conduct peace initiatives, engage in mediation between different protagonists, promote disarmament practice, advocate for government

engagement in peace building policies, and assist in the re-integration of military personnel into society through interfaith convention platforms. Despite the potential of religion in propagating peace and mediating different kinds of conflicts in society, the regional and international peacekeeping and peacebuilding institutions have left religion out of the peacekeeping processes. This is evident in various peace missions in the world, such as United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) among others. This has led to perceiving that the reasons for the under-focus on religion in the peace processes is due to the existing secular, rational approaches in solving challenges in the society and the methodology as well as epistemological strategies laid down by the scholars in the conflict resolution field that present religion as either a partaker of conflict or ignore its capability.

Ignoring the aspect of religion in state matters is like ignoring the interest of the state, yet diplomacy involves promoting the interest of the state. There are factors listed such as military might, economic might, geographical aspects, that international actors put into consideration to shape state policies and world views. There is a great need to consider and include religion in this list because, simply put, religion is a powerful domestic and international force that informs decision-making. Religious leaders are agents of influence; therefore, they should be invited to the table more often, and their contributions taken into consideration. Thus, it is important for national and international leaders, international and regional organizations, and diplomats to put into consideration the role of religion in the peacemaking process.

The study had hoped to add to the existing written sources on religion and peace diplomacy in the EAC and aid in filling the knowledge gaps on the role and impact that religion has had on peacemaking initiatives.

### Significance of the Study

This study aimed at assisting religious actors to take a central role in solving conflicts and managing peace in the conflict-stricken zones, especially in the African continent, such as the sub-Saharan region where the East African region is located. This would increase the ease of diplomatic experts in resolving peace on various platforms in the country and institutions.

International organizations, such as the United would be in a position to embrace alternative models of peace resolution and conflict management from the traditional use of peace-keeping forces. This would reduce the level of expenditure on maintaining and supporting the peacekeeping forces in specific locations as national, regional, and international religious actors will be fully involved in searching for a long-lasting solution to conflict.

The study suggests to diplomatic experts in advocating the use of ideologies to manage religious extremist conflict in different setups around the world. This would divert the use of distorted religious teaching to gain sympathy and use religion to win public confidence.

### Assumptions of the Study

The overall assumptions for this study were that the respondents would answer questions in a candid manner, that the survey instruments would yield the required results,

and that the sample would be a representative of the population the study wished to make inferences about. Other specific assumptions included the following:

1. Peacekeeping and peace stability have been facing challenges due to the exclusion of religion from the process of mediation and negotiation.
2. Different religions in specific conflict platforms are tools that can be used to bring peace and sustain peace regionally in the EAC.
3. African communities are historically religious and, therefore, their problems can only be solved through the integration of religious elements in conflict management, specifically in the EAC.

#### Scope of the Study

The study focused on the period of 2001 to 2020 because in 2001, the EAC was officially established when the first summit was held in Arusha. In 2007, Rwanda and Burundi joined the EAC, followed by South Sudan in 2016. Also, during this period, the region has experienced conflicts of civil, political, and religious nature, among other types of conflicts. For example, in 2007/2008, Kenya experienced post-election violence. Despite efforts made by religious stakeholders in achieving peace and stability when conflict arises, the region will still experience conflict, hence the need to understand the role of religion and its impact in promoting peace and stability in the EAC. This study was limited to both primary and secondary data in order to acquire information that would help to increase the authenticity of study findings, and specifically focused on two main religions: Christianity and Islam.

### Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

This study was limited to examining the role of religion in regional peace diplomacy in the EAC but with particular focus on the three founding states, namely Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. The focus was only on the role of religion, the study did not avail information on how economy and politics influence regional peace diplomacy within the EAC.

The researcher had planned to collect data from most of the EAC states' embassies in Kenya but was denied access to the embassies due to information security policies in place. However, data was collected from The Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa, which works among all the EAC partner states, and this came in handy.

The study focused on a sample of the University Christian and Muslim students in Kenya and did not engage intensely with the many practitioners on the ground in order to avoid pre-conditioned responses based on experiences with the EAC.

### Definition of Terms

**Conflict:** Maoz and Henderson (2020) elucidated conflict as the occurrence of struggles between incompatible wishes, needs, ideas, interests, or people when they are not satisfied. In this study, it indicated a situation in which states find themselves at odds or disagreeing and being hostile to one another.

**Culture:** Tylor (2010) interpreted culture as a complex whole that includes art, law, knowledge, customs, morals, beliefs, and other habits and capabilities acquired by

man in society. In this study, the concept of culture was narrowed down to behaviour patterns associated with particular groups of people that would dictate their way of life.

**Diplomacy:** Stahn and Melber (2014) described diplomacy as an established method of influencing the behaviours and decisions of governments and other international actors to avoid violence through negotiations and mediation processes. In this study, diplomacy was used in reference to a tool and/or method of association between two or more states used to promote peace and stability among states.

**Peace:** Richmond (2008) stated that peace is the balance of power between and among states to avoid conflict or war. In this study, the term peace indicated the absence of violence and or the ability to promote law and order.

**Peace diplomacy:** Siracusa (2010) described peace diplomacy as a level of engagement among international actors with the aim of promoting peace. In this study, peace diplomacy referred to the process between and among actors or states in the international system through which they engage in public and private dialogues to pursue their interests in peaceful ways, thus without resulting in war or conflict, and able to maintain order and stability.

**Religion:** Maoz and Henderson (2020) define religion as a belief in the existence of some divine authorities. In this study, religion was considered an agent of influence; that it influences the thinking process of individuals based on their beliefs, hence having an influence on the state.

**Religious actors:** As per Sandal (2017) religious actors include faith-based leaders and faith-based civil society organizations. In this study, religious actors included

indigenous spiritual leaders, organizations, institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as communities that are associated with specific spirituality or faith.

Violence: Galtung and Hveem (1976) define violence as when the somatic and mental potential of human beings are not realized, and it is applied to the relationship among states. In the study, violence was defined as acts or behaviour that cause harm or death to members of society.

## Summary

This chapter has focused on giving an introduction and background on what religion and peace diplomacy are, the relationship between the two aspects, and mainly the role of religion in peace diplomacy within the EAC. The study has identified that there have existed various peace initiatives that have taken place within the EAC, ranging from the South Sudan civil conflict to Somalia refugee and terror issues, civil war in Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and post-election violence in Kenya using different peace missions and justice systems. The key element missing in the whole peace mission and justice process is religious engagement in the platform.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework that guided the literature. The study reviewed various literature from different authors touching on the topic of the study. The structure of the literature focused on people's perceptions of the potential of religion for regional peace diplomacy in the EAC, areas in which religion has been applied in regional peace diplomacy, and the challenges faced by religion in promoting peace diplomacy in the EAC region. These approaches assisted in the analysis of the role of religion in peace diplomacy in the EAC.

#### Theoretical Framework

Various theories of international relations focus on human behaviour that influences diplomacy, peace, and conflict, and can be used to explain the role of religion in peace diplomacy in the East African region of Africa. This study focused on two theories: social constructivism and secularization theory.

#### Social Constructivism Theory

This theory is mostly referred to as constructivism theory. Its focus is on "human awareness or consciousness and its place in world affairs" (Jackson & Sørensen, 2019, p. 234). Although other theories' assumptions, such as neorealism, emphasize that the distribution and ownership of resources, both military and economic, define state

behaviour, constructivism contends that the most important aspect of international relations is not materialistic but rather social. It asserts that people work together to construct the society they live in through social interactions.

In accordance with Jackson and Sørensen (2019) international relations is an object that exists within human consciousness. This is to mean that the international system is driven or constituted by human ideas. The international system would change if thoughts and ideas changed. This is the thought behind Alexander Wendt's view that "anarchy is what states make of it" (Wendt 1992, p. 394). Under constructivism, human beings are subjective and not objective in explaining reality. The international system is built on beliefs and ideologies. The main focus is always on value, and the principles put in place by IR actors, as there is no particular actor or unit that is superior to the other within the international system (Jackson & Sørensen, 2019).

Prior to the 1980s, constructivism was attributed to Immanuel Kant, who contributed to the development of phenomenology, which is the study of how human consciousness affects our understandings of what we observe or what appears to us through direct experience. Kant distinguished between two different terms, "phenomena and "noumena". Phenomena are objects we observe, while noumena is the unknowable essence of objects as things in themselves, different from how we may see them or how they may appear to us. Other contributors would include John Locke, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim (Jackson & Sørensen, 2019).

One of the contributors to this theory is Nicholas Onuf. This approach in the 1980s became a significant approach as it was still during the Cold war period when the balance of power was divided into two blocs: The Soviet Union and United States of America

(USA). The end of the Cold War and the discussions among IR scholars such as idealists, liberals and neorealists and other disciplines such as sociology and philosophy contributed to constructing the constructivism approach. In order to develop the central tenets of constructivism, scholars have borrowed very deliberately from other disciplines in order to develop the central tenets of constructivism (Jackson & Sørensen, 2019). The idea behind the constructivist school of thought, as observed by Tannenwald (2015), is that it is centered on the intersubjective beliefs, conceptions, ideas, and assumptions shared among a group of people. These ideas define international relations and can be adopted by groups like policymakers, organizations, social groups, and society, ultimately influencing behaviour and policy. These shared ideologies or belief systems are a reflection of the social needs and aspirations of a state, group, class or culture. Also, the ideas can facilitate the process of policymaking, thus providing solutions to specific policy problems.

Unlike other theories that emphasize pursuing and owning power, Wendt (1999) noted that in constructivism, ideas are not more important than power and interest; rather, power and interest have the effects they do in virtue of the ideas that make them up. Barnett & Duvall (2005) further explain that there is no single expression that can define power, as there are quite a few that include: compulsory power; structural power; and productive power. Compulsory power is where one actor has direct and total control over another actor. Here, policies are forced down on others. Structural power is where actors constitute social capacities and interests in direct relation to one another where they are capable of altering fortunes and circumstances, for example under the capitalist world-economy. Productive power is where ideologies are constructed to define legitimate knowledge and shape what matters to bring out meaning and signification.

The constructivist approach does not outset content to be constant or universal, but rather investigates the conditions under which some aspects of a tradition become defined as correct while others are incorrect. Therefore, religion is a complex aspect that can be unpredictable. Therefore, religious actors must strategically define religion based on the environment and the groups of people involved so as to maximize utility. For instance, Wickham (2015) elucidated that Islamic movements adapt strategically to their environment, but their interests, at times, are difficult to comprehend since they are never well-defined. Therefore, strategy and interests must be understood so as to predict the outcome; there is a need for further development of basic concepts so as to fully analyse ideas and meanings.

#### Secularization Theory

"The word 'secularization' itself comes from the Latin *saeculum*, which could be taken to mean both an age (or era) but also, at least by the fourth and fifth centuries, "the world," probably as an extension of the idea of a "spirit of an age." It could mean unending time... "world without end"... or the world "our there," but it could also mean a lifestyle that is at odds with God (thus people would enter monastic life to flee "the world") (Christiano, Swatos, & Kivisto, 2016, p. 55). The term would later be used to distinguish between civil and ecclesiastical law, possessions, and land. G. J. Holyoake was a British freethinker in the nineteenth century who founded the Secular Society as a "group committed to a just world order and moral program of individual action that would address human problems without the use of supernatural explanations" (Christiano et al., 2016, pp. 55–56).

Christiano et al., (2016) continued to explain that whatever religion means, secularization is defined as the opposite of that. In the West, the church has always been separated from the state in the belief that people are capable of leading their lives free from the interference of religion, and they can choose to follow a religion without the interference of the state or the fear of suffering civil disabilities. This is also very much in existence in other parts of the world. Organizations that are no longer controlled by religious organizations are known to be "secularized". Separating the church from the state has an impact on both religious organizations and the people.

The aspect of secularization is beyond the church-state issue. The theory expresses how religion influences all aspects of life, from personal, state, and organizational habits. The main assumption is that people have and are becoming less religious; it is difficult to reconcile modernity with religious traditions. People are more awed by human achievements than they are by divine forces. Thus, the future will be structured based on these achievements rather than on sacred beliefs.

On the word of Bruce (2011), assumptions of secularization included the deterioration of religious institutions; behaviour of displacement of religious rules and principles by demands that accord with strictly technical criteria; the removal of religious agencies and facilities by political powers. This led to the replacing of religious beliefs by rational and empirical beliefs; gaining secular control of social activities and functions; and the decline of the involvement of people's resources, time and energy towards supernatural concerns. Putting these aspects into consideration, and with the global emphasis on freedom of choice in terms of religion, it becomes difficult and a great challenge to maintain boundaries. Modernization brings about new ways of organizing social life, thus

undermining the popularity, prestige and power of religious beliefs among individuals and institutions. It is important to note that a state could have a large number of people who are religious but still be formally and publicly secular.

