The Influence of Islam in Curbing Terrorism Activities in Eastleigh Community, Kamukunji Constituency, Nairobi, Kenya

By

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Abstract

Kenya has had its fair share of terrorism attacks, most of which have been linked to adherents of Islam, raising the question on Islam as a factor in terrorism. Although, the potential influence of Islam on terrorism has emerged, questions continue to abound as the nature of the influence. To address this gap, this study established the influence of Islamic religion on terrorism in Kenya with reference to Eastleigh community, in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The study was conducted in Eastleigh because it has the highest proportion of Muslims in Nairobi County. This study was necessitated because of the rise of global and local terrorism with potential links to religion. The objective of the study was to establish the influence of Islam in curbing terrorism activities. The study is beneficial to various stakeholders who will benefit from the recommendations: This includes both the county and national government level who may use the recommendation of the study to improve both religious and education policies; Muslim preachers who may use the findings of the study to revise their teaching methodologies; CBO's and NGO's engaged in counter-terrorism may use the findings to develop new strategies and to the academic community by enhancing knowledge. The theory of Islamic theory of fundamentalist and instrumental theory of terrorism guided the study. The study was based on cross-sectional descriptive study design. Eastleigh, total population as per the year 1999 was 172,407. The study's target population comprised of Muslims with no definite population size as there exists not accurate statistics. Sample size of the study was 349 respondents, with the study using cluster sampling and convenience sampling to collect data from Muslims while purposive sampling was used to collect data from key informants. Data was collected through the use of questionnaire and interview guide. Questionnaire was administered to the Muslim while interview guide was administered to Sheikhs, Imams and Madrassa teachers. Validity and reliability of the findings was ensured through pilot study, expert reviews and thick description. Cronbach Alpha test was used to analyze the pilot data for reliability. Thematic analysis and content analysis were used in the study to analyze the qualitative data while quantitative data was analyzed through SPSS version 24 and this involved descriptive analysis and cross tabulation. Findings show that majority of the respondents believed that Islamic doctrine contributes to terrorism in some way. The results also showed that majority of the respondents believed that Islamic practices does not contribute to terrorism. From the results it was established that majority of the study respondents believe that Islam is opposed to terrorism. Thus, it can be concluded that Islamic religion has contributed to terrorism to the degree that Islamic doctrines have been misused by Islamic fundamentalists. Additionally, the study suggests that Islamic religion is a religion of peace that can be used to combat terrorism. The study recommends the need for government to use Islamic religion as a counter-terrorism strategy.

Key words: Kenya, Nairobi, Kamukunji, Influence, Terrorism, Islam, Curbing, Terror, Eastleigh

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Background to the Study

According to Rapport (2004), he states that terror has always formed part of social existence. However, he notes that there has been an increase in frequency of terror which is no longer restricted to any country but now has become a transnational phenomenon due to its evolving mode of conflict and introduction of religious viewpoints.

Hasenclever and Rittberge (2010) suggest that the relationship between terrorism and religion started thousands of years back. This is also noted by Rapport (2004) who researched terrorism and terror in three religions; Judaism, Hinduism and Islam. Although the concerns of religion as potential factor in terrorism has been acknowledged by aforementioned authors, this debate is seen as inconclusive as religion is wide and vast, with many religions such as Christianity, Islam, African Traditional religions and Buddhism. In this particular study, the researcher singled out Islamic religion, which formed the basis of this research study in relation to combating terror and terrorism in the specific selected area of study, which is Eastleigh of the Nairobi city county Kenya.

Terror and terrorism are generally inclined towards religion which is founded upon various doctrines, teachings and practices. According to Borum (2011), there are many ways of countering violent extremism whose main concern should be to curb the influx associated with massive recruitment of new recruits. One way by which it can be done is through the management of radicalization processes that involves acquiring extremist's beliefs which promotes anti-terror related groups. It is clear that, for a person to join a group he/she needs to identify with the people represented by the group itself. New recruits and the prospective members are to have the need and a feeling of belonging and to relate with others in the group such as a religious grouping (Preece, Nonnecke & Andrews, 2004).

A good number of followers among the terror groupings are not only attracted by ideologies but they are also induced to join these groupings due to poverty, lack of knowledge about the groupings and inducement by material benefits. Lofland and Skonovd (2012), identify six peculiar motifs of religious conversion. The motifs offer unique experiences that make the process of conversion individual, which eventually might lead to a person being radicalized. The six motifs are: mystical, intellectual, affection, experimental, coercive and revivalist. Therefore, in the management of terrorism that results from religious association, it is important that these six motifs be analyzed to establish their effect in the radicalization process of an individual. Gunning and Jackson (2011), point out that religious extremists have intentions which are strict, improbable, absolutist, lacking political practicality and are hostile to any negotiation. There is need to manage the proliferation of this form of terrorist and getting to understand how religion is getting to influence their thinking (Crenshaw, 1981).

