



NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY-KENYA

RESEARCH PROJECT

**THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGY ON RADICALIZATION:
CASE OF AL-SHABAAB TERROR GROUP**

By

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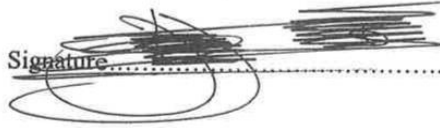
**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF ORDINARY DIPLOMA IN NATIONAL
SECURITY AND STRATEGY OF THE NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY OF
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DECLARATION

This research report is my original work and has not been presented for the award of a diploma in any University or any other institution of higher learning.

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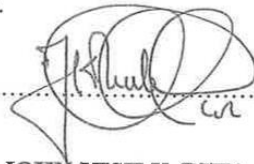
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family for their immense support, patience, and understanding during my entire coursework. May God bless them abundantly.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to acknowledge those who have made significant contributions to the completion of this thesis. First and foremost, I express my deepest gratitude to my family for their unwavering support and endless encouragement throughout this journey. Their lessons of perseverance and determination have proved invaluable, becoming the bedrock of my journey not only through this study but also through life itself.

This work is especially dedicated to the brave fallen heroes of the Kenya Defence Forces who gave the ultimate sacrifice for the defense of our nation. Their valor, resilience, and commitment have served as a source of inspiration and a constant reminder of the price of the peace and freedom we enjoy. I want to particularly honor the memory of my esteemed colleagues, the Late Major Mwinyikombo and Col Aboud Said. Your unyielding dedication to duty and the love for our nation will forever be etched in our hearts. I pray that God grants your soul eternal rest in paradise.

I hope that the knowledge learned from this study will sharpen our understanding of radicals and contribute to our collective efforts to counter their ill-intended agendas. This thesis is a tribute to everyone who believes in the noble cause of national service. It is my hope that through this work, we can honor your commitment and fortify our resolve to continue serving in our respective capacities for a more peaceful, stable, and prosperous nation. May the sacrifices made and the dedication shown by our heroes not be in vain but rather ignite a flame that continues to burn brightly in the pursuit of knowledge and the protection of our nation.

ABSTRACT

Worldwide, terrorism has become an increasing threat to international peace and security. As a result, the recent past has seen many international, regional, and national initiatives adopted to combat terrorism. Despite these global, regional, and state counterterrorism measures, terrorism threatens peace and security. Recent scholarship in counterterrorism is divided; on one side, some scholars contend that counterterrorism measures increase terrorism through retaliations by groups like the Somalia-based Al-Shabaab group, while others believe that it decreases the threats of terrorism. This study sought to pick up the debate by assessing the significance of religious ideology on the radicalization of the Al-Shabaab terrorist group and its subsequent terror campaigns. Religious ideologies are important in understanding a group's identity and aim in further deducing its role in threatening peace, security, and state stability of a state such as Kenya, which borders Somalia on the east. As part of its theoretical framework, the study applied social psychology, resource mobilization, and rational choice theories that enabled it to identify challenges and opportunities in countering-ideological narratives in counter-radicalization among the Al-Shabaab. The study found that Al-Shabaab's communication strategy features an advanced operational, tactical, and strategic level stratagem that depends heavily on religious ideology for its radicalization and recruitment programs of potential members. The study shows Islam is not a monolithic religion but has variations or denominations. Since the formation of the Islamic religion in the 6th century, several sects, many of whom have been influenced by non-Arabic cultures, have held divergent interpretations and applications of Islamic law. In the Kenyan context, the two major groups of Sunni and Shias are further divided into two divisions - the sub-sects which follow under the two central umbrellas are the Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaa (the party of the Sunnah who are predominantly the Sufis and the moderate Muslims) and the Wahabi Salafis. These divisions remain under the Sunni umbrella. Sunni has four schools, Hanafi, Shafi, Maliki, and Hanbali. Shia has two schools, Jaafri and Zaydi. These schools are regional and have been termed sects, aligning with the problematic movements within the Muslim divide. The study reveals that the Al-Shabaab group has exploited some religious and ideological differences. The ideological impulse used by the Al-Shabaab is impregnated with misinterpretation of scriptures drawn from the Holy Quran. It applies them selectively to justify its call for Jihadi uprising and bombing campaigns, such as the deadly Westgate Mall attack of 2013 and the Garissa University College bombing of 2015. This has meant that radicalism drawn from religions contributes majorly to the conundrum of insecurity in Kenya. The current Islamic ecology in Kenya points out that radical jihadists like Aboud Rogo or Ahmed Makaburi were extracts of the Wahhabist ideology, which for many years preached radical sermons in Mombasa Mosques, luring many youths into radical jihadist indoctrinations adopted and promoted by the Al-Shabaab. This is the foundation of contemporary radicalization and terrorism emanating from toxic religious and ideological interpretations. The study proposes several recommendations touching on good governance, capacity building of counterterrorism unit, human rights law, Islamic jurisprudence, and the need for an effective media strategy to counter the toxicity of Al-Shabaab's radical religious, ideological narrative.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
AQ	Al-Qaeda
AS	Al-Shabaab
ATPU	Anti-Terrorism Police Unit
CT	Counter Terrorism
CTC	Counter-Terrorism Committee
EAC	East African Community
EU	European Union
GIMF	Global Islamic Media Front
IR	International Relations
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
KDF	Kenya Defence Force
MAD	Mutually Assured Destruction
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation
START	Study of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism
UN	United Nations
UNCS	United Nations Counter-terrorism Strategy
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

UK United Kingdom

USA United States of America

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Religious ideology is a set of ideas on religious and secular tools that accompany political processes systematically and sustainably. Religion is ideological because it supports the beliefs and practices of powerful groups, such as the ruling class in society, by maintaining them in power. Religious attributes are essential components of an individual's social and psychological makeup. Religious ideologies are used to raise awareness of a certain group of people that need attention. Ideologies link thoughts, beliefs, myths, and actions at hand. Groups can sometimes use an ideology to preserve their political power and as an instrument of competition and conflict. A group first has to internalize the beliefs associated with their ideology, which gives them a cognitive map and filters the way social realities are seen, rendering the reality easier, coherent, and meaningful.¹

Al-Qaeda is described as a set of beliefs that are an ideology of oppression, hate, and violence and a form of totalitarianism. According to analysts and policymakers, ideologies have been instrumental in guiding the activities of al-Qaeda and its followers. America referred to the September Twin Tower bombings of 2001 as hijacker terrorists driven by religious ideology.² Al-Shabaab is an offshoot of the Islamic Courts Union that split in 2006 and imposed Sharia law.

Ideology is important in understanding the moral fabric of the Al-Shabaab terror group. The local clan structures heavily influence the group in Somalia. The religious ideology has recruited more people in Al-Shabaab through radicalization and helped in sourcing for support and legitimizing the existence,

¹ Moghadam, Assaf. "The Salafi-jihad as a religious ideology," *CTC Sentinel* 1, no. 3 . (2008).

² Ibid

leading to the terror group's success³. Since 2007, the Al-Shabaab started locking the streets of Somalia as a self-proclaimed branch of AL-Qaeda which had gotten acceptance from al-Zawahiri in Afghanistan. The militants remain an infamous and widely discussed group that has caused terror and unrest in Somalia and her neighboring countries, primarily Kenya and Uganda. This study explores the nature of Al-Shabaab ideologies and the extent to which ideologies have catalyzed radicalization within the group.