### General Literature Review

As the international system evolves, the role of religion has and is still reviving itself on the central stage, transforming the viewpoint of IR actors. To some, as Christiano et al. (2016) maintained, the assumption is that with technological advancements and economic development, religious beliefs, practices, integration, and even organizations, will disappear in various aspects of life in favour of secular endeavours. Although some previous scholars believed that religion was doomed, it is evident that religion is multifaceted in practice and its relevance to international relations is believed to be dependent on context.

Gopin (2000) clarified that every religion of the world at some point advocates committing to the value of peace, both modern reformation, and classical texts, through its thinkers and leaders. He further added that the religious fraternity is increasingly playing an essential and valuable role in international conflict resolution. The religious actors in international conflict resolution are Catholic, Quaker, and Mennonite leaders who have successfully intervened in and well-mediated Asian, Latin American, and African conflicts. In addition to the list are major Buddhist leaders, like "Maha Gosananda for Cambodia," "Thich Nhat Hanh from Vietnam," and others (Gopin, 2000, p. 1). Though some preachers creatively integrate peacemaking and their spiritual tradition, many others engage in destabilizing violent activities that emerge in the modern world. This phenomenon reflects religion's contradictory roles in human history: religion's contribution to conflict,

bloodshed, intolerance, and hatred, as well as religion's assistance in crafting laws and concepts that become the foundation of a civilization, with cultural engagement to major peace-associated values. He also notes that cultural engagement with essential peace-associated values includes: "empathy, an openness to and even love for strangers, the suppression of unbridled ego and acquisitiveness, human rights, unilateral gestures of forgiveness and humility, interpersonal repentance and the acceptance of responsibility for past errors as a means of reconciliation, and the drive for social justice" Gopin (2000, pp. 1–2).

### Perceptions of Religion on Regional Peace Diplomacy

In the opinion of Wendt (1992), the identities and interests of states are created as they interact. Thus, anarchy does not necessarily lead to self-help. In the international system, states strive to be powerful and secure. Therefore, it is influenced by their identities and interests, but dependent and constructed based on their interactions. For instance, during the Cold War, if the United States and the Soviet Union were in agreement on their ideologies, the war would have ended earlier or never have been in existence. Our actions are structured by collective meaning influenced by our interactions.

Gopin (2000) believed that situations apart from religion, such as the desperation of economically excluded individuals, are key to the conflict. On the contrary, religious symbolism and language are essential approaches through which people interpret reality by expressing their full scope of emotions using religious terminology. It is therefore important for training to be conducted on how the diversity of laws, whether metaphysical or mythical, is expressed in the believer's mind in the process of projecting their deepest

feelings. In addition, it is essential to not only understand the importance of a religious system but also the actual practitioners themselves.

India provides a case where many violent events occur because different radical Hindu parties abuse (or use) sacred mythic stories of the gods, thus using the acts of victory and defeat to ignite rage against foreigners, especially Muslims. Gopin (2000) noted that the western method used to explain this circumstance is reflected in how many of the middle class, as well as academic Hindus, have adopted a struggle towards strengthening typical civil society components such as civil rights for everyone, a free press, integrated law enforcement agencies, and honest courts. This approach pursued by Indian society should not go unnoticed. This is reflected in Rajmohan Gandhi's efforts to engage with deep-rooted Hindu myths of reality and retrieve from them the concepts of non-violence and peace, as well as deduce the ultimate spiritual truths presented in the highest virtues, such as ahimsa (non-violence).

This affirms Gopin's (2000) research on sacred tradition, myths, symbols, and texts that results in conflict environments as one of the contributors to different theoretical methods of conflict analysis theories. An analysis of this type will reveal the extent to which empowerment perceptions, or the lack thereof, are involved in a specific crisis. Different conflict resolution approaches that assess the association between self and enemy, or the role played by deep injuries, are in a position to be enriched through assessing spiritually associated materials. Secondly, spiritual virtues can be utilized to assess what human needs are achieved through the imagery or texts involved. In addition, these occurrences may also present an important frame of referral for conflict resolution platforms. Therefore, religion is in a position to develop a bridge through enacting special

cultural expression towards solving a specific conflict. Gopin (2000) highlights several areas for peacemakers by reading Christian materials, such as Mathew 7:1, and the ideology of judgment suspension of other religion, such as acting as a linkage to other monotheistic conventions that share similar moral values; and the theoretical approaches of crisis platforms for Christians where the actors were in a position to have extra-religious morale to humanize the other while at the same time suspending stereotypes during conventions.

Diverse religious cases have been presented on the Christian platform, in which King David conquered the land using the appropriate available means. This was viewed as conforming to the best conventions of Jewish thought, which assisted the Jewish fraternity to thrive militarily, thus making them stronger militarily than in the days of the traditional Jewish monarchs who waited for Messiah's arrival. However, the Holocaust, in which there was the greatest elimination of the Jewish community, and the criticism of the gentile community, where the Jews were perceived as less privileged, presented a different view of religion (Gopin, 2000). The British colonial rule was, as noted by Dowd (2017), at its peak through its motivation to create associations strategically with foreign states, with a major vision of extending trade. This built on the definition of diplomacy as the conduct of association where one or more states engage by peaceful means.

As reported by Best and Rakodi (2011) different faith traditions or rivals within a faith tradition are religious in some of the dimensions of conflict and violence. Religion plays a role as a mobilizing device, marker of identity, basis for rationalizing violent behaviour, and a source of values that are used as the basis for peacebuilding and reconciliation. Additionally, the relationships between religions and other key actors in the

international system, such as the state, are complex. Silvestri, Freedman, & Mayall (2015) explained that after the Cold War, previous scholars predicted that religious and cultural identities would be the main drivers of international conflict; although the state would remain the most powerful actor, the 'clash of civilizations', which is based on religious lines, would be the fuelling force of conflict, locally, between neighbouring states, or regionally and globally. Primarily, the conflict lines are between the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds. Religious identities between the "West" and "Islam" promote and amplify conflict, especially since 9/11.

#### The Use of Religion in Regional Peace Diplomacy

Frettingham & Hwang (2017) identified that any measures on how religion is interlinked with nationalism in a state, such as Taiwan, should start with taking responsibility for the emergence of nationalist sentiment on the land and the place of political struggle over the individual's national identity. The gap between national identity and politics is related to the emergence of nationalism within civil society within the post-democratization period to bridge the gap developed by the weakness of a state, such as the Taiwanese. In this context, the state has been unable or unwilling to sustain national projects, creating a void for new aspects of political identities or the emergence of Taiwanese nationalism. As Frettingham & Hwang (2017) related, religion, as an institution of cultural events that pre-occurred intending to develop the state, thus forming an essential platform for identity construction in a unique political environment where full statehood is absent, is an essential platform for identity construction as well. This makes religion an essential platform that it would not have otherwise achieved. This environment has provided Taiwanese nationalism with a chance to develop in a social space composed of

religious segments and other non-state actors, an indication that religious movements are in an influential position to inject "ecumenical nationalism" or better dissect any approach to promote a monolithic Taiwanese identity.

The process of a state attempting to universalize high culture that is transferred through the national learning system instead of the regional and local folk traditions eliminates the unique cultures of subnational communities. As a result, the state is increasingly reliant on the inculcation of a powerful and homogenous shared culture to promote social cohesion as well as provide moral policing. This moral policing had already been previously supplied by the local design of the community. Frettingham & Hwang (2017) acknowledged that as a shared national culture starts to pervade, the whole population, as well as subgroupings, are eliminated.

Reychler (1997) cited the role of various religions in conflict contexts as being motivated by negative and positive developments, inclusive of de-secularization globally and the emergence of religious conflicts. As a result, the focus has shifted to religious fundamentalism militants as a threat to peace. In addition, the importance is reflected in the events of realignment or the cooperation between the traditionalists and progressives, with a focus on specific issues. The evolution of religion has increased focus on the role played by religion in conflict contexts being negative and positive developments.

There has been an increase in focus drawn through increased engagement of church communities or churches in pursuit of constructive management or détente of conflicts. This is reflected through the debates of American bishops during the eighties, where the role of the churches during the democratic emancipation of Eastern and Central Europe, or the effect of church leaders on the conflict dynamics in several African conflicts,

was accessed. All these issues have raised alarm in the global environment, such as the South Africa conflict with Allan Boesak or Desmond Tutu, and also engaging Sudan, Mozambique, and Zaire conflict platforms.

In these contexts, Reychler (1997) took note of Beira archbishop Mgr. Jaime Goncalves as having played an important role in the achievement of the peace-deal in Mozambique on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1992. The unfolding of events ended the conflict in which millions of people lost their lives and half of the population were displaced. In a different setting, Monseigneur Laurent Monsengwo of Zaire became elected as the chair of the "High Council of the Republic," thus pursuing a critical challenging task of negotiating opponents of President Mobutu and Mobutu. In the same event, the Catholic Bishop in Burundi acted as a representative of half of the population where there was mediation process engagement to come up with a more collegial government to curb further violence. The church has also played a significant role in empowering people in the developing world, an approach reflected in Liberation Theology and other current initiatives to provide peace services in crisis areas, as well as in field diplomacy.

Nelsen, Guth, & Fraser (2001) identify religion as one of the key cultural elements which have helped in shaping modern European politics in different ways. In their assessment, Nelsen, Guth, and Fraser indicate that the official association between the church and state in many countries is integrated into political institutions where religious symbols and open policy formulation form part of clerical influence. The key role played by religion is further reflected in European party systems holding the marks of religious criticism founded in the Reformation and French Revolution. In this context, most

confessional parties hold 'Christian' in their names and uphold the pursuit of policies in line with religious principles to assist in competing against the secular parties.

In Nelsen et al. (2001) religious practice and affiliation remain powerful predictors of a person's vote choice. They go on to say that common protestant associations aided the national process of unification in the United Kingdom and, later, in its former American colonies. Other critiques further identify that the European integration process during the 1950s was, to a larger extent, a Christian Democratic project that was spearheaded by Catholic devotees such as Robert Dvhuman, Alcide de Gasperi, and Konrad Adenauer. Therefore, with the assistance of the Vatican and national Catholic hierarchies, the Christian Democratic leaders were able to have strong backing from their consecutive parties.

In the early years of the post-war period, integration and religion, such as Catholicism, were interlinked explicitly, politically, and theoretically. In addition, the great debate over the integration process took place between Catholic nations, which supported a single European federation, and the Protestants who joined the debate later, such as Denmark, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Norway, who advocated closer collaboration among the sovereign states. However, the level of religious commitment affects the attitudes towards the integration process as per various religious traditions (Nelsen et al., 2001).

### Challenges faced by Religion in Regional Peace Diplomacy

Besides religion being a driver of conflict, there is also a concern about the extent to which religion will indirectly foster or tolerate violence. Different factors such as religion, language, ideologies, and ethnicity intertwine, hence shaping behaviours and

ways of thinking that result in discrimination and exclusion, and, in the end, physical violence. For instance, the authors explain that "the Qur'an is viewed to be inherently violent and that all forms of Islamism are nothing but an antecedent of violence, terrorism and totalitarianism" (Silvestri et al., 2015, p. 21).

Reychler (1997) has intimated that religious institutions might also be in a position to influence conflict dynamics through abstaining from interventionist engagement. Since most global conflicts take an asymmetrical mode, the attitude pursued by some religious leaders partially plays a role in conflict consequences. Reychler linked this behaviour to implicitly reinforcing 'the might is right principle' (Reychler, 1997, p. 25). This phenomenon is equally reflected in World War II, when the Vatican embraced a neutral approach to the emerging conflict. The Catholic church did not publicly condemn the German atrocities committed in concentration camps or Poland.

Therefore, to protect its diplomatic interests, the Vatican preferred this approach and abstained from pursuing evangelical disapproval. In relation to conflict management, the bystander's role, those who are neither affected nor perpetrator, have been shaping the course of events, depending on their opposition, support, or neutrality based on moral or other issues in the contemporary world (Reychler, 1997). The expression of antipathy or sympathy of the leader of the Citta del Vaticano, Pius XII, that acted as a representation of about 500 million Catholics, was in a position to have curbed a large violence level.

The mentioned cases have presented religion as a tool that has several weaknesses that hinder its impact in building a safe world from conflict. Therefore, the mobilization of external and internal bystanders when communities or individuals' human rights are being violated has been a major challenge to religious organizations (Reychler, 1997).

Thus, the involvement of various religious institutions in various types of conflict remained as secondary or primary actors or as passive bystanders in conflict contexts. In addition to this retrogressive approach to religious peacemaking efforts, as third parties, these agencies inclined to be more reactive players. These actors seemed to act better towards humanitarian relief efforts in post-conflict escalation rather than respond to potential violence. These issues were further compounded by the fact that the various religious institutions lacked effective cooperation mechanisms, and thus most of the peacemaking and peacebuilding measures were sometimes uncoordinated (Reychler, 1997). This factor presented a need for more professional expertise to be engaged by various actors in conflict analysis as well as management.