Juergensmeyer (2010), opines that violence and religion have had a close relationship since the inception of religion, as religion has made it easy for terrorist groups to easily recruit perpetrators. Terror and terrorism are justifiably accompanied by a religious force and support of a world view or organization. Religion is thus at times used along other influences and occasionally seen as the main incentive.

Religious extremism is thus closely linked to existing forces of geopolitics (Cavanaugh, 2009; Juergensmeyer, 2017). In Africa, terror has taken various forms and magnitudes. For instance, in Nigeria, the Boko Haram has had different views from the government despite the various calls for its abolishment among religious and political leaders (Sampson, 2016; Onapajo & Usman, 2015). In Central Africa, a major terror group identified as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) with roots in Syria and Iraq has had a direct impact in government operations as a post Al-Qaeda jihadist threat (Cronin, 2015). Now, what was once a gentle extremist existence in Sub-Saharan Africa is converting into a movement, with countries such as Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) now providing arms and funds to the radical jihadist crusaders under Al Qaeda (Gunning and Jackson, 2011). The recent bombings in Kenya and Somalia among others clearly indicate evidence that intercontinentally funded terrorist linkages have taken root within the hearts and minds of the Sub-Saharan Africa people posing great challenges in the world (Howard, 2010).

In Kenya, different violent groups have more or less similar ideologies which are founded on some traditional or local beliefs. According to Wachenje, (2015), the outlawed Mungiki Sect which traces its origin from Central Kenya, the Mombasa Republican Council, the Chinkororo in Kisii and the most recent is Al-shaabab in Nairobi which has taken unique names like Super power. For example, Mungiki sect members go through rituals such as drinking blood and eating raw meat as a rite of passage before engaging in their activities.

Not only do they drink blood but they are dipped in water, sprayed with blood and water by traditional herbs men as they take oath of allegiance to the sect. The practice of the Mungiki sect and the Mombasa Republican Council are terror like as they engage in fee collection from businessmen for "protection". They mount unauthorized roadblocks and extort money among the civilians. All the above are acts committed by militia and terror groups. These militia and terror-like groups have challenged states security machineries. They are used as tools of violence by political and economic actors to create fear in lives of others and to create more human insecurity. One main terrorist group that has led to insecurity in recent times is Al-Shabaab, which to a great extent has thrived under the disguise of religion dogma called Jihad (Wachenje, 2015).

The Jihad issue is a dogma with profound religious foundation that terrorists' groups such as Al-Shabaab use to attract potential terrorists (Mbogo, 2014). The growth of Al-shabab in recent times has thrived due to marketization through use of Qoran in radicalization of Muslims. This has to a greater extent entailed explaining to the Muslims the causes of their misery and how to eliminate it through terrorism activities (Raymond, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

Kenya's Vision 2030 is a key development guideline in which the social pillar proposes living harmoniously as a community in an atmosphere that is free from crime and safe. Social cohesion is thus inevitable if political and economic stability have to be secured. Despite the Government's vision of a society devoid of terrorism, terrorism acts have continued to occur in Kenya. In the recent past, Kenya has experienced a number of terrorist attacks: Garissa university attack in 2015, Westgate attack in 2014 and the Dusit D2 attack in 2019. The aforementioned attacks have been carried out by persons of Muslim faith raising the question on the possible role of Islam religion on terrorist attacks in Kenya. Thus, the rise of terrorism in Kenya has led to renewed interest on the possible role of Islam on terrorism in Kenya. Despite this interest, the influence of Islam on terrorism still remains an area yet to be explored. This study sought to examine the influence of Islamic religion on terrorism in Eastleigh, Nairobi County in Kenya.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of Islam in curbing terrorism activities in Eastleigh, Kamukunji in Nairobi.

Objective of the Study

To establish the influence of Islam in curbing terrorism activities in Eastleigh, Kamukunji in Nairobi.

Research Question

To what extent does Islam influence curbing terrorism in Eastleigh, Kamukunji in Nairobi?

Rationale of the Research

Global and regional reports on terrorism link terror activities to religion. Islam is vehemently fighting terrorism and terror activities although at minor scales. However, the very activities undertaken by them and the youth themselves in fighting against more recruitment and training in terror need be clearly understood. This has thus prompted the intention to conduct a study on the influence of Islam religion in combating terrorism.

