Since independence there is widespread grievance among Kenyan Muslims who feel that the mainly Christian regime treats them as second-class citizens and discriminate economically and politically. The government, for its part, has fears that the influence of some foreign and local radical Muslims could disrupt peace and security in Kenya. The 1992-1994 Muslim disturbances along the coast, the twin bombings of the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam in 1998, and the recent bombing of a tourist hotel in Mombasa in which all-Muslims were suspected, revealed a level of organization and claimed responsibility intensify these fears. Never- theless the vast majority of Kenyan Muslims are moderate, reject violence and work to achieve equal rights by peaceful means.

Kenya's six million Muslims form a significant minority within the predominantly Christian population. Their large number, com- bined with the fact that most of them are concentrated in economically and strategically important areas, gives the Muslims, at least potentially, considerable political weight. This is especially true in the towns there, such as Mombasa, Malindi, and Lamu, Muslims account for more than 50 per cent of the population. On this strip lie the majority of whom are Muslims), Arabs, and people from various African ethnic groups that have adopted Islam. Another important group of Muslims in Kenya are the Somalis, who live in the Northern provinces. Their number is estimated at about 600,000. There are also considerable numbers of Muslims in the large towns, including Nairobi. Among Kenya's Muslims there are various groups and denomina- tions. It is widely believed that if Islamic penetration into the area came primarily from Hadramaut, to the south of the Arabian Peninsula, and was spread by Sunni Shafi'i scholars, the great majority of Kenya's Mus- lims are Sunni of the Shafi'i school.

The Kenyan government, like the govern- ments of Uganda, Tanzania, and most African countries, prohibits the formation of political parties based on religion. There- fore, religious leaders - Muslims and Chris- tians alike - set up ‘religious’ or ‘social’ organi- zations through which they can express their views and satisfy their aspirations. Some Muslim organizations have come and gone. Some of them were regional or sectional, others nationwide. They are supposed to deal with social, educational, national, and religious matters. Nevertheless, these organizations have frequently become involved in political concerns. The authorities in Kenya, like those in Uganda and Tanzania, have them- selves established Muslim umbrella organi- zations and worked through them to obtain Muslim support and to influence and super- vise their activities. Many of the key posi- tions in these organizations are occupied by Muslims who support the government, among them assistant ministers and senior government or ruling-party officials. The main Muslim umbrella organization is the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUP- KEM).

Since independence, the authorities have seen to it that Muslims are represented in the government - in the ruling party and in public institutions. Muslims have generally been represented in government by two or three assistant ministers who are loyal to the regime, out of a total of forty to fifty ministers and assistant ministers. The Mus- lim assistant ministers generally come from a very small circle. When President Moi came to power in 1978, Muslims were gen- erally not well represented and, for the first time, two Muslim ministers were appointed. Furthermore, in 1982, a Somali Muslim Chief of Staff was appointed. After the 1997 elec- tions, there were 30 Muslim MPs out of 210 MPs (14.2 per cent).

There have been other concessions that the government has made since indepen- dence to gain Muslim support, in both periods of municipal, parliamentary, and presidential elections, when the political importance of the Muslim vote is especially noticeable. Among these concessions were: making the Muslim festival of Id al-Fitr a national public holiday in Kenya; enshirning the principle of the separation of church and state, a principle that President Moi's regime has been watching especially closely. Nevertheless, these organizations, on the grounds that they posed a political threat to the government, were shut down only Muslim NGOs imme- diately after the bombing, the government had put the sin of responsibility on the Muslim community. President Moi met with SUPREME leaders and made some conciliatory gestures to the Muslims, but radical Mus- lims continued to criticize the government and the West in general and the US in particular. This division between moder- ates and radical, as well as ethnic, religious, political, and personal rivalries within the Muslim community, weaken them in their confrontation with the regime.

It is likely that Islam as a religion will fur- ther expand and gain strength in Kenya. In its non-extremist form, it may well assume a greater political role in the light of the polit- ical progress Muslims are making in the field of education and the increasing numbers of Muslim intellectuals, journalists, and politi- cians. The prolonged struggle against govern- ment policies has fostered Muslim solidi- ty and the government's refusal to recognize the party caused violent distur- bances there in May 1992. This was the first of a series of clashes between IPK and government forces that continued sporadically for nearly two years.

Since independence, the authorities have recognized Muslim grievances and deep feelings of discrimina- tion. The colonial era and since indepen- dence, Muslims have repeatedly com- plained that the main Christian regime discriminates against them and treats them as second-class citizens. For example, they are not always using the same hospitals and institutions. But colonialism was the most culturally advanced group and the rulers of Kenya's coastal regions whereas today Muslims are less advanced than the Christians and lag behind in educa- tion. They have been denied land owner- ship, while Christians from the interior have been given land on the coastal strip and control the main sources of income there, especially tourism.

Against this background of Muslim dissatis- faction, a young shahid, Khalid Balala, ap- peared on the scene and became the main exponent of Islamic extremism in Kenya dur- ing the violent disturbances of 1992-1994. Balala demanded the legalization of the IPK, that President Moi's regime be overthrown, and accused him of being a traitor and in clandestine. He also called on Muslims to be strict in observing Islamic practices, especially daily prayers. He also called on Muslims to be strict in observing Islamic practices, especially daily prayers. He also called on Muslims to be strict in observing Islamic practices, especially daily prayers. He also called on Muslims to be strict in observing Islamic practices, especially daily prayers. He also called on Muslims to be strict in observing Islamic practices, especially daily prayers. He also called on Muslims to be strict in observing Islamic practices, especially daily prayers.

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