#### Empirical Literature Review

The role of religion in promoting peace has often been understood as either a source of conflict or reconciliation. This simplicity, however, shows that there is no common or deeper understanding of the central terms of the debate that is applied to a diverse range of institutions, situations, ideologies, and actors in the international system given the complexity of religion.

Best & Rakodi (2011), in their study on "violent conflict and its aftermath in Jos and Kano, Nigeria: what is the role of religion?" examined the protracted inter-religious conflict in Nigeria and its aftermath in Kano State, which is a predominantly Muslim state, and Jos, which is a religiously mixed state. In Nigeria, the hostility between Christians and Muslims is linked to deep political historical roots between the northern and southern regions over the access of federal power and resources, different views of legal regimes, and inequalities in the access of opportunities. The authors continue to explain that over

the years, the increase in violence has increased, where Muslims are against Christians and Islamic sects are against each other. While this study employed an interview guide as the data collection instrument, their study used secondary data, semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions.

As mentioned by Best and Rakodi (2011), there are certain factors that have contributed to the increase in violence in the regions, which include: religious rivalry and competition, shrinking state resources, formal democratization, growing poverty and inequality, and international influences. Therefore, police brutality in the regions has become a challenge in promoting peace; thus, it has undermined people's confidence in the security forces, and therefore the government. In these communities, increased poverty and inequality, marginalization of the youth, and religious rivalry have caused friction between communal groups.

Religion is instrumentalized by the powerful in these regions as they struggle for political power and competition. In Jos, for instance, the violence is based on control of local government between indigenous and settler groups, with the conflict polarized along religious lines. There is the need for the government to reform the security forces and promote good governance so as to control the eruption of conflict that could lead to violence in these areas. In accordance with

According to Maoz and Henderson (2020), religion gives a definition to a believer's identity and offers a distinction between nonbelievers and believers, as well as between out-group and in-group, and has the power to ordain their religious personnel (rabbis and priests). These powers can be a source of conflict. Within the East African region, religion plays a unifying role that adds cohesion in communities through religious

rituals as well as symbols given as a unifying platform; this platform is reflected through the EAC.

Kilonzo (2010) observed that 1992 saw the emergence of multiparty politics in Africa, where a few church leaders gained the courage to be vocal critics of the different political entities created. In his view, Kilonzo notes that these religious leaders, such as Bishops like Henry Okullu, David Gitari, and Alexander Muge of the Anglican Church of Kenya; Catholic church bishops Ndingi Mwana Nzeki; Presbyterian Church Kenya Reverend Timothy Njoya; as well as National Council of Churches of Kenya's (NCCCK) Reverend Mutava Musyimi, among others. Therefore, in the post-election conflict of 2007, the church did not fully participate at the national level in the process of championing displaced people's rights and helping in the peacebuilding process, as reflected by many NGOs. This data does not bring out a positive image of the church leadership and does not conform to Mwalimu Julius Nyerere's observation that: "Everything which prevents a person from living in dignity and decency must be under the attack from the church and its works" (Kilonzo, 2009, p. 101).

As specified by Okullu (2003), the clergy might not be in a position to redesign an economic system, but they are responsible for advocating for the majority of people to have access to basic human rights, as a denial of these basics is unjust and immoral. On the contrary, Orabator (2000) indicated that the religious agencies in the African continent have taken a reactive status where they spectate the unfolding of events. Therefore, the failure to take action by the religious agencies has participated indirectly in the crumbling of a situation that could have been secured. Kilonzo (2009) affirmed Orabator's views by

indicating that only after the phenomenon is out of control the religious groups hurry to gather and bind together the broken pieces when the time is already past salvage.

Githigaro (2012) has emphasized that the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) in the post-election process was engaged in overseeing 'the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation project (KNDR)' process as an element of measures to ensure that the processes of reform were being developed for a coalition government with a vision of instilling national unity. In addition, the eruption of 2007 election violence in Kenya saw the Council laying down a platform of the Inter-Religious Forum (IRF) known as the "*Thabiti*" taskforce, mandating it to research the 2007/08 causes of post-election violence and its effect on national unity. This measure made it possible for the church to work together with the rest of the IRF members to collaborate with the national government and different partners on the strategies required to solve the issue that caused the widespread conflict (Kenya Thabiti Taskforce & Inter-religious Forum, 2009).

Khadiagala (2009) took note that though the relative stability within East Africa's structure is aligned towards increasing regionalism in the arena of security, the multiple layers of violence that exist in the contiguous periphery remain. This is reflected in various conflicts such as those in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan, Burundi, Somalia, and Rwanda that greatly impact regional integration. Tanzania and Kenya, reflecting their strategic roles, assume a role in ensuring peace in states such as Tanzania in Rwanda and Burundi peace mediation and Kenya in Sudan peace mediation. In order for the region to enhance security, there was a signing of military co-operation expansion that led to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 1998 Co-operation in Defense. The MoU was a decision to act as a precursor to widening the scope of conflict resolution as

well as peace-building institutions. However, religion was left out of the process of peace initiation and more emphasis was put on militarization.

Humenberger (2018) noted that in the Central African Republic (CAR), the ongoing conflict started as a result of a political conflict but later escalated into an ethnic and religious conflict majorly between Muslim rebel groups and the predominantly Christian militias. Thus, religion, though not the source of conflict, became the driving force towards it. Between 2008 and 2018, national reconciliation was made impossible since the signed peace agreements that were not less than twelve were partially implemented; more violence continued to erupt. Lack of confidence in the CAR government and the lack of armed group inclusivity to stop the violence cycles are contributing factors as to why past peacebuilding efforts never worked.

The reasons for the conflicts in CAR are national and international factors that include poverty, low levels of education, constant political instability, rebel groups and group polarizations of ethnic and religious identity groups, and international interference. Despite including the government and building security capacity, it is important to include religious leaders as they have access to a large population that trusts them and, hence, can contribute to diversification and the peacebuilding process. Additionally, they can strengthen the bottom-up peace process and promote top-down peacebuilding initiatives that would involve the national government. Also, they can access rebel groups' ads pleading for ceasefires and constitute an unbiased, reliable source of information for local government and international actors.

The EAC (2011) report highlighted that, pursuant to Article 5 of the EAC, the intergovernmental members intend to create a Common Market, a Monetary Union, and a

Political Federation so as to enhance and manage the commercial, industrial, political, social, and cultural associations. These measures were implemented to expedite the region's harmonization, equilibrium development, and sustained economic expansion activities. This approach, if implemented well, will assist the community in achieving its vision of becoming a successful, competitive, protected, and politically united regional member. This region is composed of the Head of State, tasked with setting the role, and the council, which is responsible for policy formulation, the secretariat acting as the executive organ of the EAC institutions and the community.

The EAC report further identified that the Judicial and the legislative arms are composed of the EAC Legislative assembly as well as the East African Court of Justice. Though the vision of the regional body is to strengthen economic, social, political, and cultural integration through the "One People, One Destiny" slogan, the different member states have had their share of conflicts ranging from civil conflict, terrorism, and tribal wars, among others. This has called for the enactment of peace mediators who are retrieved from various African state agencies or from the national traditional platforms. However, the element of religion in conflict resolution has taken on a third-party role where the religious agencies and leaders act as humanitarians rather than solvers of conflict.

Religion as a constituent initiates violence and peace globally, pushing the need to involve religious figures in coming up with regional peace integration and diplomacy measures. Religious figures and faith-based organizations are thus considered carriers in resolution practices, thus contributing to mediation, advocacy, and peace diplomacy. This has enhanced the development and adoption of interreligious dialogue, which is reportedly a common response to regional conflicts, strife, and nationalism. As a result, regional

peaceful engagement among various communities has risen, bringing diplomacy to the core. This way, religious figures through these dialogues motivate and guide citizens as well as institutions linked to the government in peacekeeping and diplomacy missions in an effort towards better diplomatic practices (Neufeldt, 2011).

The adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals by states presented peace as a critical element for the success of Agenda 2030, an element embraced by the member states in the EAC member states. The document Agenda 2030 affirms that in striving to transform the world through the 2030 Agenda aligned towards sustainable development, peace is identified as a key element; "there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development" (United Nations, n.d., p. 6). In this context, religious agencies are identified as major identifiers of peace in the effort towards realizing sustainable development. This is because religious people as well as faith-based institutions are believed to be carriers of religious concepts that play a role in peace rather than as sources of conflict by acting as conflict resolution and peacebuilding tools. Religious institutions play a key role as agents that signal conflict, and their visible presence helps in managing conflict and preventing it from erupting while contributing toward reconciliation and mediation.

In East Africa, specifically along the Somalia-Mozambique coastline, religion has been playing a key role in the field of conflict and peace. In this environment, religion for peace takes various shapes, mainly via interreligious activities focusing on advocacy for peace and reconciliation. Therefore, the involvement of different religious communities affirms that every segment is in a position to participate in a common cause of peaceful co-existence.

The recent EAC expansion measures to include Burundi and Rwanda in the regional body is one of the approaches towards enhancing security governance within the region. As Chikwanha (2007) noted with the exception of Tanzania, the rest of the EAC member states have experienced different levels of conflict, affecting them indirectly or directly, and posing threats to their citizens. This might compromise the major mission and vision of the regional body in enhancing cooperation among member states in economic, social, cultural, and political fields, technology and research, the judicial and legal system, and defense and security for mutual achievements and benefits (EAC, 2007, Article 5 (1)). As Chikwanha noted, however, the role of religion in EAC has been very limited as it adopted a militarized approach to security, an approach challenged by the holistic human security concept and religion. The author notes that though protection of borders is important for post-conflict countries, equally important are issues revolving around crime prevention, hunger, civil and political freedoms, democratic participation and war prevention, and health care that compete for government attention.

In regard to the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) that focuses on advocacy and religious diplomacy, there has been a keen impact on national governments and regional bodies such as the EAC. This strategically seeks to engage governments, regional bodies, and continental institutions on emerging issues linked to economic development and regional integration across continents. Further, the capacity of religious leaders is enhanced through this process, thus ensuring engagement in constructive advocacy via strategic positions and voices held in society, resulting in peace and development in communities and countries (PROCMURA, 2018).

### Challenges faced by Religion in Regional Peace Diplomacy

The recurring challenges in religion, playing its role in peace diplomacy, is due to the absence of measurement devices to quantify the results of this specific task. Therefore, we need the implementing institutions and donors to indicate what type of transformation their program is intending to achieve in order to present measurable results.

The nature of the institution might have a different effect on the outcome of peace. This is especially evident in situations involving sensitive topics, such as Islamic radicalization. In this context, an activity from a single faith institution apart from the Muslim tradition will not be in a position to solve the issue in the same way as a Muslim-oriented institution or an inter-religious institution (Danish Mission report). It is also impractical to term an institution inter-religious where the institution does not reflect the proportional inter-religious demographics as well as characters in the decision formulation boards. Therefore, most of the interreligious programs do not possibly reflect a specific religious conflict taking place in a specific context. Most of the East Africa initiatives lack a local sustainable approach and thus tend to rely wholly on external funding.

Thus, the funding is aligned to those easily funded programs. Githigaro (2012) addressed the lack of financial resources to achieve a high demand for peacebuilding interventions. In his analysis, peacebuilding programs' funding was short-term, an element that impacted negatively on the peace sustainability efforts. Furthermore, the church in East Africa is divided both before and after violence, and the church must undergo internal healing before it can be effective in building a peace bridge among bitterly divided communities.

Kilonzo (2009) cited Mue's analysis that historically, religious groups have been facing numerous failures in stilling sanity in the public domain. This is evident specifically in post-colonial Africa. In this period, the church backed the colonial government rather than condemn the atrocities committed against the Africans, instead opting to participate in political diplomacy with the then colonial powers. In Kilonzo's argument, the same predicament is being reflected in the African church's leadership in the post-independence where little was done to criticize injustices engaged by political leaders within that period. In Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta's as well as Daniel Arap Mouu's history provides enough evidence of extreme injustices, including the assassinations of junior and senior political leaders who were willing to oppose the ills of the government. The injustices were further tightened using harsh laws as well as restrictions on the freedom of the press and academics, corruption, and election rigging. All this occurred while the religious agencies as well as their leaders stayed silent, watching.

Religion plays a vital role in regional integration, though it is a marker of various conflicts in the EAC. However, each country places religious diversity and inter-religious instruction in the national education curriculum in high regard. Additionally, in the East African region, faith-based organizations are active and institutionalized, with social conflicts in the form of social exclusion and marginalization being prominent. Conflicts are looked at as religious conflicts, posing a challenge, thus creating religious suspicions and tensions such as attacks on places of worship, mutual intolerance between Christians and Muslims, as well as developed perceptions on religious conceptions regarding conflict resolution and integration in the regional EAC spectrum (Fast & Neufeldt, 2005).