Scope of the Study

The study focused on the influence of Islamic religion on terrorism. Specifically, this included: influence of Islamic doctrine on terrorism, influence of Islamic practices on terrorism and influence of Islam in curbing terrorism. The research was conducted in Eastleigh community to establish the influence of Islamic religion in combating terrorism from 2017 November to 2018 November. The study involved Muslim members in Eastleigh.

Literature Review

Many scholars who have delved in the field of security and criminology, have concluded that religion, be it Islam, Christian, Buddhist, Traditional African and beliefs or any other faith is not the cause neither is it the source when it comes to harboring of the terror perpetrators (Watson, 2012). It is important to take care when discussing how the Islamic religion has influenced important social issues since not all religions have the same influence in such matters. Thus this section sought to highlight the various ways through which Islam religion has impacted on terrorism.

Islamic Doctrine

Venkatraman (2007), in his study on the religious basis for Islamic terrorism through the Quran, revealed that the emergence of violent Jihad has been influenced to a greater extent through extreme religious interpretations of the Quran. Through such interpretation Islamist terrorists have been able to legitimize their movement as allowed by the doctrines of Quran, Martyrdom doctrine playing a major role on Islamic radicalization. Thus, terrorists use Quranic clauses to sanction their terrorist acts as an ordinance given by God to help in the preservation of the Shariat in an Islamic community.

Venkatraman suggests that the religious legitimacy of terrorists exists so long as it can be supported by doctrinal interpretation from the Quran. A study conducted by Hutchins (2017), on Islam and suicide terrorism argues through the findings that the doctrinal issues of sacrifice, martyrdom and jihad are Islamic concepts that have been distorted and exploited by the Islamic State (IS) to pursue an extreme Pan-Islamic vision. The exploitation of these ideologies has provided a basis for exploitation of Islam in recruitment of terrorists who sacrifice their lives for

Islamic cause. Islam is thus viewed as providing an ideological basis for justification to the terrorist acts. The use of such false legitimacy has led to increased radicalized recruits who are motivated to kill and die to support IS violent goals.

Although the Quran forbids suicide, terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda and IS have been able to reframe suicide as martyrdom. These groups relate martyrdom with jihad to motivate terrorists in joining for their cause as a way of redemption. Further these groups have hijacked sacred moral practices in Islam by distorting them to create real enemies such as US occupying forces and existential enemies" such as Western values. For instance, the us" (jihadists) against "them" (kafir) sacred practices has also facilitated followers of extremist ideologies to kill oneself, other Muslims and non-Muslims under the pretext of religious adherence.

Another study by Gregg (2014), was aimed at defining and distinguishing secular and religious terrorism by looking at the motivation and the goals of religious terrorism. The study revealed that the perversion of Quran ideologies has served as a way for terrorism groups to further their agenda in recruiting, motivating and sustaining their cause both in short run and long run. Additionally, Quran has offered the opportunity for charismatic leaders to emerge with extreme ideology, particularly on Jihadism to inspire more followers.

Holbrook (2010), in a study on the use of the Qur'an to justify terrorist violence demonstrated that the selective use of Quran comprises of a central pillar in furthering the militant nature of terrorist groups. This is because the selective referencing is strengthened through religious deliberations which also cite numerous Hadith and other religious sources. For instance, referencing through the term "kafir" has promoted terrorist targets through the use of certain Quran texts to support their terrorism goals. This entails ignoring the verses that calls for peaceful co-existence of human beings and dwelling on verses that allow them to justify their acts. The study concludes that application of the teachings of the Qur'an is altered and tailored to pursue militant Islamist narrative.

In a study conducted by Ben Touhami Meftah (2018), on the roots of terrorist crimes it was suggested that there is no link that points to Islam as the exact source of terrorism, with the study suggesting that roots of terrorist acts can be better linked to cultural typologies of revenge. The doctrines of Islam do not perpetuate terrorist principles but perversion of Islam way of life thus offering an opportunity for some to further terrorism. For instance the study reveals that one common verse that has been used to promote terrorist acts is the one that states " So whoever has assaulted you, then assault him in the same way that he has assaulted you" (Saheeh International, 2:194).