1.1 Background of the study

Radicalization is a global concern today. Understanding radicalization is vital in assessing the challenges associated with terrorism worldwide as it also informs approaches to counter-terrorism interventions. Radicalization creates the motivational precondition for terrorism. Therefore, knowledge of the drivers of radicalization and how to combat it is important in combating terrorism. In America, there has been a remarkable surge in terrorist activities since 2009. The majority of the terrorist activities identified worldwide involve militants of diverse origins.⁴ These terrorists have been linked with Jihadist ideologies affiliated with Al-Qaeda and related groups. The thwarted plots and wave of arrests witnessed globally show an upsurge in radicalized Muslims and non-Muslims.

Europe enjoys democracy, but reports show that Europeans have become radicalized to becoming willing to support terrorism against fellow citizens. Europe has experienced militant extremist groups and networks, resulting in Islamophobic violence, anti-government attacks, and assaults on ethnic minorities.⁵ Terrorist attacks and militant plots have long been featured as headline news in America and Europe. In 2001, 19 suicide bombers attacked the World Trade Centre, popularly based at the

³ Peek, Charles W., Mark A. Konty, and Terri E. Frazier. "Religion and ideological support for social movements: The case of animal rights." *Journal for the scientific study of religion* (1997): 429-439.

⁴ Vidino, Lorenzo. "The Homegrown Terrorist Threat to the US Homeland." *Elcano Newsletter* 63: 8 (2010).

⁵ Koehler, Daniel. "Right-wing extremism and terrorism in Europe." *Prism* 6, no. 2 (2016): 84-105.

Twin Towers in New York City. Since then, there has been a series of other attacks. These terrorist attacks have been linked to the Islamic religion⁶. Networks such as Al-Qaeda and Islamic State engage in violence through Jihad guided by the membership to Ummah. This Muslim community has the appropriation of an ideology and use of violence. A report published by the Soufan group in 2015 showed that 5000 young men went to Europe as foreign fighters linked to the Islamic State in Syria.⁷

The Global terror threat and its networks have put African countries in the global limelight following numerous attacks recorded in the last two decades. The East Africa Community (EAC), which constitutes Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, and Burundi, have tolerated the after-effect of many of these conflicts, with Kenya bearing most of the attacks due to its proximity and geo-location factors to jihadi arenas in nearby Somalia. Terrorism has been the leading insecurity factor posing a serious threat to Kenya, which is currently mutating to militarization levels and scaling up insurgency activities in relatively secure areas. Al-Shabaab (AS) militants are the leading terror group currently running an asymmetric campaign against its opponents in south-central Somalia and to the Kenyan eastern borders.

Al-Shabaab is a Somali militia currently fighting against African forces in Somalia, with its operational bases in Somalia and running a terror campaign on Kenya's eastern border. This group has had varying degrees of success in their regional recruitment efforts.⁸ Al-Shabaab has espoused a radical agenda defined by an ideological pillar and politically aligned set of grievances, enabling it to attract new members, mainly of the youth age group. Their ideological training in this organization

⁶ Dalgaard-Nielsen, Anja. "Violent radicalization in Europe: What we know and what we do not know." *Studies in conflict & terrorism* 33, no. 9 (2010): 797-814.

⁷ Soufan Group. *Foreign fighters: An updated assessment of the flow of foreign fighters into Syria and Iraq*. Soufan Group., 2015.

⁸ Amble, John C., and Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens. "Jihadist radicalization in East Africa: Two case studies." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 37, no. 6 (2014): 523-540.

first points them towards this path and legitimizes the terrorist acts. The ideological teachings carry a genocidal effect and have no limit to the damage they can cause.

There is a need to realize that it's not about the casualties so far registered in the region as a result of terror attacks but the evolving trend and sophistication of terror cells which are coupled with continuous inflows of hardened foreign fighters from other Jihadi arenas to the wider Eastern Africa region.⁹ The groups have managed to accelerate their efforts both on the local and international grids by riding on established media infrastructure supported by the Global Islamic media front (GIMF), the Al-Shabaab (AS), and Islamic State in Syria (ISIS) partnering with (GIMF) Websites Al Kataib media. This medium serves as the base for dissemination of battle front reports, recruitment videos, videos showcasing opposing government forces being attacked, pre-suicide bomber testimonies, and postings for all senior terror leadership seeking public support and giving words of encouragement to the low-level fighters, all which are all radicalization enablers. Generally, terror operatives' convictions all over Jihad theaters, except for a few, are the same and bonded with the same ideology, making it easy for moral contrasting and sharing of ideas among these outfits.

The vision to expand in the Horn of Africa (HoA), Somalia, and parts of Kenya extremist groups were ever since considered by former Al-Qaida (AQ) leader Osama bin Laden (OBL).¹⁰ The preference by the terror groups to pitch their focus in the East African nation has been facilitated by many factors, among them principally being the ease of disseminating the ideological terror content on the EAC demographics, which are predominantly Muslim populations at the eastern and coastal regions. In 2006 the deputy commander of Al-Qaida mentioned Somalia as the Islam southern garrison to picket

⁹ Amble, John C., and Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens. "Jihadist radicalization in East Africa: Two case studies." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 37, no. 6 (2014): 523-540.

¹⁰ Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama Bin Laden, Radical Islam and the Future.

its elements and jurisdiction in Eastern Africa. The primary concern to countries outside the region, not least the USA, reported that terrorist training camps and members of al-Qaeda cells were in Somalia, as described by al-Qaeda deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri at 'the southern garrison of Islam.'

The current African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) operations to defeat the terror group have gained some success. However, it may lose momentum if recruiting new fighters cannot be impeded. There are several causes for the presence of terror groups and sleeper cells in East Africa. The feeding pillar to the moral terror fabric, which sustains terror groups' survival by allowing regeneration, has not been diagnosed and countered accordingly, and this has become elusive in its identification. One of our strategic mistakes has been assuming Islam is a monolithic block while terrorism is a threat other than the ideology that breeds it. We have not taken our eye off the ball – we never had it on it in the first place. An understanding of how radicalization happens from an ideological dimension of Islamist terrorism is therefore crucial to any strategy that seeks to contain and defeat the ideological pillar which drives its violence.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Global trends show increasing convergence of discourses in terrorism, radicalization, and extremism that challenge counterterrorism efforts. Since the inception of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), little has been done to audit the overall performance of attrition of Al-Shabaab despite being a requirement in forming the basis of accountability and reduction of Al-Shabaab support systems. The intelligence focus concentrates on combat factors and estimates in planning for the military combat missions, leaving the ideological, moral component unattended, thus facilitating Al-Shabaab radicalization and regeneration power to attract more adherents.