A common challenge in the religious arena is when civil society organizations (CSOs) face difficulty disseminating their messages, thus a constant need to develop a strong association with Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs). Another challenge is when religion-based initiatives become categorized into particular approaches, thus ensuring efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of the particular initiative primarily focused on regional diplomatic measures (Merdjanova & Brodeur, 2011).

Ugirashebuja, Ruhangisa, Ottervanger, and Cuyvers, (2017) acknowledge that the general principles take a threefold function, as they "operate as aids to interpretation, as grounds for review, and as rules of law, breach of which may give rise to tortuous liability" (Ugirashebuja et al., 2017, p. 202). Therefore, a point of reference for law (source of law), a general principal acts as a "gap filling" tool to the level where a lacuna emerges from the fact that an environment may emerge that is not managed by a rule of law, be it judicial or statutory. This term, "general principles," is the most common inspiration, emerging from the International Court of Justice Statute, which is an appendage to the UN Charter. Unfortunately, the document fails to characterize or clarify the "general principles", thus tasking the unavoidable disintegration of international judicial agencies and experts.

However, Kamanga, and Possi (2017) underscored that the EAC's important general principles are a source of controversy due to whether they have been reflected by statute or through judicial pronouncements. Religion in these processes is not involved in the formulation of the UN Charter, though elements of fundamental human rights are entrenched in the international and national law platforms. The state has been playing a key role as the main custodian of the peace process at the national level and at regional levels. In the same capacity, Idi Amin Dada committed several atrocities, including

plunging the economy into a financial crisis and ejecting foreigners such as Indians, but the religious leaders remained mute to avoid the regime's wrath. The same is being reflected in Museveni's government, which has been linked to oppression.

Conceptual Framework

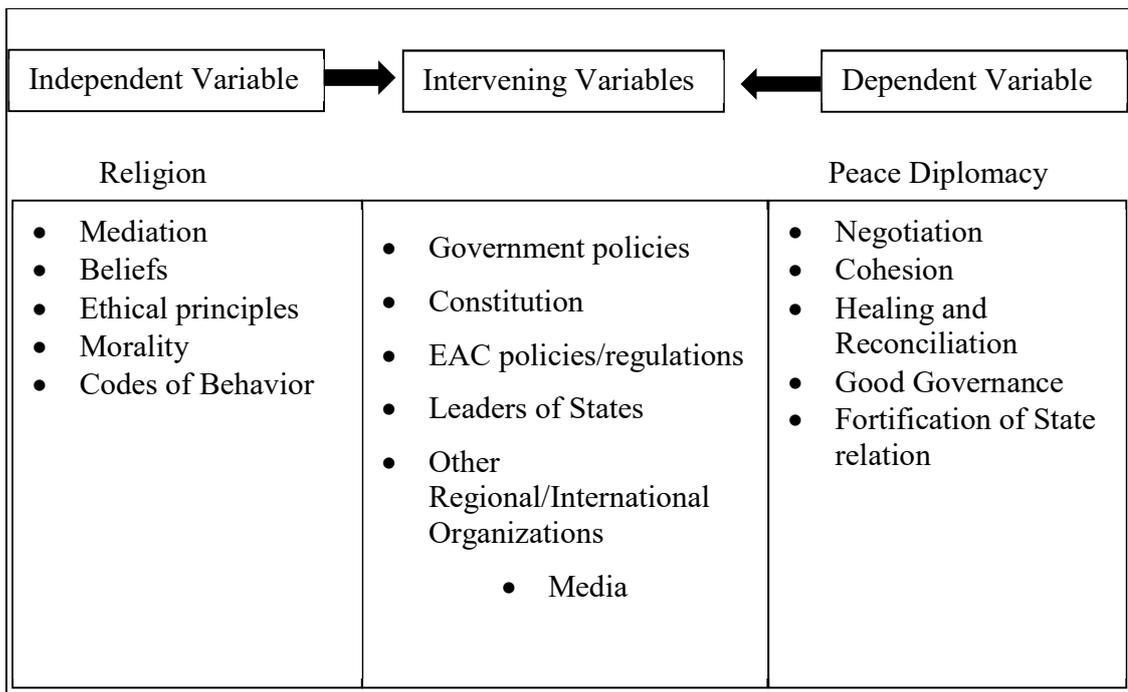


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author (2021)

Discussion

Within the international system, diplomacy can only function based on the combination of different factors. One of the factors would include religion. Over decades, the practice of diplomacy has had to adjust its operations as the world evolves. One of the main functions of peace diplomacy is to prevent war, violence and conflict, thus to promote peace within an anarchic system. Putting religion into consideration, there are various

aspects to consider that affect how peace diplomacy would be conducted within the EAC. These aspects would include mediation, beliefs, ethical principles, morality, and code of behaviour.

This is to say that such aspects influence the impact of the peace diplomacy process. The aspects of peace diplomacy would include negotiation, cohesion, healing and reconciliation, good governance, and fortifying state relations. However, the relationship between religion and regional peace diplomacy is not hallow, as there are other intervening aspects to be considered for religion to have an influence on regional peace diplomacy within the region. These aspects would include government policies, constitutions, EAC policies and regulations, leaders of states, and other regional and/or international organizations. For instance, a leader of the state would govern the state based on his belief system, thus influencing the relationship with other states.

### Summary

The chapter has identified that the religious values and beliefs reflected through scriptures and other platforms support the protection of fundamental human rights in any situation. Therefore, religion is presented as the best tool to instil peace in a given context. However, religion still acts as a facilitator of violence in some areas that might pit one religion or domination against the other, while, on the contrary, religion can be used as a potential peace tool in specific conflict zones. This is reflected in the European Union integration process supported by the Catholic Church and the Protestants and furthered by the selfless advocacy by different individuals to instil peace in conflict zones and an individual taking a major part in perpetuating violence. The historical role of religion in Africa and more particularly in East Africa Community peace building is still lacking as it

pursues the stands taken by the forefathers during the independence period. The church, therefore, should pursue an active role in peacemaking and peace building within the EAC region.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This chapter gives a detailed research approaches on research methods conducted in carrying out the data collection for the study. The study therefore assessed the research design of the study; population being analysed; target population in the study; the sample size fit for study; sampling technique; data collection instruments; data collection procedure; pilot study; reliability and validity; data analysis plan; and ethical consideration.

#### Research Design

The research design of any given study constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data and is determined by the nature of the research problem in a study, the purpose of the study, objectives that guide the type of data required, and the means of obtaining data (Kothari, 2004). This study was based on qualitative phenomenological and descriptive research designs. In addition, it also employed an explanatory research design. Qualitative phenomenological and descriptive research designs were employed with regard to the first objective, which sought to examine people's perceptions of the potential of religion in regional peace diplomacy within the EAC.

These research designs were applicable to provide not only practical but also in-depth understanding of a given social phenomena with an aim of capturing the respondent's opinion, experiences, and views on the role of religion in regional peace diplomacy in the EAC. Explanatory research design was employed with regard to the second and third

objectives, which were to establish areas in which religion can be employed towards regional peace diplomacy in the EAC region and to assess the challenges faced by religion in promoting regional peace diplomacy in the EAC region, respectively.

An explanatory research design was suitable for these objectives because it allowed the researcher to acquire data on areas in which religion had already been applied in promoting peace within the EAC and if any to also explain reasons as to why things are the way they are in terms of the challenges faced by religion in promoting regional peace diplomacy within the EAC.

### Population

The population for this study included all residents of the three main founding states of the EAC, which include: Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. In line with the last census held in these three states, Kenya's population was at 47.5 million as of 2019 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). In Uganda, the last census was conducted in 2014 and the population was enumerated at 34.6 million (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2014). In Tanzania, the population as of 2019 was 55.9 million (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). In addition, special categories of respondents considered in this research included: citizens, religious leaders from main religions, the employees of EAC secretariat, employees of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA).

### Target Population

The target population for this study was within Nairobi County that has a population of 4.3 million (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). The study focused on post-graduate students from United States International University-Africa, Daystar

University, Catholic University, and public universities such as the University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University. The target population also included institutionalized religious groups such as Christians and Muslims.

### Sample Size

The study used a sample size of thirty respondents composed of ten post-graduate students from private and public universities (United States International University of Africa-USIU; Daystar University; Catholic University, University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University in Nairobi, five heads of major religious institutionalized groups, and nine leaders from regional institutions such as the EAC as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and two members of parliament and four religious leaders that included two Bishops and two Muslim. The study employed purposive sampling because all these had information about the role of religion in promoting peace within the EAC.

### Sampling Technique

The study employed a snowball sampling technique to achieve its sample size. This is to say, for example, that postgraduate students studying courses such as political science, international relations, religious studies, development and peace studies, especially those from Uganda and Tanzania, led the researchers to other fellow students applicable to the research.

Also, the study employed purposive sampling whereby the researcher was keen on the institutions to visit such as those centered on religion, such as Catholic University and Daystar University where there is the diversity of students from Uganda and Tanzania. Also, the researcher visited government institutions and religious institutionalized groups

seeking participants that would give information and or their opinion and perception on the role of religion in regional peace diplomacy, as well as existing information on areas where religion has been employed in the promotion of peace diplomacy in the EAC.

#### Data Collection Instruments

The study employed an interview guide that will be used as the data collection instrument to gather information relevant to the study. The questions in the interview guide are generated from the objectives of the study.

#### Data Collection Procedures

The primary data was collected through audio recordings during the interview process and was subjected to transcription and analysis. This was followed by the process of coding, followed by transcription, to enable identification of issues, topics, similarities, and any divergent that might emerge during the interpretation of participants' narratives. Therefore, this process of data analysis assisted the researcher to understand the phenomenon at hand from the participant's perspective.

The study employed the thematic content analysis approach as this method assessed common data set patterns. This approach assisted in assessing the existence of common patterns around data sets.

For the purpose of maintaining the participant's authentic information and findings, this research gave direct feedback quotations from the informant to be interviewed. Furthermore, triangulation of data was used to make comparisons of data gathered from diverse sources in order to establish the findings' robustness as well as the

accuracy of individual interpretation and conjecture. In this regard, in-depth knowledge of the role of religion in peace diplomacy in the EAC was valuable to the research.

### Pretesting

The research instrument was pretested by Daystar University students, where respondents from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania were engaged accordingly. The pretest assisted in assessing the effectiveness of the interview guide structured to achieve the study objectives and the time frame to allocate for the interview.

### Reliability and Validity

The interview guide was used as a guide to deliver the targeted objective, which was tested through administering it to the respondents in the public and private universities, and the findings were mapped against the study objectives. The time frame for each interview was adjusted to fit 15 minutes to engage the participant within a given period. The response from the participant was transcribed and coded and assessed in line with the objectives of the study and other literature findings.

### Data Analysis Plan

For this study, both primary and secondary data collection methods were applied. Primary data collection was through conducting interviews. Secondary data collection was collected from books, project reports, journals, and videos. Qualitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics. The data was first subjected to an assessment of errors manually. Afterwards, the options in the interview schedules were allocated numbers

(coding) after transcription to enable ease in analysing the content in thematic form. All the questions in this study were treated as variables. After coding, data entry was done.

## Ethical Considerations

The study used consent forms that were filled out by the respondents and also an introductory letter from Daystar University. In addition, the University letter assisted the researcher in obtaining a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). The NACOSTI letter from the national government assisted in approving the collection of data from the respondents and institutions as part of the requirement to collect information from the public for educational purposes in Kenya. The researcher applied moral rules and professional codes of conduct throughout the research.

The researcher sought consent from respondents and requested them to sign their consent after explaining the purpose of the research and procedures for collecting data. This was to ensure that individuals participate voluntarily with full knowledge of the risk and benefits. The researcher also considered respecting respondents' confidentiality by not disclosing their identity and ensuring that they provided detailed interview questions and that participants could withdraw from the interview when they felt uncomfortable.

The findings for this study were used for academic purposes and would not be disclosed for any other purpose. Also, given that religion is an emotive issue, the researcher would pay attention to how questions would be raised so as not to stir up emotions, and in cases where emotions were evoked, the researcher would end the interview.