Terrorists with the Sunni ideology believe any crime committed deserves a reciprocal act thus justifying act such as burning of members perceived as disloyal. Finally, Antwi-Boateng (2017), suggested that the use of Islamic doctrines, albeit through its perversion has allowed for the mushrooming of charismatic leaders such as Hassan AlBana of the Muslim Brotherhood, Osama Bin Laden and Ayman Zawaheri of al Qaeda, and Abubakar Al Baghdadi of ISIS. This has led to emergence of leaders in various parts of Africa who pledge loyalty to these leaders. For instance, the leader of Boko Haram, Ahmed Shekau, has publicaly pledged allegiance to the leadership of ISIS. These leaders capitalize on the use of sermons based on doctrines derived from the Quran to inspire their followers from across the world to further their goals. From the aforementioned studies, it is evident that significant number of the studies have been conducted on Islamic doctrines and terrorism. However, these studies have focused on only the countries that are dominated by Muslim community, with limited studies focusing on countries with Muslim as minority groups. Thus, this study sought to address this gap in the context of Kenya.

Influence of Islam

Cavanaugh (2009) suggests that Islam in Arabic translates equates to a religion that pursues peace and submission to Allah. He thus emphasizes that peace is the overriding concept in Islam and the goal of Islam is for an individual to be at peace with Allah, and thereafter human being. To achieve peace with the human family, Islam places heavy emphasis on doing the will of Allah by becoming responsible for his actions to other humans. Thus, they posit that Islam as a religion of peace requires an individual to be responsible for his/her actions, and thus Islam in its entirety cannot promote violence. Islam as a religion of peace and tranquility puts emphasis on virtues such as compassion, tolerance and patience. While teaching loyalty to Allah. A Muslim is one who avoids harming either through his hand or tongue. Great importance is attached to Jihad and not terrorism as Hadith and Quran does not promote the use of sword or gun.

Peace as per Islamic tradition is espoused on the verses on Quran, the Hadith and Sunna on conflict resolution through nonviolence. According to Malik & Rafaqi (2012) Islam promotes peace through social justice which occurs through the practice of Islamic values that entails the following: 'values such as unity, supreme love of the creator, mercy, control of passion, and accountability for one's actions. The principle of social justice, Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana & Abu-Nimer (2005) argue is promoted through Jihad virtue and values. Jihad in light of Quran can be achieved through tongue, heart or hand but greater Jihad occurs in the heart and leads to control of one's weakness. According to Malik & Rafaqi (2012), Jihad occurs at the command of Allah who demands an introspection as a way of pursuing peace and moral responsibility. This assertion supports the findings of Hasenclever & Volker (2010) who associate jihad in Islam with the sole purpose of promoting directly nonviolence in the form of actions such as respect, courage oppression, wisdom and love. Pal (2014), in his study that sought to establish the role of Islam in promoting non-violence concludes that Islam promotes forbearance and not vengeance, as it believes vengeance belongs to Allah. The study affirms that Islam practices are espoused in love, compassion, kindness and accountability and thus any thought of Islam promoting violence is banished from the Quran.

In a study conducted by Akhter, Munir, & Khattak (2015), the authors argue against views that reflect Islam as an extremist religion. The authors posit that Islam has no space and consent for extremism to frighten people in any case. Accordingly, the authors suggest that Islam doctrines aim at developing one's own spirit to the highest moral standards of humanity and also encourage others to follow the right path and to prevent them from wrongdoings. Thus they see Islam as hinged on rooting out evil and promoting peace; Islam invite people towards good and oppose wrong. Those who accept the invitation and embrace Islam are called Muslims and Ummah as a whole, who make efforts to set up and enforce goodness and eradicates and suppresses evils.

The Islamic teachings never allow any Muslim to kill other Muslims or humans, and even a small creature without any reason (Hamidi, 2016). Islam as opposed to terrorism establishes a great system of morality and virtue. To this extent Islam has great potential in purifying the souls from egotism, brutality, violence, prejudice, intolerance, immorality and undisciplined traits. Islam strongly implants a conviction in the heart of a human, that his all dealings are with Allah, Who sees him at all times and in all places. Islam urges its followers to look forward to the great judgment where all will be accountable, whether they have committed bad deeds or good deeds (Kaplan, 2017).

Research Methodology and Design

Research methodology is the process used to gather data and information for the purposes of making informed decisions. Research is a scientific and systematic search for relevant information

on a specific topic (Kothari, 2014). The study uses both qualitative and quantitative research methodology. Precisely, the methodology was a proportionate mixed method (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004 & Almalki 2016). Quantitative data was collected through questionnaire while qualitative data was collected through key informant interviews.