The response to Islamist terrorism since 9/11 has lacked a strategic depth and focus on tackling the ideological agenda responsible for radicalization. "Degrading" groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS will not

solve our problem. Another like-minded group will inevitably emerge if we do not delegitimize and destroy the nihilistic ideology the Islamist enemies embrace.¹¹

Furthermore, radicalization has been enhanced by rapid urbanization, internet connectivity, high migration levels, high unemployment among youth, and global warming. At the bottom of every factor are militants' strategies and how they package and market their ideologies to the masses. Counterterrorism ought to go beyond just countering terrorism but broadly to tackling the ideological threats that push a group or an individual to terrorism. Therefore, it is necessary to assess how religious ideology has affected radicalization amongst the Al-Shabaab in Somalia to devise ways of countering the ideologies and radicalization for a peaceful Somalia and East Africa.

1.3 Research Questions

What is the role of religious sects in radicalization among Al-Shabaab?

- a. How has the radical's communication strategy in religion influenced radicalization among the youth to join Al-Shabaab?
- b. What are the challenges and opportunities of tackling ideological narratives in counter-radicalization among Al-Shabaab?

1.4 Study Objectives

1.4.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study is to examine the role of ideology in the radicalization case of the Al-Shabaab terror group.

¹¹ Eneboe, David. *It's the Ideology: How to Defeat Islamist Terrorism Once and for All*. Potomac Institute Press.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

- a. To examine the role of religious sects on radicalization in Kenya
- b. To scrutinize the communication strategy employed by the radicals toward radicalization
- c. To identify Challenges and opportunities in countering ideological narratives in counter-radicalization among Al-Shabaab

1.5 Literature Review

1.5.1 Theoretical Literature

Ideology in political violence and terrorism has been approached descriptively rather than analytically.¹² Reviewers claim that doctrine is sidelined in favor of factors and issues. Sanin and Wood acknowledge that ideology has an instrumental purpose in some armed groups. Still, we should also consider commitments and the potential impact of the doctrine on recruitment, operational issues, and motivation. Other scholars have discussed the role of beliefs and values in radicals being able to move to extremism.

From the different definitions of ideology by different theorists, it is unclear whether scholars share a common understanding of ideology and its implicated phenomena. Jonathan Leader Maynard claimed that there should be a broader conception of ideologies and not just a handful of beliefs and cultural edifices.¹³ According to Maynard, ideology creates the desire to commit violence, legitimizes perceptions, and provides the basis for dealing with the commission of violence.¹⁴

In the academic discourse, ideology has been treated narrowly with little reference to scholars that have defined the concept and how it is applied. Ideology is mainly used in relation to political and

¹² Snow, David, and Scott Byrd. "Ideology, framing processes, and Islamic terrorist movements." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (2007): 119-136.

¹³ Haynes, Jeffrey, ed. *The Routledge handbook of religion, politics and ideology*. Routledge, 2022.

¹⁴ Hall, Joan Kelly. *Teaching and researching: Language and culture*. Routledge, 2013.

religious doctrines with little emphasis on what it means to people and how it is applied. In some cases, ideology has been dismissed as an irrelevant issue regarding matters of violent extremism. Despite this, ideology remains central in debates about radicalization and counter-extremism.

Discussions on concepts and processes of radicalization rotate around the role of ideology in it. According to Donatella Della Porta, conversion to violence requires a definition of reality that an individual has to arrive at by adopting new beliefs and values. As such, a value system evolves where dense social networks create positive attitudes towards radical forms of action.¹⁵ Peter Neumann noted that political ideas may not be ignored in the radicalization process.¹⁶ He further posited that policymakers and academic commentators favor extreme beliefs and violent action without assessing cognitive radicalization. For instance, John Horgan and Randy Borum thought that political violence and terrorism could be studied without ideology.¹⁷ Neumann argued that beliefs, political ideas, and questions on the role of ideology and the relationship between extremist beliefs and violent extremism continue to be contested.¹⁸

Ideology has been critiqued as researchers pay great attention to extremist beliefs, not violent behavior. They assume that these beliefs lead to terrorism or their support for it¹⁹. Radicalization has been ridiculed as it lacks explanatory power meaning that thousands of people may share specific values and radical beliefs, but a minority acts violently. Despite these criticisms, ideology matters; it

¹⁵h Caiani, Manuela, and Donatella Della Porta. "The radical right as social movement organizations." *The Oxford handbook of the radical right* (2018): 327-347.

¹⁶ Neumann, Peter R. "The trouble with radicalization." *International affairs* 89, no. 4 (2003): 873-893.

¹⁷ Holbrook, Donald, and John Horgan. "Terrorism and ideology." *Perspectives on terrorism* 13, no. 6 (2019): 2-15.

¹⁸ Ibid P. 892.

¹⁹ Knott, Kim, and Benjamin J. Lee. "Ideological transmission in extremist contexts: Towards a framework of how ideas are shared." *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 21, no. 1 (2020): 1-23.

motivates and influences decision-making in various disciplines and the study of religions.²⁰ Dawson and Amarasingam endorsed this view when they interviewed transnationals.

Jihadists stressed the importance of ideology/religion and how it influences their radicalization decision. Nevertheless, ideology may not be the only predictor for radicalization and extreme violence. Guhl presses the place for identity, social bonds, moral outrage, emotions, foreign policy, and status consideration. Other scholars share Guhl's view.²¹ For example, McCauley and Moskalenko considered beliefs and feelings in their two pyramids model; Hafez and Mullins felt political and religious ideologies, grievances, interpersonal ties, networks, and enabling environment to explain how individuals are radicalized.²² Despite their criticism, Schuurman and Taylor viewed ideology as a precondition for fanaticism, another model for assessing radicalization. At the same time, Kruglanski et al. regarded an individual's motivation and social network with ideologies.²³ All these researchers perceive ideology as made up of factors that lead to a dynamic radicalization process; some see it as contemporary, while others see it as facilitating extremism. These scholars have limited the role of ideology to cognition and belief, which is the direction this study takes.

1.5.2 Empirical Literature Review

Various studies have shown how adopting religious ideologies has led to radicalization. In research sponsored by the national institute of Justice, empirical evidence is provided of how radicalizing individuals varies by ideologies and narratives embraced, period, and groups or movements. From an

²⁰ Jost, John T., and David M. Amodio. "Political ideology as motivated social cognition: Behavioral and neuroscientific evidence." *Motivation and emotion* 36, no. 1 (2012): 55-64.

²¹ Jakob Guhl, 'Why Beliefs Always Matter, But Rarely Help Us Predict Jihadist Violence: The Role of Cognitive Extremism as a Precursor for Violent Extremism', *Journal for Deradicalization*, 14 (2018), pp. 192-217: p. 217.

²² McCauley, Clark, and Sophia Moskalenko. "Toward a Profile of Lone Wolf Terrorists: What Moves an Individual from Radical Opinion to Radical Action." In *Lone Wolf and Autonomous Cell Terrorism*, pp. 79-95. London: Routledge, (2017).