## Summary

This chapter has presented the best research design and approaches fit for the collection and presentation of data. It was therefore relevant for the study to utilize

interview questions that were administered selectively to those potential respondents with knowledge of the topic of the study. The study ensured that participants' privacy was upheld by using codes to represent participants during the transcription of the recorded data. The process of data collection and procedures upheld ethical issues by acknowledging the right authors and requesting permits to research in a specific field of interest.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

#### Introduction

The purpose of this research was to examine the role of religion in regional peace diplomacy within the EAC. This chapter has four main sections which present the findings guided by the research objectives. The first section examines people's perceptions of the potential religion has in regional peace diplomacy. The second section looks at the areas in which religion can be employed towards regional peace diplomacy in the EAC. The third section assesses the challenges faced by religion in promoting peace diplomacy in the EAC region. The fourth section gives a summary of key findings. The research was guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine people's perceptions of the potential of religion in regional peace diplomacy
2. To establish areas in which religion can be employed towards regional peace diplomacy in the EAC region.
3. To assess the challenges faced by religion in promoting regional peace diplomacy in the EAC region.

#### Analysis and Interpretation

##### Description of Respondents

This study focused on those EAC members based in Kenya. The study conducted interviews with thirty members of the EAC based in Kenya, that include: citizens, religious

leaders from all applicable religions, the EAC secretariat, departmental heads and workers, and the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA).

In-depth interviews were carried out among the respondents who were asked eight questions, first to narrate their perception of the EAC and its main role. Secondly, they were again asked to narrate the impact that religion has had on the EAC peace diplomacy. Thirdly, they were asked to narrate some ways in which religious leaders were involved in promoting regional peace diplomacy. In this way, they were asked to narrate their thoughts on religion and religious leaders in relation to peace diplomacy in the EAC, which they perceived to have key components in the peace process in the region. Fourthly, they were asked to narrate areas in which religion has been used as a tool to promote peace in the region. Finally, they were asked to narrate the limitations that religion has encountered in this process, which they satisfactorily indicated.

A thematic content analysis was conducted on the interviews to obtain a qualitative dataset. A coding framework, key themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data were developed within a matrix. The findings for this study are described and presented under the themes below in accordance to the objectives.

#### People's Perception on the Potential of Religion in Regional Peace Diplomacy

The study sought to determine people's perceptions of the potential of religion in regional peace diplomacy, pursuant to the first objective of the study. The first part included a discussion on the knowledge of the EAC and its main role. While the second part discussed people's perceptions of the potential of religion in regional peace diplomacy.

### Knowledge and Main Role of EAC

The EAC is an intergovernmental institution composed primarily of sovereign states that include Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and South Sudan. Additionally, the EAC's main roles are as follows; promotion of social, political and economic development, regional integration, promoting peace and unity, regional judicial system and conflict resolution tool within the region.

The EAC aims to achieve prosperity, competitiveness, security, stability and political unification in East Africa. The member states include Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi, with the objective of creating a political federation that would expand and reinforce economic, political, social, and cultural integration. People's quality of life is to be improved through increased security, greater competitive capacity, value added, trade and investment. Its secretariat headquarters is in Arusha, Tanzania. Therefore, the current study categorized and discussed EAC main roles in a summary below as follows:

The EAC's primary role is to promote socio-political and economic development. This concept refers to the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals, and the processes that create, sustain, and transform these relationships over time.

Also, this role elucidated the way power and resources are distributed within EAC. This role involves promoting trade, businesses, and free movement of goods from one-member state to another or to the rest of the region. This also involves the movement of people from a one-member state to the rest of the region. This concept was found to be one of the most common important elements of the EAC. Therefore, this is an indication that

there is freedom of movement for people, goods, and services within that region. With the existence of the EAC, citizens from member states have access to resources, and this is especially important for women.

The study found that EAC plays an economic development role within the region. Conforming to the study respondents, it is about the distribution of resources, and markets in the region are equality done. Men and women from each member state are able to work within this region. Again, member states are able to access credit to pursue and expand businesses, and farming can be challenging as, in most cases, they possess fewer assets than men.

However, within the EAC partner states, the key informal channel of accessing credit for both men and women is through family or friends as they rarely borrow from financial institutions.

From the study conducted in Tanzania, one of the respondents indicated as follows:

*Ninajua watu wengi ambao wameweza kujisaidia kibiashara kupitia chama za familia na marafiki. Unapata wengi wameweza kukopa pesa kwenye chama na kuendea mizigo Uganda na hata Tanzania kuja kuuza hapa Kenya. Pia unapata watu wanatoka sehemu tofauti za Afrika Masharika kuja kufanya kazi hapa Kenya, hivi wameweza kujiendeleza na pia kusaidia familia zao.*

The respondent above further postulated as below:

*I know of very many people who have been able to help themselves in terms of business through help groups formed either by family members or friends, where members contribute cash for investments and give loans to the members. You find members are able to access loans which they use to purchase goods from Uganda and Tanzania and sell in Kenya. Additionally, citizens from other EAC member state countries are able to migrate to come and work in Kenya, hence they have been able to develop themselves and help their families*

The study also identified another category of the main role of the EAC as being regional integration. This term is used interchangeably as regionalism where regionalism is the tendency of geographically proximate territories or states to engage in economic integration and to form free trade areas and probably one market. This concept focuses on economic integration, free trade, and common markets as part of regional integration, which are more often mentioned by the under-study population. Regional integration has actively participated in maintaining peace and security in the EAC. The EAC has joined energy to ensure peaceful coexistence and stability.

The respondents revealed that the EAC is a regional integration of the member states whereby the region is considered as a single block on the African continent. Furthermore, another section of respondents interviewed gave narrations supporting the idea that EAC was a regional integration institution that promotes cooperation among the member states or within the region, thus with the aim of promoting and achieving peace, stability, and wealth.

In his paper called "The End of Geography," Dinka & Kennes (2007) exemplifies regionalism as characterized by political re-alignment, increased homogeneity, and business transactions. Further, he adds that states also join more than one regional bloc to overlap membership and independent integration agenda, for instance EAC, The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and The Southern African Development Community (SADC) in order to expand the territories (Dinka & Kennes, 2007).

The process of joining the regional integration countries is done voluntarily and one has access to common markets. There is a chance of reducing conflicts and an

opportunity to increase mutual relations in terms of commerce, social exchanges, and cultural integration (EAC Secretariat, 2010).

Regionalism can eradicate conflicts. In Africa, peace and stability have been influenced by COMESA and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in their respective regions. At the 1999 COMESA summit, economic development, security, and peace were related, and they established a peace and security committee in 2000. Consistent with a report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2018), through regional integration in the EAC, the overall gender policy framework may prove effective and may accompany and/or replace national initiatives.

The current study identified another category showing the main role of EAC was the promotion of peace and unity in the region. As respondents indicated, they know EAC as an interstate organization that works towards promoting peace and unity among themselves. Without peace and unity, nothing can be achieved. Peace and unity were realized through member states' representatives elected to deliver on the agendas and common markets and free movement of the people. For this to occur, peace is a crucial aspect that cannot be ignored, hence the reason why the EAC exists.

#### Impact of Religion on Regional Peace Diplomacy

The study sought to find out the impact that religion has on regional peace diplomacy in the EAC. This is to address the second objective of the study that seeks to evaluate areas in which religion has been applied in regional peace diplomacy. Waltz (2001) highlighted that religion is part of the aspects to consider while applying any diplomatic style. The respondents argued that there was an active and passive approach by which religion had an impact on regional peace diplomacy. The second objective involved

determining the impact that religion could have on the regional peace diplomacy in the EAC block. The study categorized the impacts as follows: advocacy for peace in the region, source of conflicts in the region, connecting the people of the region, constitutional mandate, decision-making process, and electoral process within the region.

The study purported that the first and greatest impact of religion on regional peace diplomacy involves an active peace advocacy approach within the EAC. Most of the respondents agreed that religion has positively affected peace development among the EAC.

This is to mean that religion takes an active approach to achieve results and positively contribute to peacebuilding in certain principles while at the same time it takes a passive approach whereby it doesn't quite achieve anything. One of the Muslim teachers said the following:

*Christians are first politicians, then Christians, while Muslims are first Muslims, then politicians. This means that Muslims will first advance their faith before any other agenda; they will put their focus first on what their religion teaches and tells them to do*

As it was seen in chapter one, religion has been playing an active role in the promotion of certain principles that contribute to regional peace and stability. They include unity promotion, economic, social, and cultural development, the electoral process, human rights, constitutional rights, and an honest court, among others. In the same way, religious leaders have been able to hold prayers and illustrate the atrocities against their communities. This concurs with the theory of secularization, which expresses how religion influences all aspects of life, from personal, state, and organizational habits. Below is a discussion of the sub-theme's analysis in relation to the interview questions and objectives.

Those themes that indicate how actively religion is involved in the peace diplomacy of the EAC are discussed below as follows:

*The majority of EAC citizens practice some forms of religious beliefs. Religious doctrines and teachings advocate for cohesion and harmony within the community. Therefore, religion forms an indefensible platform for the advancement of peace and diplomacy within the EAC region. One of the respondents stated that "Diplomacy is conducted by individuals who subscribe to different religious teachings. Religion plays a big role, since most people ascribe to their religious beliefs, which determine what course of action and decisions they make.*

As indicated by Gopin (2000), every religion of the world at some point advocates committing to the value of peace. The majority of the respondents explained that religion has an impact on regional peace diplomacy as it is a source or an advocate for peace; one respondent who was a Christian indicated that their religion instructs or teaches them to strive for peace with all in keeping with Hebrews 12:14 which states: "Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy: without holiness no one will see the Lord" (NIV). Further on, it was narrated that:

*A majority of the citizens of the EAC region practice some form of religious belief. Religion widely forms one of the common pillars of society. Most of the doctrines and teachings in the various religious sects (secular and traditional) advocate cohesion and harmony in the existence of the community. Therefore, religion forms an indefensible platform for the advancement of peace and diplomacy within the EAC region*

The research revealed that religion served as a connection between communities. Another impact of religion on EAC peace diplomacy is connecting communities within the region. Religion can act as a connecting force within society; "as trusted institutions, as bearers of values, as a moral foundation for confronting injustice, as levers for promoting reconciliation, as mobilizers of communities, nations, and groups for peacebuilding, and as a motivation for peacemakers" (Smock, 2008, p. 4).

As maintained by the study, religious leaders will act as mediators and facilitators if they act as neutral parties in conflict. The pulpit brings people from different cultures together through its influence. The findings show that the majority of the respondents adhere to the statements that religion helps in connecting people. Concerning peacebuilding in the broader civil society sphere, church representatives envisage their leading role in different ways: "Peacebuilding starts with the church," says a military chaplain. Everything starts from the idea of reconciling people with God. Peace is a state of rest, an absence of hatred towards your neighbour (Brylov, Kalenychenko, & Kryshtal, 2021).

The study discovered that religious organizations emphasize the fact that they are respected by the faithful, which gives them wider possibilities for action:

*When churches spread certain ideas during their church services, they can contribute to spreading peace. This message is likely going to influence those people who enjoy certain authority in a community and can become agents of peace (Source: Field Data, 2021).*

The electoral process is another category through which religion impacts the EAC's regional peace diplomacy. The process of selecting leaders through vote representation is known as election. This process of selecting the leaders, there are so many stakeholders who get involved. Some of the stakeholders are religious leaders and church organizations. Religious leaders have incited and later supported electoral and political violence at some point.

In 2007-2008, post-election violence, religious leaders were divided along ethnic lines and kept quiet against ethnic violence (Maseno, L. 2018). However, religious leaders were actively involved in peacebuilding efforts and averting electoral violence in the 2013 general elections. Various churches got heavily involved in peace rallies and caravans.

Religion helps in the electoral process in the EAC bloc. Most of the respondents indicated that religion has the power to influence the process of conducting the election of the leaders. And politicians use the pulpit to talk to a huge population. Additionally, religious leaders take an active role in using their congregations or audiences to support politicians during elections.

In Kenyan politics, for instance, the strong ethnic bonds were reaffirmed in the recent referendum elections. In the 2017 general elections campaigns, Raila Odinga campaigned under the theme of the Walk to Canaan, promising his supporters that he would reach the promised land once elected.

There are several areas where religious leaders have tried to mingle with electoral and political discord and violence. For instance, in Nigeria, both Christian and Muslim leaders have tried to gain influence by claiming the effectiveness of the rival religion. (Best & Rakodi, 2011). The Christian religious leaders in Rivers state were accused of receiving bribes and campaigning against the Muslim candidate, the current Nigerian President, Muhammadu Buhari. They circulated a message inflicting fear of Islam on Nigerians in case a Muslim president is voted in. Religious leaders in Nigeria were accused of undermining free and fair elections by condemning votes that were rigged (Familusi, 2012).

The study also found that religion serves as a constitution mandate and human rights advocate. This is another element that religion impacts on the regional peace diplomacy of the EAC. In the human rights mission, religion has played a role in two ways. First, freedom of worship, which is a fundamental human freedom. Accomplishing this freedom is problematic. Secondly, religion. The findings from the interviewees confirmed that religion impacts the constitution's formulation, upholds, and endorses it.