The study used cross-sectional descriptive study design. Cross sectional descriptive design is selected because it is particularly suitable for establishing relationship between variables. Further, cross sectional descriptive can contribute to enhancing the results from data collected through questionnaire. In addition, the research design was useful in addressing any emerging existing inconsistencies that emerge from the findings. Finally, the research design allows the use of different methods to extend breadth and scope of various components of the study.

Research Findings and Discussions
The study sought to establish how Islamic doctrine has influenced terrorism. These findings revealed that to a great extent the respondents believe that Islamic doctrine of Jihad and revivalism has influenced terrorism (mean=4). The respondents believed that to moderate extent the doctrine of life after death has influenced terrorism (mean=3). This concurs with the assertion by Venkatraman (2007) that the doctrine of jihad has led to the emergence of violent Jihad occasioned by extreme religious interpretations of the Quran. Similarly, Hutchins (2017) argues that the exploitation of Jihad doctrine and revivalism has provided a basis for exploitation of Islam in recruitment of terrorists who sacrifice their lives for Islamic cause. These findings suggest that most respondents believe that some Islamic doctrine has contributed in some way to promoting terrorism.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics on Islamic Doctrine's Influence on Terrorism

Statement	N	Mean	SD
Islamic doctrine of jihad	326	4.04	1.19212
Islamic doctrine of life after death	326	3.39	0.99931
Quran's doctrine of revivalism	326	3.51	0.83148

Source: Researcher 2019

The results of a cross-tabulation between Islamic region and curbing terrorism self-esteem indicated that 39% of respondents were not in agreement that Islamic region plays a role in curbing terrorism while 61% of the respondents agreed that Islamic religion opposition has helped in curbing terrorism. This implies that Islamic religion is fundamentally anti-terrorism and thus can be used as an anti-terrorist strategy.

Table 2: Cross tabulation between Islamic Opposition and Terrorism

Opposition to Islam		Terrorism		
		Disagree	**Agree**	**Total**
Little extent	Count	20	22	42
	% within Opposition	47.60%	52.40%	100.00%
	% within Terrorism	16.10%	11.40%	13.20%
Moderate Extent	Count	7	53	60
	% within Opposition	11.70%	88.30%	100.00%
	% within Terrorism	5.60%	27.50%	18.90%
Great Extent	Count	77	110	187
	% within Opposition	41.20%	58.80%	100.00%
	% within Terrorism	62.10%	57.00%	59.00%
Very Extent	Count	20	8	28
	% within Opposition	71.40%	28.60%	100.00%
	% within Terrorism	16.10%	4.10%	8.80%
	Count	124	193	317
	% within Opposition	39.10%	60.90%	100.00%
Total	% within Terrorism	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Source: Researcher 2019

From the findings it was established that a majority of the respondents disagreed that Islamic practices leads to terrorism. Additionally, results indicated that only the practices of desiring to obtain highest rewards have the potential to lead to terrorism among all the Islamic practices. For the minority who believe those Islamic practices can contribute to terrorism it was established that they believed that Islamic practices lead to terrorism only to the extent that spiritual leaders can exert a group influence on members. It was also established that majority of the respondents were in agreement that Islamic religion plays a role in curbing terrorism. The study further shows that the teachings of Islam contribute to curbing terrorism differently. Findings from the interviews with key informants were in agreement that Islam is a religion of peace, thus, it plays an important role in curbing terrorism.

Conclusion

From the study results it was evident that the respondents were in agreement that Islamic practices do not necessarily contributes to terrorism. Thus, it can be suggested that Islamic practices plays little influence on contributing to terrorism, except to the degree that it promotes peer influence amongst the members. The study results showed that Islamic religion is opposed to terrorism. This demonstrates the foundation of Islamic religion lies in promoting peace and tranquility, and cannot be labelled as a religion of violence as argued by some. Islam, just like any other religion, has had its share of positives and negatives. The focus on the Islamic role on terrorism has overwhelmed the positive aspects of the Islamic religion and its opposition to terrorism highlighted in the current study.

Recommendations

The study shows that Islamic doctrines can contribute to terrorism. This suggests the need of anti-terrorism strategies to include Islamic scholars and preachers in teaching the right doctrinal beliefs according to Islam. From the results it was evident that Islamic practices do not contribute to terrorism. This study recommends that participation in Islamic practices should be used as a way of reducing terrorism activities.

From the findings it showed that Islamic religion is opposed to terrorism. Thus, the study findings recommend that government and other stakeholder put more emphasis on developing and supporting Islamic teaching through establishes of more Madrassas. The study findings also suggest a review of curriculum by incorporating Islamic education as a way of promoting peace and stability and curbing terrorism.

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