²³ Kruglanski, Arie W., Michele J. Gelfand, Jocelyn J. Bélanger, Anna Sheveland, Malkanthi Hetiarachchi, and Rohan Gunaratna. "The psychology of radicalization and deradicalization: How significance quest impacts violent extremism." *Political Psychology* 35 (2014): 69-93.

empirical assessment of domestic radicalization, the study highlighted radicalization warning indicators such as subscribing to religious beliefs, low education level, and economic deprivation. Further, the US Department of State found that radicalization resulted from social and behavioral indicators embedded in the process. David Muhlhausen, found out that radicalization of an individual starts with embracing terrorist beliefs and values that sideline and justify other groups as enemies, therefore, engaging in violence against them. An individual may also become a terrorist and engage in activities, commitments, beliefs, and behaviors that facilitate terrorism outcomes.²⁴

According to Morgham's staircase to terrorism, potential radicalization candidates begin by desiring to improve their situation. Morgan posits that unsuccessful attempts lead to frustration and building more anger against the enemy. These are now the sympathizers joining extremist organizations to undertake terrorist violence. Further, Moghaddam claims that the Jihadi-Salafi radicalization followed this model. Radicals that meet other like-minded people go together in the phases of radicalization and eventually become terrorists.²⁵

In Her study on the role of Ideology in Radicalization in Kilifi Mombasa, Eunice Njambi discovered that freedom in religion has brought out hatred within different religious affiliations. The respondents believed there was no relationship between religion and security and that people hide behind religion to execute terrorist acts.²⁶ Anne Aly and Jason-Leigh Striegher had a central opinion when they examined the role of religious ideologies in radicalization. These two authors applied a case study of

²⁴ Smith, Allison G. *How radicalization to terrorism occurs in the United States: What research sponsored by the National Institute of Justice tells us*. US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, (2018).

²⁵Borum, Randy. "Radicalization into violent extremism II: A review of conceptual models and empirical research." *Journal of strategic security* 4, no. 4 (2011): 37-62.

²⁶ Eunice Njambi. *The Role of Ideology in Youth Radicalization: Mombasa, Kilifi and Kwale Counties*. Occasional Paper 8, no. 2 (2017)

Jack Roche, the first convicted Australian terrorist. They found that religion played a lesser role in Radicalization than government policy response.²⁷

Radicalization is not a rational choice *per se*. From their analysis of how an individual can be part of a radical group based on spiritual incentives, Wiktorowicz and Kaltenthaler they have studied UK's Al-Muhajiroon group, an extremist Islamic group. They found out that the group disbanded in 2004 but continued in two different groups because every group has demands or costs associated with it, such as time, monetary contribution, risk of expulsion if not complying with their rules, etc. Johnson and Feldman noted that young people in search of their identity could be easily lured to radicalization through ideologies which they believe affords them loyalty and solidarity. However, one needs a close relationship with the group before they become radicalized.²⁸

1.5.3 Gaps in the Literature

Study on radicalization involves studying terrorists and drivers towards radicalization based on Islamist beliefs. Terrorism involves individuals, and no study has investigated an individual in radicalization or that has abandoned radicalization. As this study looks at the Al-Shabaab group, it will interrogate some individuals involved in the radicalization process to get first-hand information.

The literature reviewed shows that radicalization was not studied in its early stages, and few comparisons have been made with non-Muslim radicals. Further, there are few cross-sectional examinations on the lives of terrorists right from childhood to adolescence, the stage in which most radicalization happens. Additionally, ideological conversion is still a new phenomenon that has not been well-researched. There is a need for more research to inform policy on defeating radicalization.

²⁷ Borum, Randy, (2011) Ibid.

²⁸ Bizina, Margarita, and David H. Gray. "Radicalization of Youth as a Growing Concern for Counter-Terrorism Policy." *Global security studies* 5, no. 1 (2014).

1.6 Hypothesis

- a. Religious sects influence the radicalization of Al-Shabaab.
- b. The communication strategy in religion has influenced radicalization among the youth to join Al-Shabaab.
- c. It has been challenging to tackle ideological narratives in counter-radicalization among Al-Shabaab.

1.7 Justification of the Study

1.7.1 Academic justification

Ideologies are important in understanding a group's identity and aim. Youth radicalization is a major concern for governments because it threatens peace, security, and stability. This paper assesses how ideology has enhanced radicalization in the Al-Shabaab militia group in Somalia. This has added to the body of knowledge on radicalization and ideologies. Scholars can refer to the specific context of the Al-Shabaab insurgency.

1.7.2 Policy justification

The significance of the study was to assess the role of religious ideology on radicalization amongst the Al-Shabaab militants in Somalia. The use of ideology has made radicalization successful, exacerbating the efforts toward counterterrorism. This explains the need to understand the nature and binding fabric of the terror groups' moral component, underpinned by a well-elaborated ideological strand, which cross-pollinates as an ideology and revolutionary potency that it carries across all Jihadi frontiers. This is helpful in re-evaluating strategies for counter-terrorism based on the diagnostic appeal and dispensation of suitable remedial counter-ideological measures for decisive containment. The findings of this study provide information that can help to develop an effective strategy focused on dealing with religious ideology and thereby reduce opportunities for terrorists to recruit and carry

out attacks in Kenya. The study proposes, for instance, a policy measure aimed at reducing and preventing religious radicalization among the youth age groups.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

Social Psychology Theory

Byrne, Baron, and Sul have defined social psychology as the scientific field that helps to understand the nature and causes of individual behavior in social institutions.²⁹ Social psychology studies how human thoughts, feelings, and goals are constructed within people's social setups. Aristotle believed that all human beings are social animals³⁰. Plato thought that the state controls individuals and therefore encourages the socio-centered approach. According to Hegel (1770-1831), society has inevitable links due to the social mind of human beings.³¹ Texts focusing on social psychology emerged in 1908, at the start of the 20th Century. McDougall published the first book in social psychology, arguing that social behavior was innate³². Allport acknowledged that interactions between people influenced social behavior³³. In 1898, Triplett experimented performance of cyclists and schoolchildren to see how they behaved in a social environment.³⁴ People became interested in behavior after World War II and grouped in social situations. This led to various studies on social attitudes.

According to social psychology, behaviors are influenced by social contexts even when no one else is physically present. People and society influence people's behavior, emotions, and thought processes.

²⁹ Baron, R. A., D. Byrne, and J. Suls. "Attitudes: Evaluating the social world." *Social psychology* (1989): 79-101.

³⁰ McCarthy, George E., ed. *Marx and Aristotle: nineteenth-century German social theory and classical antiquity*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1992.

³¹ Fulda, Hans Friedrich. *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831)*. Vol. 2. Beck, 1981.

³² McDougall, William. *An introduction to social psychology*. Psychology Press, 2015.

³³ Post, David L. "Floyd H. Allport and the launching of modern social psychology." *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 16, no. 4 (1980): 369-376.

³⁴ Strube, Michael J. "What did Triplett really find? A contemporary analysis of the first experiment in social psychology." *The American journal of psychology* 118, no. 2 (2005): 271-286.

The social psychology concept provides predictions that can be scientifically tested. So many experiments have been undertaken to support the theory of social psychology. However, one limitation of the theory, one may argue, is that it undermines an individual's experiences and only provides superficial snapshots of social processes.

Social psychology theory explains why social movements and militia groups are formed. When a certain group of people has an ideology, they will influence the behavior of those around them and can recruit more people by influencing their behavior. Al-Shabaab takes advantage of social contexts such as the media and mosques to teach religious ideologies that change the behavior, emotions, and thoughts of individuals who eventually start behaving as per what they observe and are trained. The behavior of Al-Shabaab motivates others due to their psychological traits or external compulsion.