The religious leaders have influence over their congregations on matters having to do with the constitution's upholding, its understanding, and implementation. Most of the time, when the constitution is being worked on, it goes through denominations for analysis and promulgation for people to understand what is inside. The church has got the power to uphold it or defy it.

For example, the Catholic and Anglican churches in Kenya during the 2010 constitutional revision. The church played a key role by convincing its members to pass it into law. This is consistent with Constructivism theory, which holds that humans are aware or conscious of global events (Jackson & Sørensen, 2019). Religious leaders in the EAC are aware of their place in matters pertaining to adopting policies and regulations that do not violate human rights. When people's rights are violated, religious leaders partner with governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders to adjust to this situation.

However, religion has a passive approach as far as peace in the region is considered. This occurs when religion and religious leaders have no role or keep silent in peace diplomacy and has not impacted the hard security measures within the region. On the one hand, religion is seen as active in certain aspects, but on the other hand, it is seen as incapable of achieving anything in terms of peace diplomacy; religion has limited impact in regional peace diplomacy. As indicated by one of the respondents: "Religion can be used as an instrument of spreading peace and cohesion among people. However, differences between different religions, such as Muslims and Christianity, have the potential to brew enmity in society. Muslim teachings do not advocate peace but vengeance when a brother wrongs you" (Source: Field Data, 2021).

Within the international system, the military might be highly considered so as to promote peace and security. Religious leaders are unable to have total influence on peace and security due to the lack of military power. If there is any intervention, it is normally through prayers and dialogues with concerned parties, such as political leaders when conflict arises.

Individual religious leaders, such as Sheikh Balala, the Late (rtd) Bishop David Gitari, Archbishop (rtd) Ndingi Mwana a'Nzeki, Reverend Timothy Njoya, the late Bishop Henry Okullu, and the late Bishop Alexander Muge, have been vocal in demanding that Kenyans' human rights be respected by the government (Kenga, 2014).

#### Source of Conflicts

Another impact of religion on regional peace diplomacy within the EAC is that it is viewed as a source of conflict. The study revealed that religion is seen as a source of conflicts in the communities. Religious leaders have instigated conflicts and violence. As stated by Best and Rakodi (2011), conflict and violence always have a religious dimension, and religion plays a role as a mobilization device, a basis for rationalizing violent behaviour, and a source of values towards peacebuilding and reconciliation.

This is manifested when the religious leaders see something bad happening and they keep quiet. Religious leaders play a major role in preventing conflicts and sustaining conflicts' re-occurrence. However, people may lose trust in it. As Bruce (2011) argued, the assumptions of secularization theory include: the deterioration of religious institutions; the behaviour displacement of religious rules and principles by demands that accord with strictly technical criteria; the removal of religious agencies and facilities by political powers; the replacement of religious beliefs by rational and empirical beliefs; gaining

secular control of social activities and functions; and the decline of the involvement of people's resources, time, and energy towards supernatural concerns.

A study on political violence perpetrated by Jews and Muslims in Israel. The study established that economic and political deprivation leads to supporting violence when religious leaders inflame messages about deprivation.

Evidently, the participants said: "Religion can serve both to make the peace or to exacerbate tension, depending on how well leaders use it as a mechanism" (Source: Field Data, 2021). Additionally, when religious leaders feel threatened by opponents and want to continue influencing the faith or political leaders, they incite or support violence (Basedau & Koos, 2015).

The results of the respondents during the interview purported that religion has a limited role during peace diplomacy within the EAC, as indicated by one of the participants: Religion has taken a passive role in ensuring that there is peace in the country caused by conflict. This was seen in Kenya in the 2007 post-election violence where external forces such as former UN secretary general Kofi Annan attempted to bring peace and external eminent persons engaged, but religion took a passive role as the church itself was divided (Source: Field Data, 2021).

In the same way, interviewees added that: "The passive approach was further reflected in Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi and Tanzania's leadership that has been involved in directly arresting the opposition leaders. This was also seen in the Rwanda genocide and the Lord Resistance Army's torture of the residents. The atrocities committed by the government or the emerging contesting groups have seen the religious institutions take a silent stand" (Source: Field Data, 2021). On the same issue, the respondents further said:

"Religion has had limited impact in the regional peace diplomacy. This is because the regional body lacks a religious unit that offers solutions to the security department, and thus the institution eliminates indirectly the inclusion of religion in the regional peace process" (Source: Field Data, 2021).

### Ways Religious Leaders Involved in Peace Diplomacy Promotion

The study sought to identify how religious leaders are involved in the promotion of regional peace diplomacy. The findings identified the following ways in which religious leaders got involved in the promotion of peace diplomacy in the EAC: When participants were asked about how religious leaders are involved in promoting regional peace diplomacy, they were categorized as follows: promoting peace principles, decision-making process, and effective communication, passive role of prayer, educational system, and terrorism.

The study revealed that the majority of the respondents stated that religious leaders were involved in regional peace promotion through value promotion. This was achieved through engaging and teaching the congregation values such as love, tolerance, forgiveness and accommodation of divergent views. In this way, peace was fostered as people of different countries in the region were able to live harmoniously and with tolerance. The study further revealed that the respondents agreed that religious leaders were crucial in promoting peace among the EAC community through critical decision making in times of crises.

Other respondents were of the view that through effective communication, tranquillity was achieved. The study revealed that through communication approaches, peace can be maintained through a number of ways, including, expressing concern about the failure of security forces to prompt and decisive responses to early warning signals of violent religious eruptions, exposing perpetrators of violence to punishment in view of the due process of the law, enforcing basic human rights and redress of wrongs through compensation, resolving to avoid the use of abusive language and being confrontational,

calling on the media to avoid biased and inciting journalism and to be truthful and objective in their reporting, recommending. Similarly, another of the respondents reiterated that the clergy ensured peace prevailed through prayers that were submitted to God during church services.

The study also established that the respondents agreed that religious leaders were engaged in peace diplomacy through inculcation of religious studies in the education system. In this way, learners are taught the importance of peace at a young age by virtues and are discouraged from engaging in vices at a young age. Many African societies believe in religion as the guide to virtuous living, and thus, when religion is introduced early in schools, a country raises better individuals that value life.

From interviews conducted, some respondents stated that religion played no role in fostering peace and cohesiveness in the EAC countries. The respondents believed that the passive approach taken by religion indicated that there was an absence of religion in regional influence. In fact, the respondents argued that religion fuelled instability as demonstrated by terror attacks believed to be orchestrated by one religion against another.

In Kenya, there have been instances of terror attacks by Al Shabab that spared the lives of Muslims but ended up killing and destroying properties that belonged to non-Muslims. For instance, after the killings that took place in Lamu in 2014, Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attacks. As earlier stated by one of the respondents who is a Muslim teacher, the religion seeks vengeance. It explains how Al Shabab admitted to these attacks, claiming that they were revenge for the Kenyan government's actions in Somalia.

Ultimately, locally there were local tensions due to the propaganda celebrating these attacks, which included a video entitled 'Reclaiming Muslim lands under Kenyan

Occupation’, released in Swahili and English, where Kenyan Imams from the coast region preached on how land from Mpekotoni was stolen by ‘disbelievers’ (Anderson & McKnight, 2015). Additionally, a sign was placed on the road stating ‘Muslims, it is your land. Your land is being taken away. Wake up and fight’ (Lind, Mutahi, & Oosterom, 2015).

### Thoughts on Religious Leaders in Relation to Peace Diplomacy

The study sought to determine the respondents’ thoughts on religious leaders’ role in peace diplomacy. The findings are presented in the narrative below. The study findings revealed that the majority of the respondents believed that religious leaders were instrumental in instilling peace principles among people. This was achieved through biblical teachings during sermons, crusades, and seminars. Religious leaders are believed to teach peaceful coexistence, especially among people of diverse religions. They teach about religious intolerance by encouraging brotherhood among divergent religious views. In this way, people believe in one Supreme Being, God, regardless of the different modes of worship.

The study revealed that corruption in the church leadership has affected the role of the religious leaders in speaking up against anything hindering peace diplomacy in the EAC. However, the respondents thought that religious leaders played a role in getting rid of church leaders from leadership. Corruption is an evil that can cause many problems, including threatening peace and stability. Through corruption, church leaders deviate from preaching about virtues and may end up radicalizing the youth, as witnessed in some parts of Kenya where the youth are radicalized against some perceived "enemy" religions. This is a big threat to unity and peaceful coexistence. The study further revealed that some

conflicts witnessed in EAC countries were fuelled by some religious leaders as indicated by the respondents.

On the Kenyan political front, leaders tend to use religion to avoid individual and collective responsibility. Politicians are fond of evoking God whenever they fail in performing their duties. "That's God's will" and "With God we will overcome" are popular scapegoats used by Kenyan political leadership in crisis situations such as poor service delivery and issues such as terror attacks (Gumo, Akuloba, & Omare, 2012).

Again, the research found out that terrorism and radicalization were other thoughts that religious leaders commonly mentioned in the peace diplomacy of the EAC.

This was through the radicalization of the youth, thus encouraging attacks on perceived ungodly religious adherents. An attack on one religion may trigger retaliation attacks, thus leading to religious conflicts that may balloon into even greater conflicts, thus threatening the peace of EAC countries due to spillover effects.

In this report, we draw on the UK Terrorism Act 2000 definition of terrorism as an action that endangers or causes serious violence to a person or people, causes serious damage to property, or seriously interferes or disrupts an electronic system. Consistent with this definition, the use or threat must be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause.

Religion has tried embraced utility and teaching its followers to avoid violence and killing innocent people, as the Bible says in Matthew 5:21: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to

judgment.' And the book of Exodus 23:7 stipulates that: "Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and righteous, for I will not acquit the wicked".

Therefore, the process of radicalization and terrorism are being condemned by the Bible, which is considered as the book of reference and was written to correct human errors.

On April 3, 2015, the Evangelical Alliance of Kenya, through its Board Chair Bishop Mark Kariuki, considers EAK as the voice of the church in the nation and is set to change the country, which is something national leaders, the government, and the opposition leaders have not done, except the church remains firm. This board has jointly issued press statements which resonate with their objective of advocacy and leadership on things impacting the spiritual, social, and economic welfare of the EAC and Kenya in particular. Additionally, the board intentionally used its influence to align with its other objective of facilitating conflict and dispute resolution and peacebuilding.

The Evangelical Alliance of Kenya (EAK) condemns, in the strongest terms possible, this shooting and killing of innocent students, and we echo the voices of other leaders and categorically state that this is unacceptable.

"We condole with the families of those who have lost their loved ones, their sons, daughters, relatives. Our prayers are with them during this very difficult period of their lives, and we pray that God will comfort them. We also send our condolences to students of Garissa University College, who lost their friends and colleagues during the unfortunate and regrettable incident. We share your pain and tears. For those who are injured and recuperating in hospitals, we pray that God gives them a quick recovery... we call on all Kenyans to be calm, and ask them to keep hope alive, for a better day in Kenya is dawning. To all God-fearing Kenyans, and Christians at large, to earnestly pray for our nation during

this Easter season. EAK will be calling for a National Day of Prayer in the next two weeks, and the date will be communicated later."

These press statements were made by religious leaders after the attacks on Garissa University College, the Africa Inland Church (AIC), and the Catholic Churches in Garissa.

With Christianity as the dominant religion, the church has played a key role in the politics of the country. (Kenga, 2014). Interestingly, another thought of religion and its leaders involves decision and policy making regarding peace diplomacy in the EAC.

Religious leaders are involved in numerous peace diplomacies, especially where parties that are in conflict need a mediator. A good example is negotiated government, where religious leaders are involved in power-sharing deals, leading to the creation of governments of national unity. This ensures that warring groups feel included in the government, hence leading to tranquility.

The study further revealed that the respondents were of the view that religious leaders were critical in ensuring human rights were not violated. Religious leaders have an important role in protecting people, especially the vulnerable, through their leadership and can challenge and shape social and cultural norms that condone violence. As trusted figures within their communities, religious leaders are uniquely positioned to promote the wellbeing of people and speak against oppressive practices such as violence.

## Areas in Which Religion Can Be Employed Towards Regional Peace Diplomacy in EAC

The second objective of the study was to establish areas in which religion can be employed towards regional peace diplomacy in the EAC region. This section presents some of the areas in which religion can be employed in regional peace diplomacy within the EAC. This part was related to question four of the interview, which sought to show how religious leaders are involved in promoting regional peace diplomacy. The areas in which religion can be used in promoting peace in the EAC were categorized as follows: war and conflict zones, political and security matters, sensitization forums, constitutionalism mandate, educational institutions, electoral process issues, decision-making process, and places of worship. The narrative analysis of this section will be presented below as follows.