Resource Mobilization theory

Research on how social movements use resources to spur social change started in the 1960s-1970s. The resource mobilization theory argues that for a social movement to succeed, they need material, cultural, norms, socio-organizational and human resources. These movements also need the skills to be able to utilize the resources.³⁵ Previous studies have looked at how psychological factors influence social movements. The resource mobilization concept looked at the broader social factors in the success of a social movement.

Social movement organizations are groups advocating for social change, while the social movement industry is organizations advocating for the same cause.³⁶ In this concept, social movement

³⁵ Jenkins, J. Craig. "Resource mobilization theory and the study of social movements." *Annual review of sociology* (1983): 527-553.

³⁶ McCarthy, John D., and Mayer N. Zald. "Resource mobilization and social movements: A partial theory." *American journal of sociology* 82, no. 6 (1977): 1212-1241.

organizations can acquire resources in different ways. They may produce the resources themselves or may seek external support. Social movement organizations should have the skills to utilize the resources effectively. Resource mobilization theorists are interested in how resources impact the organization's activities.

Resource mobilization theory gives the framework for understanding political mobilization. In the context of this study, social movements such as the Al-Shabaab terror group use ideology to access resources such as money and human labor to fund their illegal activities and get the labor for an attack. They use ideologies and pass message to their sympathizers on how the Muslim community is endangered, displaced from their land, and denied leadership positions. They request support from their sympathizers and Muslims in the diaspora regarding resources and labor to facilitate fighting and conquering to get what is theirs.

1.9 Research methodology

This section highlights the approach that was undertaken by the study. It comprises the research design, target population, sample size, sampling technique, data collection, analysis, and presentation.

1.9.1 Research Design

This study employed a systematic review to examine the effects of ideology on radicalization among the Al-Shabaab in Somalia. The research sourced primary and secondary sources from academic journal articles and books published between 2010 and 2022 in various electronic databases, including JSTOR, Science Direct, and Google Scholar. The search engine applied the terms “Ideologies and Radicalization.” Eligible studies were reviewed to find other relevant studies.

1.9.2 Study Scope

The study focused on Islamic ideology as a driver of radicalization in Al-Shabaab. The study relied on secondary data sources that discuss issues with militia groups and ideologies such as Al-Shabaab, Al-Qaeda, and ISIS-linked groups.

1.9.3 Research Target Population

The target population for this study comprised the radicals already serving at Al-Shabaab or those de-radicalized and the neutral groups.

1.9.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The systematic review targeted original articles published in English about research on ideology, radicalization, and terrorism.

1.9.5 Data Collection Method

The researcher reviewed published articles from JSTOR, Science Direct, and Google Scholar and published radical journals.

1.9.6 Data Analysis and Presentation

The content from the data collected was analyzed and presented as narratives, tables, and figures. The study does not feature any data sets generated or analyzed from the study.

1.9.7 Ethical Considerations

This study made use of previously published articles and reports. These materials have all been appropriately cited and retrieved through references. The researcher was keen to avoid data bias, citation bias, language bias, familiarity bias, country bias, and multiple publication bias. Additionally, this study sought the approval of the National Defence University of Kenya and further authorization from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI).

1.10 Definition of Terms

Religious Ideology - Religious ideology is a set of ideas on religious and secular tools which accompany political processes in a systematic and sustained way. Religion is ideological because it supports the beliefs and practices of powerful groups in society, maintaining them in power and the ruling class. Example of powerful movements is Al-Shabaab, Al-Qaeda, Salafi, etc.³⁷

Radicalization is the process through which an individual adopts belief systems to justify violence to cause social change and actively supports and employs violent means.

Recruitment is the process of identifying and hiring human resources to fill positions within an organization in the context of this study.

In the context of this study, the terms radicalization and recruitment are used interchangeably.

Terrorism – According to the UN Security Council Resolution 1566 (2004), terrorism is defined as criminal acts against civilians, executed to cause death or injury, taking a hostage to provoke terror in public or intimidate people, or compelling a government or a particular organization to abstain from doing an act.³⁸

Al-Shabaab – in Arabic, Al-Shabaab means the youth. The Al-Shabaab terror group is the most prominent militant organization fighting against the Somali government. They aim to establish a new state in Somalia and strictly rule according to their interpretation of Shariah law.³⁹

³⁸ Meisels, Tamar. "Defining terrorism—a typology." *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 12, no. 3 (2009): 331-351.

³⁹ Rotich, Hillary K. "Al-shabaab Militia, a Threat to Security in the Horn of Africa: a Case Study of Kenya." PhD diss., university of Nairobi, 2020.

Al-Qaeda - is one of the world's longest-operating and largest jihadist militant organizations. It seeks to rid the Muslim world of foreign influence and establish Sharia-based Islamic governments. Osama bin Laden founded the group on August 11, 1988, after he had gained experience training and organizing opposition against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Since then, it has become an organization with affiliates and supporters worldwide and has carried out some of the most violent and infamous attacks in the last twenty-five years.

1.11 Chapter Outline

Chapter one has covered the introduction and background, spelled out the statement of the research problem, research questions, research objectives, literature review, the scope of the study, theoretical framework, and research methodology. **Chapter two** delves into the role of religious sects in radicalization, while **Chapter three** examines the communication strategy of the Al-Shabab concerning its radicalization and recruitment processes. **Chapter four** explores the Challenges and opportunities in counter-radicalization amongst the Al-Shabaab. In contrast, **Chapter Five** presents a critical discussion of the study's issues and a summary conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS SECTS IN RADICALIZING YOUTH TOWARDS AL-SHABAAB

2.1 Introduction

Today, Muslims, Jewish, Christians, Hindus, and Buddhist terrorists use religion to legitimize their actions. Terrorists have engaged in inhuman acts such as barbarous acts and suicide bombings in mosques, bazaars, educational institutions, markets, malls, public places, and security institutions. The terrorists justify their actions in jihad—holy wars, which has confused the Islamic concept of Jihad. Extremist groups have been bound by a well-protracted discourse drawn from religious scripts projected and molded to seemingly religious edicts about the means of survival for the religion and its adherents.

The exclusivity and absoluteness assumption of their conviction and the superficial interpretation of the Islamic holy book remains the biggest undoing of all the jihadi extremist groups. They use Islam and the fanciful notion of jihad to recruit young people and to deceive Muslims who feel oppressed. They lure them by convincing them that the current Muslim states are un-Islamic and, therefore, an Islamic State must be established, and they must migrate to it.⁴⁰ The lack of understanding of religious teaching and guidance in most extremist undertakings has contributed to their adamant nature to all calls for peaceful resolution departing from the very tenet of friendly Islamic philosophy. This situation has led to a dilemma in that Muslim youth mistakenly assume that terrorism and extremism are caused by religious teachings and the attitudes of religious people while being ignorant of Islam's normative teachings and being influenced by media and extremist propaganda. Due to this incorrect mindset, the number of young people joining VE organizations like Al-Shabaab has increased. This chapter delves into the religious sects in radicalizing the youth towards the Al-Shabaab militia group.

⁴⁰ Shaykh Muhammad Al-Yaqub, *Refuting ISIS* (2016) p. 5

It will first look at the history of the Islamic religious sects, narrow down to the problematic sects, and lastly, the drivers of religious radicalization amongst the youth.

2.2 Islam religion sects

Islam has several sects with similar fundamental and foundational beliefs with divergent applications and interpretations of Islamic law. As the faith expanded, several sects emerged as non-Arabic cultures, and desert environments influenced them. Islamic religious sects are groups of individuals who share beliefs. Religious sects are started by founding individuals whose ideas within the provision and set laws of the religion evolve and change over time (typically from orthodox to unorthodox) due to the interaction with cultural and environmental dynamics. As other individuals join and leave the group, their ideas change through interactions.⁴¹ Thus, a group's shared beliefs dynamically evolve. This belief changes dynamically, which makes these groups so intriguing to study as it will point to the advent of the sects' extremist genome, providing clarity on its problematic extremist path.

Religious sects within the Muslim are not jurisprudential movements, as many make a mistake in reflecting the Sunni and Shia divide as sects. Sunni has four schools, Hanafi, Shafi, Maliki, and Hanbali. Shia has two schools, Jaafri and Zaydi. These schools are regional and have been termed sects, aligning with the problematic movements within the Muslim divide.

Guided by the two major divisions, the Sunni and the Shias, in the Kenyan context, the subsects which follow under the two central umbrellas are the Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaa (the party of the Sunnah who are predominantly the Sufis and the moderate Muslims) and the Wahabi Salafis, and these divisions are under the Sunni umbrella. In comparison, most Shias belong to the Twelve Sect, which belief in twelve divinely guided imams.⁴²

⁴¹ Swatos 2007

⁴² Gova, A. The Nizārī Ismā'īlīs in Modernity. Master's Thesis, Simon Fraser University, Canada: Burnaby, (2005).

Many of the radical movements, the likes of Al-Shabaab (Somalia), Boko haram (Nigeria), Ansari Sunnah (Mozambique), and Allied Defence Forces ISIS affiliates (Democratic Republic of Congo) in the West and Eastern Africa belong to the Wahabi Salafis, a subsect of the Sunni divisions, it is worth noting not all Wahabi Salafis are extremist. However, all the West and Eastern African extremists subscribe to the Wahabi-Salafi sects.

2.3 Extremist Islamic Religious Sects

The extremist phenomena in Somalia have always existed but were mostly kept under check by the former Siyyad Barre Government vigil. However, after the overthrow of Siyyad Barre's government in 1991, the extremist tried to fill the vacuum to win the adjudication space since most of the religious orientation was handled by the Ahlul Sunah Wal Jamah (ASWJ) who are Sufis moderates and apolitical by design. The Somalis, by then, were referring most of their adjudication of cases to the ASWJ sheiks and institutions, which by default, the extremist narrative was always under check. Following General Aideed's forces combined with the Mogadishu people's revolt in 1991 to overthrow Said Barre's government, the extremist tried to fill the vacuum. Since then, the extremist's main problem has been Ahlu Sunna sheiks because Somali people consider Ahlu Sunna sheiks as the sole legitimate religious authority in Somalia.⁴³

The leading brand of Islam being championed by the extremist drivers at the time was Salafism, which antagonized and threatened both the government and the ASWJ movement. It is important to note that during the Siyyad Barre period, ASWJ was not antagonistic to the regime. Hence, they were given space and legitimacy to run their religious affairs without political affiliations and thus remained apolitical.

⁴³ Dr Ilmi Mahmoud, The battle dossier page 9,(2010)

On the other hand, the extremists were not armed but threatened to challenge the regime's legitimacy. Hence, they were perceived to be a threat by the Siyad Barre government.

The ASWJ, from 1991, after the ouster of the Siyad Bare regime, continued to enjoy its status under the rein of Gen Farah Aideed, who was inclined to the beliefs of the ASWJ. However, after the demise of Gen Farah Aideed in 1996, the extremist Salafists led by Al Ittihad Al Islamiyah (AIAI) seized the opportunity to undermine the ASWJ movement and hence, started their upward trend towards ideological entrenchment in Somalia. AIAI had thousands of members in universities and mosques, but which Siyad Barres government suppressed their activities.⁴⁴ The extremists got the opportunity they had been waiting for a long when the so-called Islamic courts took over the control of Mogadishu, headed by Sheik Sharif, the former Islamic court union chairman. The extremists started destroying the tombs of the ASWJ sheiks in the Barawe district of Lower-Shebelle and many parts of south and central Somalia.⁴⁵ In addition, they started targeted killings of the prominent ASWJ sheiks during this period. The people began to realize the true nature of the radicals, and resentment against the extremist's actions began growing. However, the intervention of the Ethiopian People's Defence Forces (EPDF) (2006) diverted the people's anger and provided the extremists with the legitimacy and support they needed for armed struggle.

The Djibouti conference later enhanced the extremists, which led to the establishment of Sheik Sharif's Government; this provided the extremists renewed power and influence. During this period, the extremists destroyed graves and killed more ASWJ sheiks. From 2005 until today, the Salafi Wahhabi extremists have excavated 595 graves belonging to prominent sheiks throughout Somalia.⁴⁶ In addition, the extremists killed 243 prominent sheiks during this same period. Hence, more than 80%

⁴⁴ Joseph, Dan; Maruf, Harun. Inside Al-Shabaab (p. 19). Indiana University Press

⁴⁵ Joseph, Dan; Maruf, Harun. Inside Al-Shabaab (p. 85)

⁴⁶ Dr Ilmi Mahmoud, The battle dossier

of prominent Ahlu Sunna sheiks fled from Somalia or moved to the central regions. The extremist tendency was fueled by the need to remove the Islamic heritage in Somalia and impose their new brand of Islam (Salafi/Wahabis beliefs), thus resorting to targeting the conservative or classical Islamic scholars of ASWJ who inherited the 1400yrs of Islamic intellectualism. Many prominent sheiks from the 2nd Islamic century developed and contributed to the Islamic centers of learning based on classical teachings till the 17th century in Mogadishu.

Notably, most of the sheik's exhumed tombs have played a significant role in Islamizing the Somali coast and interior population for the last ten centuries. The advent of the reformist Salafists/Wahabis in Somalia introduced the puritanical brand, which germinated the likes of the Al-Shabaab rebel and terror armed groups marauding in Somalia at present. It's important to note that the Islamization of the Kenya coast was more exact in the period and accelerated in the 5th century after the arrival of the Arabs at the coast of Lamu, Malindi, and Mombasa. Which subsequently lead to the establishment of the Zanzibar sultanate.

East African ulama's academic minds were shaped by a religion-cultural network that connected the Gulf, Hijaz (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), the Kenyan-Tanzanian coast, the coast of Mogadishu, the coast of Kenya, the coast of Comoros, and the offshore islands. A notable Muslim religious intelligentsia existed, having connection centers of Islam. Hadhrami towns like Inat and Tareem (Yemen), as well as Makkah, and Medina, as well as Cairo and Istanbul, also played a (scholars). The coast produced several extremely knowledgeable academics in various coastal cities like Lamu, Malindi, and Mombasa, who became references for the whole Muslim world (community).⁴⁷ Many of the scholars were moderates and non-Salafist/Wahabi-orientated.