The first area in which religion can be used in the peace diplomacy of the region includes war and conflict zones. Religious leaders and organizations such as the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission and the National Council of Churches of Kenya have positively contributed to peacebuilding and reconciliation in ethnic conflict areas in many ways. First, they have provided emotional and spiritual support to war-affected communities, effective mobilization for their communities and others for peace, mediation between conflicting parties and reconciliation, dialogue and negotiations, problem solving workshops, training in conflicts resolution and peace commissions (Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa & Community Peace and Development Project (National Council of Churches of Kenya), 2002).

The results of the study show that the respondents stated that one of the key areas in which religion can be employed to attain regional peace diplomacy is war and conflict

zones. Religion has served in the area of mobilization of communities, particularly youth, in the marginalized areas, to foster peace diplomacy in the EAC. These concepts involve a required religion to foster peace,

The study also discussed another area through which religion has been used to promote peace diplomacy in the EAC, which is the view of constitutionalism and human rights matters. This refers to defending the respect of the people, their gender and the rights of everyone.

In 2005, the Pentecostals rallied themselves and their members alongside the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) to reject the Bomas Constitution draft during the November election.

Referendum. The church rejected the draft because it provided for abortion and Islamic Kadhi courts. When the Committee of Experts drafted a new constitution, which was published by Parliament, the NCKK and the Catholic Church called for the removal of clauses allowing abortion and Kadhi courts, respectively, and wanted all religions to be treated equally. Christian denominations formed the Kenyan Christian Leaders Constitutional Forum (KCLFC) to oppose the draft by carrying out rallies and its symbol was red, which was used to signal danger.

Another area the church has used in the promotion of peace diplomacy is through educational institutions. Education is important for all people within a nation and the government invests heavily in the education of the communities. The government tries its best to educate its people. Therefore, religion, through its believers, has tried its best to develop an educational system that helps the government foster education for all citizens across the EAC. Depending on Aughinbaugh, Pierret, and Rothstein (2015), 26% of

students who worshiped at least weekly were more likely to perform and behave well than those who did not. This implies that there is a correlation between religious believers and success, which results in good mannerism and success in the future. If the people of the EAC are educated in the schools developed by religious believers, the higher the chances are that students will develop good manners and good leadership skills, which EAC member states need to solve their peace diplomatic issues.

Another area where religion has fostered peace diplomacy within the EAC is through its involvement in the electoral processes of the EAC member states. Religion and politics are linked. For example, in the run-up to the 2007 general election, churches were openly partisan along ethnic lines, depending on the ethnic backgrounds of their leaders. Again, religious leaders offered conflicting prophecies about who was to become president in the 2007-2008 general elections and even anointed them in public to signify that God had shown them the leader (Kenga, 2014). Furthermore, religion has involved itself in matters related to decision-making in the EAC member states. In Kenya, churches have given opportunities to invite politicians. NCKK has been used as a platform to air politicians' manifestos to the congregations, as the church is a ready crowd.

In Eldoret, Bishop Korir hid Kikuyu during the 2007 post-election violence. Mediations during the 2007 post-election violence were mainly done by the church. Unlike in Rwanda, where the government tried to mediate between people and electoral issues, However, in Kenya, the government has failed to mediate because leaders have failed to own their mistakes.

Finally, places of worship. This supports Nelsen et al.'s (2001) argument that religious affiliation is a powerful predictor of people's vote choices. Similarly, this concurs

with what Gopin, (2000) said about several areas for peacemakers by reading Christian materials, such as Mathew 7:1, and the ideology of judgment suspension of other religion; such as acting as a linkage to other monotheistic conventions that share similar moral values; and the theoretical approaches of crisis platforms for Christians where the actors were in a position to have extra-religious morale to humanize the other while at the same time suspending stereotypes during conventions.

### Specific Instances Religion Has Promoted Peace Diplomacy

The research sought to find out whether there are specific instances where religion has promoted peace diplomacy in the region of the EAC. Most of the participants said that religion plays a key role in conflict related matters, such as: genocide and tribal reconciliations, post-election violence, joint statements (religious conferences), religious prejudice and discrimination, the handshake and the multiparty fight. In the case of religious prejudice and discrimination, religion played a role in ending conflicts and wars that could be religiously related.

The findings disclose that the majority of the respondents alleged that religion was used in the post-election violence instance in reconciling tribes among people in Kenya. This was accomplished through religious conferences and joint statements.

Most of the respondents revealed that religion was specifically used during the genocide in Rwanda and tribalism disputes. Religion played a major role during the Rwandan genocide and Burundi skirmishes, the 2007 post-election violence in Kenya. For the refugees from both Hutu and Tutsi tribes to protect them against getting either massacred by Interahamwe or FPR.

For instance, during the Rwandan genocide, the Catholic church hosted tribalism as a foul within society. It resulted in conflicts which affected peace and unity among the people. Where there is tribalism, the church is not left untouched, and its leadership tends to either mitigate or side with the biggest contributors to the development of the church. For instance, in one of the interviews, the respondents told me that: "I abandoned my friend who changed his mind about which church to give the offering because the church was not supporting his tribal candidate" (Source: Field Data, 2021). In conclusion, tribalism is a huge threat to peace, mainly within rural areas and those predominated by one tribe.

The study further indicated that the handshake between the two strong political leaders in Kenya, Raila and Kenyatta, was made possible through religious leaders; the study further indicated that during the multiparty fight for democracy in Kenya, religious leaders were involved in these specific areas. One of the respondents during the conversation indicated that: "Religion has played a role in ending conflict and war that is attributed to religious prejudice and discrimination, i.e., in 1987, Kenyan Muslims and Kenyan Christians engaged in strife that led to the death of many believers from both faiths" (Source: Field Data, 2021).

From the findings, it was revealed that post-election violence was one of the specific areas where religion was used to promote peace diplomacy. A majority of EAC countries usually face post-election violence following disputed presidential elections. Parts of a country that are perceived to have their victory stolen may face unrest leading to wanton destruction of property and loss of lives. Religious leaders play an important role in ensuring that the sides that are opposed to results are brought to the table for dialogue to

ensure the stability of a country. As Gopin (2000) adds further, the religious fraternity is increasingly playing an essential and valuable role in international conflict resolution.

The study revealed another challenge, which is tribalism and ethnic violence. In most cases, the term "tribalism" is used as a synonym for ethnicity. Tribalism led the government of Kenya to lose the referendum. Tribalism is a bigger challenge in Kenya, as in the 2007 post-election violence that fuelled hatred and resulted in instability in several regions in the country. It affected the peace in the whole country.

The respondents mentioned genocide and tribalism wrangles as one of the specific instances where religion has promoted peace and diplomacy. Tribalism is rooted in countries where a nation is formed by more than two tribes. Tribalism breeds hatred that can spark genocide when triggered, especially by incitement by those in leadership positions.

A good example of genocide has occurred in Rwanda and Kenya in the wake of the killing of a president and disputed election violence, respectively. After such wrangles and killings, religion has promoted peace by preaching tolerance and bringing the warring communities together. Religion also promotes forgiveness since the majority of those who maim others are well known. This concurs with Frettingham & Hwang (2017), who indicate that religion is interlinked with nationalism in a state.

Other respondents believed that religion has promoted peace through religious conferences. At such conferences, people are sensitized to peaceful coexistence and the importance of living in peace with other people.

Further, the respondents felt that religion played a role in promoting peace, especially after the famous handshake between Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta and

opposition chief Raila Odinga, and especially after the opposition boycotted repeat general elections in 2018, leading to tension in Kenya.

### Challenges Faced by Religion in Promoting Regional Peace Diplomacy in The EAC Region

The study sought to assess the challenges faced by religion in promoting regional peace diplomacy in the EAC region. Most of the respondents interviewed said that interreligious beliefs were a main challenge which religion is facing while trying to promote peace diplomacy in the EAC. This section reports what respondents perceived as the main challenges of successfully promoting peace in the region. The challenges were categorized into five: Interreligious beliefs, bad leadership, extremism and terrorism, political divisions, tribalism and ethnic violence, gender inequality, and Westernization.

From the results of the study, the majority of the respondents believed that interfaith conflicts were the major challenges towards attaining regional peace. Interreligious conflicts, especially between Muslims and Christians, for example, hamper regional peace, especially in the EAC. The divergent religious views lead to bitter rivalry regarding which religion believes it worships the true God. This leads to disagreements on core values of the human race. Many a time, one of the warring religions may be unwilling to sit down and iron out issues with the other due to perceived unrighteousness.

The respondents also stated that bad leadership was a hindrance to regional peace. The respondents felt that political leaders are out to promote their selfish interests and block peace, since when there is instability, they profit from the misfortunes of the electorate. Other leaders are usually adamant about forming governments of national unity to accommodate the disgruntled side. This leads to prolonged political unrest. This is in

support of what Quandt (2005) expounded that religion is a major source of soft power and can either be used or misused by religious and governmental organizations to pursue their interests.

The study further identified another possible limitation to promoting peace in the EAC to be extremism and terrorism. The majority of the respondents narrated that extremism and terrorism have affected the peace diplomacy in the region. There are some religions and communities that are stigmatized wherever terrorist activity happens. This causes religious and tribal divisions, leading to instability in the region.

The study also found out that another limitation to regional peace diplomacy in the EAC includes tribalism, which is mostly triggered by political divisions. Tribalism is defined as a divide and rule tool initiated by the colonial regime. It was further adopted by most African countries to rule over their citizens. Tribalism is considered a disease that has existed for a very long time, and there has been little effort from political leaders to fight it as they tend to benefit from it. Ethnicity remains the strongest force that binds groups together more than even religion. It is because of this fact that it becomes difficult to eliminate it, and any attempt to do so, if we are not careful, may only remain at a mere verbal level. It is due to tribalism that most African countries are corrupt and inefficient, and eradicating it will not be simple. Even religion won't be able to do it. (Gumo, S. et al., 2012).

In Africa today, including Kenya, many people believe that churches should act as the conscience of the nation in regard to government matters such as speaking against corruption. Sometimes, religious leaders get compromised because of the ethnic division of their leadership and also do not criticize the government for the purpose of gaining

money from the politicians or when the leaders are from their ethnic background. This has had an impact on the development of African content, the EAC, and Kenya as a whole. In post-independence Kenya, the regimes of Kenyatta, Moi and Kibaki worked to create a multi-ethnic and a multireligious Kenya. (Kenga, 2014).

The study further purported that gender inequality is another challenge that religion has faced in the process of peace diplomacy in the EAC. In March 2017, the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) passed the EAC Gender Equality and Development Bill, and since then there has been improvement in conditions that affect women across the EAC partner states. Additionally, it contributed towards expanding opportunities for women on trade liberalization, particularly on trade, economic empowerment, and land rights.

Factors like gender inequalities and forms of marginalization bring religious leaders to incite violence which disrupts peace in the area (Basedau & Koos, 2015). From the findings of the study, the majority of the respondents indicated that Westernization has been seen as another challenge to the peace diplomacy in the region. Westernization is defined as adhering to the way of life of the West. It is done through education, belief systems, dressing, technology, and language. Some authors, such as Esiobu (2019), argue that for Africa to succeed, it ought to go back to its grassroot systems without depending much on the West. Reychler (1997) notes that religious institutions might also be in a position to influence conflict dynamics through abstaining from interventionist engagement.

### Possible Solutions to the Challenges

The findings of this section outlined the suggested ways religion can promote peace diplomacy in the EAC. These ways were categorized as follows: leadership advocacy, involvement in decision making and negotiations, speaking one voice, mutual tolerance, leadership equality representation, and creation of mentorship programmes.

The study revealed that the respondents respectively cited that religion can promote peace diplomacy through advocating for quality leadership and incorporating religious leaders in the decision making and negotiations processes across the region. Another group of respondents claimed that religion can promote peace diplomacy by speaking with one voice. This can be done when the religious leaders across the board come together in unison in addressing the matters related to peace in the region.

The research further posited that the respondents indicated that religion can promote peace when there is a mutual tolerance among different religions within the region, while other respondents pointed that religion can promote regional peace through equality representation in the leadership management of the states. For instance, Tanzania has been able to overcome this, when the president is from the Christian faith; the vice president comes from the Muslim faith and vice versa. The late Tanzanian president, John Pombe Magufuli, was of the Christian faith, while the vice president, Suluhu, came from the Muslim faith, and this has been written in the constitution. Nobody can reject that as it is written in the Tanzanian law.

The study indicated that religion can promote peace through creating mentorship programmes. This is done through religious institutions, training vulnerable and marginalized people to get involved in the state's affairs. But also, through educational

schools teaching public administration to youth and minorities. Further, I was eventually told by the respondents that: "Incorporating religious leaders in crucial decision making and peace campaigns. Ensuring different religions respect one another can promote peace among the people of different religions. "(Source: Field Data, 2021)

Based on the data collected from The Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa, it was reported that religion can promote peace diplomacy in the EAC through mutual tolerance, quality leadership advocacy, involving its leaders in national decision making, speaking with one common voice, gender and minorities' representation, and creating educational programmes to foster peace in the region. As Ornek & Ultan (2014) identify Gandhi's input on peace through advocating for Sarvadharmā Sambhav (secularism and peaceful co-existence of all religions), noting that this is the only means that can bring peace in the world, and thus promotes the approach of unity in multicentric living, noting that God is morality and ethics.

#### Summary of Key Findings

The main objective of this study was to establish the role of religion in regional peace diplomacy within the EAC. Specifically, examining people's perceptions of the potential of religion in regional peace diplomacy, establishing areas in which religion can be employed towards regional peace diplomacy in the EAC region, and assessing the challenges religion is facing in promoting regional peace diplomacy in the EAC region. The following is a summary of the key findings of the study:

1. People's perception of EAC and its main role were social, political and economic development; regional integration in one block, promotion of peace and unity in the

region, common judicial system, and conflict resolution institution within the region.

2. In most cases, religion was applied in the following areas: war and conflictual zones, political and security matters, mobilization forums, during the constitution amendments and when human rights are deviated or turned down; during the electoral process, in matters to do with decision making and worship places.
3. Religion has a positive involvement through prayers, dialogues with state leaders and politicians, and even through organizations such as NGOs.
4. Religion has a passive approach whereby religious leaders do not play a role or are silent where peace diplomacy is concerned.
5. The main challenges religion faced during the promotion of peace diplomacy were: inter-faith conflicts, mediocre leadership, radicalization and extremism, tribalism, gender inequality, and adoption of Western cultures.

### Summary

This chapter has presented the data analysis and interpretation of the findings to the three research questions examined in the study, namely the people's perception of the potential of religion in EAC peace diplomacy; the areas in which religion has been used towards regional peace diplomacy in the EAC; and the challenges religion faces in promoting regional peace diplomacy in the EAC.

The study found that people had a couple of perceptions of religion in the EAC, like advocating for peace, connecting people, limited functions, constitutional rights advocacy, involvement in the national decision-making process, source of conflicts and resolution tools, electoral process, among others. Concerning the areas in which religion

can be used towards peace diplomacy in EAC, the study found that war and conflicts, political and security, mobilization forums, the constitution and human rights, educational institutions, elections, decision-making and places of worship were areas employed to promote peace in EAC. Political debates, mass prayer ceremonies, and schools were used. Seminars and worship places were also employed towards regional peace diplomacy in the EAC.

The study further found that the challenges religion faced in promoting regional peace diplomacy were inter-faith conflicts, bad governance, extremism, political divisions, tribalism, gender inequality, and westernization acculturation.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study in relation to the role of religion on regional peace diplomacy in the EAC guided by the objectives. The chapter also discusses the research methodology, and its major findings, the results of each objective in this study with comparison to empirical studies reviewed. Conclusions are then provided from the study; recommendations for improvement and further studies are also clearly stated in relation to the examination of the role of religion in peace diplomacy in EAC regional states.

#### Discussions of Key Findings

##### Public's Perception of The Potential of Religion in Regional Peace Diplomacy

. The study established that people perceive the EAC as an intergovernmental institution, and religion plays a role in certain aspects that include promotion of social, political and economic development, regional integration, promoting peace and unity, regional judicial system and conflict resolution tool within the region. With regards to the respondents' perception of the main roles of the EAC, the findings indicate that the three major roles were socio-political and economic development, regional integration, and championing for peace and unity. The EAC promoted economic growth by allowing trade and free cross-border movements of goods among member countries. The free movement meant that there was integration, since barriers of movement were eliminated, and the

region was considered as a single block within the African continent. Furthermore, the study revealed that EAC was critical in bringing about regional integration, as evidenced by the respondents who affirmed that the region was more united in solving its challenges socially, economically, and even politically.

#### Areas in Which Religion Has Been Applied in Regional Peace Diplomacy

The study established that religion has played an active passive role in regional peace diplomacy in the EAC. An active approach in which religion has an impact on regional peace diplomacy is that based on the religious beliefs of some, such as Christians, peace has always prevailed within the region since people strive for peace with one another as dictated by biblical teachings and other religious teachings.

It was also revealed that through religion, sustained prayers were conducted to pray for peace, love and unity. The respondents believed that religion was an effective tool used to spread messages of peace and cohesiveness through the diversity of religions. A good example in Kenya is the national prayer day conducted yearly and headed by the head of state. The prayer day brings together leaders from all cadres, including religious, community, and political leaders, who put aside their differences and put the country before personal selfish gains to call for cohesiveness.

However, the study also revealed that though religion played a role in ensuring peace, it was also a cause for conflicts. Religious diversity exacerbates tensions. This has been witnessed, especially during terror attacks when a particular religion is accused of being a terrorist sympathizer. This breeds animosity and tensions that, if not checked, could be a spark to fuel violence and threaten peace.

The study further sought to bring to light different ways in which religious leaders were involved in the promotion of peace. The findings revealed that the majority (45.16) of the respondents believed that religious leaders used value promotion as an effective way to promote peace. The respondents believed that the teaching of values such as love, forgiveness, tolerance, and respect for contrary opinions led to the fostering of tranquility. The study also established that through decision making, especially in times of conflict, the clergy were instrumental in calling for dialogue and toning down resentments that could threaten peace.

#### Challenges Faced by Religion in Promoting Peace Diplomacy in the EAC

Some of these challenges include interreligious beliefs, bad leadership, extremism and terrorism, political dynamics, gender inequality, tribalism and ethnic violence and westernization.

It can therefore be concluded that some ways that religion can promote peace in the EAC were: quality leadership advocacy, involvement of religious leaders in decision making and negotiations, mutual respect across inter-faith denominations, equality representation in leadership, and creation of mentorship programmes. Quality leadership advocacy was found to be one of the most effective ways in which religion can be used to promote peace diplomacy in the EAC. This concept implies that religious leaders in the contemporary conflict arena have become increasingly engaged in active and efficient tasks as advocates, educators, observers, pursuers, and intermediaries of transitional justice. (Kadayifci, 2009).

Religion can promote peace and diplomacy in the following ways: promoting unity among diverse cultures, religions, and races; providing platforms for dialogue and

conflict resolution; and supporting the socioeconomic well-being of conflict and disaster-affected communities" (Source: Field Data, 2021).

### Conclusion

As noted earlier in chapter one and two of this study, war is inevitable in an anarchic international system; diplomacy is therefore used as a tool to promote peace and stability between and among states. The EAC is not spared from wars and conflicts, among others, which necessitate diplomacy. In this context, religion has a great impact on peace diplomacy as it shapes the opinions and policies of states, thus affecting their foreign policies economically, socially, and politically.

This study focused on determining the role of religion in regional peace diplomacy in the EAC within the period of 2001-2020. In-depth interviews were carried out among 30 EAC members who were asked to narrate their knowledge and main role of EAC, the role of religion in the promotion of EAC peace diplomacy, challenges or limitations hindering this process and possible solutions to overcome the limitations.

### Recommendations

The study made the following recommendations on the basis of the objectives, main findings of the study, and conclusions:

1. There is a need to train more religious leaders in matters of peacemaking in the EAC region. This would help them to overcome the challenges that are faced by religion in terms of diversity of beliefs and mutual respect and tolerance regarding peace diplomacy across the region. Making them knowledgeable about peace

diplomacy in a way that is relevant to their working capacity and allowing them to use this.

2. The religious leaders across the EAC should be trained on matters regarding peace diplomacy, conflict resolution, tribalism, and ethnic violence among others towards coexistence.
3. The government and other stakeholders should support the religious leaders' educational systems and mentorship programmes towards peace diplomacy promotion in the EAC.
4. Religion doctrines should be incorporated in the EAC member states' constitutions as policy related to law to allow the implementation of peaceful coexistence among the communities within the EAC borders.
5. Peace diplomacy should be included in the EAC educational system as a core-curriculum in order to promote this concept among learners at all levels.
6. Religious leaders should be involved in matters regarding the national decision-making process.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

The following recommendations for further research are based on the summary of findings, conclusions, and implications of the study:

1. This study was carried out for only one-member state of the EAC, Kenya. It is recommended that the study be replicated among the four other member states to compare the perceptions of religion in regional peace diplomacy, areas in which religion can be used and challenges religion faces in the promotion of peace diplomacy.

2. Another piece of research can be replicated among religious leaders in the other four-member states in order to see whether the findings will be compared and contrasted with the case of Kenya.
3. The researcher recommends that research be done on how religion affiliation influences economic growth in the EAC region.
4. Future studies could use a larger sample size so as to generate more findings.
5. The study further recommends future research on the influence of religion on local governance in the sustainability of peace and conflict resolution in the EAC block.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Researcher's Letter of Introduction to Respondents

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a master's student of Diplomacy, Development and International Security at Daystar University, carrying out research on "The Role of Religion in Regional Peace Diplomacy: The Case of the East African Community, 2001-2020." The main objectives include:

1. To examine people's perception of the potential of religion for regional peace diplomacy in EAC
2. To evaluate areas in which religion has been applied in regional peace diplomacy
3. To assess the challenges faced by religion in promoting peace diplomacy in the EAC region.

I would really appreciate if you would spare some time to respond to the questions herein. The data collected is strictly for the purpose of writing the MA thesis and I purpose to maintain confidentiality. Your response is highly valued and will adhere to the ethical considerations that govern the research process.

Yours Faithfully,

Jane Miano

(19-1619)

## Appendix B: Interview Guide

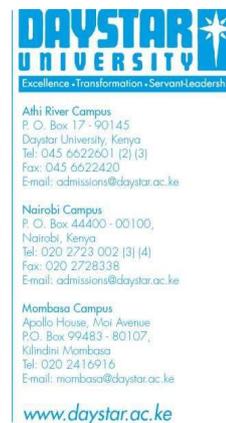
The researcher will make a self-introduction and introduce the purpose of the interview and thank the interviewee for availing time for the interview. The following are the interview questions that the researcher will ask the selected interview respondents:

1. What do you know about the EAC and its main role?
2. What impact does religion have on regional peace diplomacy?
3. How are religious leaders involved in promoting regional peace diplomacy?
4. What are your thoughts on religion and religious leaders in relation to peace diplomacy in the EAC?
5. What areas has religion been applied in regional peace diplomacy?
6. Are there specific instances where religion has been used to promote peace diplomacy in the EAC?
7. What are the possible limitations of religion in promoting peace diplomacy?
8. In what ways do you think religion can promote peace diplomacy in the EAC?

## Appendix C: Researcher's Introduction Letter from Daystar University

Wednesday, May 5, 2021

The Director General  
National Commission for Science,  
Technology and Innovation  
P.O. Box 30623 – 00100  
NAIROBI – KENYA



Dear Sir/ Madam

**RE: JANE MICERE MIANO (19-1619)**

The above named is a MA student in the Department of Peace and International Studies at Daystar University. She has successfully defended her thesis proposal entitled, **“THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN REGIONAL PEACE DIPLOMACY: THE CASE OF THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY, 2001-2020.”** I would be grateful if you could grant her a research license to enable her undertake her field research.

Yours Sincerely,



Mrs. Sylvia Wakene Muriuki  
HoD, Department of Peace and International Studies

“...until the day dawn and the **daystar**  
arise in your hearts”  
**2 Peter 1.19 KJV**



Appendix E: Research Permit

**REPUBLIC OF KENYA**  
National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation

**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION**

Ref. No: **585582** Date of Issue: **12 July 2021**

**RESEARCH LICENSE**



This is to Certify that Miss. Jane Mwangi Mwangi of Daystar University, has been licensed to conduct research in Nairobi on the topic: **THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN REGIONAL PEACE DIPLOMACY: THE CASE OF THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY, 1961-2020** for the period ending: **12 July 2022**.

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## Appendix F: Research Authorization from the Ministry of Education



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[cdenairobi@gmail.com](mailto:cdenairobi@gmail.com)

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 NYAYO HOUSE  
 P.O. Box 74629 – 00200  
 NAIROBI

When replying please quote

Ref: RDE/NRB/RESEARCH/1/65 Vol.1

DATE: 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2021

Jane Micere Miano  
 Daystar University

**RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION**

We are in receipt of a letter from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation regarding research authorization in Nairobi County on the topic: *"The Role of Religion in Regional Peace Diplomacy: The Case of the East African Community, 2001-2020."*

This office has no objection and authority is hereby granted for a period, ending 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2022 as indicated in the request letter.

Kindly inform the Sub County Director of Education of the County you intend to visit.



**HESBON NYAGAKA**  
**FOR: REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**  
**NAIROBI.**

Copy to: Director General/CEO  
 National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation  
**NAIROBI.**



## Appendix G: Plagiarism Report

Jane Micere Miano (19-1619)

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