⁴⁷ Accessed at <http://www.nzibo.com/pdfpapers/islamkenya.pdf>

2.3.1 The Extremist - Salafist Wahabi Sect

The Puritan of the desert, who believed in the early teachings of Mohamed, was determined to bring back the religion of Islam to its ancient simplicity. “With a great following, he commenced by destroying the tombs of saints, even targeted those of Mahomed and Hussein (prophet Mohamed grandson p.b.u.t).”⁴⁸

Muhammad ibn Abdal Wahhab, an Arab who was born in the village of Uyainah in the desert nation of Nejd, a rocky plateau in the Arabian Peninsula's hinterland, and who is now known as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is the one who gave his name to this new interpretation of Islam (KSA). However, the genuine origins of Wahhabism date back to the late thirteenth century, during the lifetime of a disavowed medieval Muslim philosopher named Ibn Taymiyyah al Harani (1263AD).⁴⁹ Ibn Taymiyyah was described as a literalist, a teacher of dogmatic, intolerant ideology, which was widely condemned in his lifetime. He was regularly in conflict with the clergy, which resulted in his arrest and label as a heretic. The majority of Sunni scholars have never accepted his theology. Yet, it was never forgotten, and it continued to draw adherents, the most well-known of whom, up until recently, was an Arab by the name of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. The Wahabi movement actively assumed its armed campaign in the Arab peninsula in the localities of Nejd, present-day Riyadh KSA, with an agreement of cooperation between the Saud clan chief Mohamed ibn Saud (political leadership) and Mohamed ibn Abdul Wahhab (religious scholar). The main focus of the collaboration treaty was to start a revolt against the Ottoman caliphate, which ruled a significant part of the Hijaz province at that time. It is crucial to note that at this point, the ottoman rulers were subscribing to the present-day ASWJ teachings, which were moderate and less antagonistic. The design teachings of Ibn Abdul Wahhab were foundational revivalist and stipulated new pronunciation of the foundational aspects of

⁴⁸ William Wing Loring, A Confederate Soldier in Egypt, (1884)

⁴⁹ God's Terrorists, the Wahhabi Cult and the Hidden Roots of Modern Jihad Charles Allen p. 52

the Islamic faith. The founding principles of Wahhabism were initially outlined in a book known as Kitab al-Tawhid (The Book of Unity), which was initially only a collection of notes but was later expanded into four substantial volumes by his successors.⁵⁰

He followed the ouster of Ottoman rule in the Arab peninsula after a series of military campaigns as early as 1818 AD. According to Wahabi doctrine, the spread of Islam was only possible via jihad against idolaters and polytheists. It followed that there was only one option available to those who considered themselves to be real Muslims: to adhere to his teachings in every way, to join him in an armed jihad against all apostates, blasphemers, and unbelievers, and to abhor those same apostates, blasphemers, and unbelievers. In exchange, they were guaranteed the protection of God, the affection and company of other believers, and quick ascension to paradise should they die as martyrs in the service of Islam. This provided the followers of his teachings to accuse many Muslims of not subscribing or in agreement with ibn Wahhab's new teachings as heretics and provided the early justification to wage war against fellow Muslims, particularly the Shias and the Ottoman rulers.

It should be noted that the term Tawhid taught by Mohamed bin Abdul Wahhab differed from the mainstream Muslim jurisprudence school of thought. He stipulated no other path to salvation. 'The only way,' wrote Al-Wahhab, "is by love to those who practice "Tawhid" (Islamic monotheism) of Allah, by devotion to them, rendering them every kind of help, as well as by hate and hostility to infidels and polytheists."

2.3.2 Salafi /Wahabi's inception on the East Coast of Africa

The East African Coast produced some exceptionally learned scholars, such as the coastal towns of Mogadishu, Kismayu, Lamu, Malindi, and Mombasa, who became points of reference for the whole

⁵⁰ ibid

Muslim (community).⁵¹ Many of the learning centers on the Kenyan coast were established over 130-180 years ago, with all teaching classical Islam of ASWJ replica of the Somalia ASWJ in beliefs and tolerance, contrasting all aspects of the Salafist teaching.

The growth of Salafist ideology in East Africa has challenged long-established norms of tolerance and interfaith cooperation in the region. It is imperative to note that the Muslim population of the earlier generation was in harmony and coexistence with authority while practicing tolerance and peaceful coexistence with people of other religions. The earliest concrete evidence of Islam and Muslims in eastern Africa is a mosque foundation in Lamu, where gold, silver, and copper coins dated AD 830 were found during an excavation in 1984. The oldest intact building in eastern Africa is a functioning mosque at Kizimkazi in southern Zanzibar Island dated AD 1007. It appears that Islam was common in the Indian Ocean by AD 1300. The point of departure started when many bright Muslim students were taken for scholarships to Saudi Arabia in the late 70s and imported the new Salafist brand of Islam, which builds to erase classical institutions in Eastern Africa.

This is the result of both internal and external elements working together. This involves a ten-year campaign by religious institutions in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations to spread ultraconservative views of Islam through mosques, madrassas, and Muslim youth and cultural centers in East Africa. This philosophy, which has its roots in Arab cultural identity, has promoted more restrictive and divisive religious ties in the area, which has led to an uptick in violent assaults. These conflicts didn't just appear out of nowhere. Instead, they show a buildup of pressure over many years. The spread of Salafist doctrine from the Gulf States, notably the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is primarily to blame for its origins (KSA).

⁵¹ Islamization in the interior of Kenya: A general overview by Dr. Yusuf A. Nzibo

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, KSA increased its support of mosques, madrassas, and Muslim youth and cultural centers across the area, driven by the global oil boom and a goal to propagate the ultraconservative Wahhabi form of Islam throughout the Muslim world.⁵² Opportunities for young people from East Africa to study in the Arab world have grown significantly. These young people challenged the ASWJ institutions' established order when they went home with increasingly conservative and exclusive views of Islam. This marked the beginning of the entrenchment and promotion of puritanical Salafi/Wahhabi beliefs. The ASWJ centers by then were prevalent in Lamu, Malindi, and Mombasa, the major coastal towns of Kenya with links to Somalia and Tanzania. These institutions started recording incidences and debates regarding pertinent Islamic jurisprudential issues with which they were unfamiliar. This led to several mosques and madrasas being taken by the Wahabi Salafist imams and teachers following the backing of financial resources from the Gulf states and KSA.

The Wahabi Salafist infrastructure was already active and established by the late 1990s and expanded throughout Kenya's period of moderate political liberalization. In the Swahili coast, where most of the population had been Muslim for hundreds of years before European colonialism, Islamism gained some supporters who felt left out of post-independence politics.⁵³

2.3.3 The Emergence of Extremist Activism and the ideological evolution in Kenya

Kenya's ideological evolution can be traced back to the early 80s, and it is essential to note the difference between Islamism and Islam. Islamism is a political ideology, a religionize politics, while Islam is a belief system governed by robust jurisprudential backing. However, there is a relationship in that the Islamists have appropriated Islam imagery, language, and symbology to articulate a political

⁵² Islamist Extremism in East Africa by Abdi said M Ali (African center for security studies) 2016

⁵³ "Kenya: Between Hope and Despair, 1963-2011," New Haven: Yale University Press, (2011)

vision. The exact contours have had a place in Eastern Africa and Kenya in particular, following the many students who were sponsored to Saudi universities in the Middle East upon return and establishing a new Salafist / Wahabi content to mainstream madrassa curriculum.

They were mirroring the developments in the Gulf region on religious reformations attributed to their Saudi networks and financial backing. The main focus was on religious renewal as stipulated by the Wahhabi doctrines, which did not align with the established local traditional Islamic religious system practiced at the Kenyan Swahili coast.⁵⁴ These were initial attempts to cast a revival ideology suggesting what was being practiced by the ASWJ and Shia sects deviated from the main streams of Islam and the Sharia Law, a notion that was contested and created numerous debates at the time to date. They did not spare anybody, so long as one is not conforming to their view and doctrinal inclination. They established local charities, community-based organizations, debating clubs in the mid-80s, and networks globally based on their contacts garnered during their study abroad. They started active propagation and further challenged the government on “Muslim” rights, petitioning it for inclusion and addressing several grievances.

In 1992, the multiparty atmosphere in Kenya witnessed a Muslim uprising and discontent for the first time, which led to the establishment of the Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK). Nevertheless, the events in the early 80 and 90s in Afghanistan following the Soviet invasion contributed mainly to the formation of the Al-Qaida (AQ) terror group, which was ideologically supported by the Saudi academia in legitimizing their actions against the Soviets. It is worth noting that many young East African Muslims were sent to Saudia for religious studies and connected to many other global Muslim networks. Notably, the Muslim alumni from Saudi Arabia were drawn from Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. They will always debate and exchange on the position of Islam and the jihad fronts.

⁵⁴ <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/horn-season-3> last accessed 25 September 22

Following their Saudi ideological inclination, they would support and propagate jihadism and militancy. In the early 1990s, the AQ established its first base in Sudan and started links with the Salafi-based Al Ittihad Al Islamiyah (AIAI) in Somalia. This saw the introduction of key AQ figures in East Africa like Harun Fazul.

The advent of political adventurisms in Kenya triggered the emergence of key individuals who challenged the traditional Islamic order (ASWJ) in East Africa and advanced political Islam in the region. The AQ narrative gained momentum and niche itself among its local affiliates, predominantly from the Salafi school of thought. This developed a radical fringe within Kenya and Tanzania's East African coast, eventually taking control of several Mosques and madrassas. It's from this Islamist fringe that Sheikh Aboud Rogo, the radical recruiter for the Al-Shabaab, and from Tanzania, we saw the emergence of Sheikh Shabani Magezi and Sheikh Ponda Issa Ponda, who organized a violent protest in Darussalam, the capital of Tanzania. These sheiks became the face of radicalism as they found an already prepared terrain for their works.

2.3.4 The newly introduced doctrines and how they formed the extremist ideologies

The spread of Islam into the East African coast will shed light on the Islamic doctrinal change witnessed in the last 100 yrs. The first-century Muslim migration to Africa was recorded in the years 7 BH (615 CE) or 9 BH (613 CE) and comprised twelve men and four women who fled Arabia and was granted asylum by Najashi, the Negus of the Kingdom of Aksum, a Christian state that existed in modern-day Ethiopia and Eritrea.⁵⁵ Other early migrations were recorded via Somalia, the upper region of present-day Puntland, at a village called Zyla, where the first mosque in the eastern region and HOA was built by the early companions of the prophet Muhamad (PBUH). The mosque is called Masjidul kiblāh-Tain (mosque with two prayer directions), which symbolizes the shift to facing Mecca

⁵⁵ John L. Esposito, ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*. Oxford University Press. p. 351. (2003).

than Jerusalem, an order undertaken when the prophet of Islam was still alive.⁵⁶ The early Muslim migration to Africa brought the practiced doctrines permeating the East African region. Mogadishu became the earliest Muslim educational center, whereby many Muslims were sent to the various faculties on Islamic Jurisprudential issues. The atmosphere during the early centuries was accommodating and exercised lots of tolerance to the traditional belief systems practiced in this region. Many prominent sheiks in Mogadishu from the 2nd Islamic century developed and contributed to the Islamic centers of learning based on classical teachings (ASWJ) till the 17th century.⁵⁷ For all these times, Islam was practiced and adopted in the East African region with harmony and saw its spread to most East African islands to Mozambique; this was attributed to the sea trade lines the Arabs and the Portuguese dominated.

Beginning of the 18th century, the Arab peninsula in the areas of Hijaz, the present-day Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), emerged as a reformist sect in the regions of Nejd the present day (Riyadh). The sect founders Sheikh Mohamad bin Abdul Wahhab and the chief of the Saud Clan, Muhamad bin Saud, started rebellion activities against the ruling Ottoman Turks which led to a 7years confrontation that culminated in the year 1818, termed the Ottoman Wahabi War (al-ḥarb al-‘Uthmānīyah-al-Sa’udiyyah).⁵⁸ The nature and contestation of the war had a dimension of reformist agenda, which perceived the Islamic Ottoman rule as deviant to the Islamic traditions. The Saudi-Wahabi campaigns gained traction when the British aided the Saudi rebels. Many of the Islamic traditions being taught were based on the ottoman Islamic educational supervision, owing to the influence and the ruling of the Ottomans, which were widely accepted throughout the Islamic world at that juncture. The Wahabi-

⁵⁶ Briggs, Phillip Somaliland. Bradt Travel Guides. p. 7. (2012).

⁵⁷ Dr Ilmi Mahmoud, the battle dossier 2011 page 17, 2010

⁵⁸ M Zarabazo, Jamal Al-Din *The Life, Teachings and Influence of Muhammad ibn Abul-Wahhaab*. Riyadh: The Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Dawah and Guidance, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. (2005).

Saudi struggles continued despite the ottoman intervention leaving a dark history of bloodshed and confrontation in the Islamic history until the ouster of Ottoman rule in the early 1900s.⁵⁹

The Saudi new rules in the Arab peninsula first establish the Saudi kingdom by naming the Hijaz region Saudi Arabia. They followed by entrenching their religious doctrines (Wahabi/Salafist), which were antagonistic to the established classical teachings, particularly in the Eastern African region. The Saudi regime followed a strategic campaign to justify its rebellion efforts against the Ottomans, who were the defacto Muslim caliphate, and the thousands of bloodsheds amongst its fellow Muslims who were not inclined to the Wahabis and Salafist teachings. The discovery of oil reserves afforded the Saud regime the to foster its efforts in establishing centers of learning across the world in support of its puritanical teachings; this saw many of the students dispatched to Saudi learning institutions to have a different view of Islam on returning home. One of the most remarkable was a total shift in the doctrinal understandings which traditional Islam was already dispensing in the East African region, and this led to the local confrontation between the newly established Wahabi-based doctrines and the traditionally practiced Islam. The most crucial aspect of the shift is doctrines that apostatize all other Muslim sects as deviant and non-Islamic, and by extension, legitimize action and attacks both physical and intellectual. This led to the emergence of various charity institutions and support from Wahhabi centers to spread their new religion to the rest of the traditional ASWJ adherents. Several newly introduced doctrines formed the basis of the Wahhabi belief system and which many of the present-day radicals draw their legitimacy to back their action against non-Muslims and non-Wahabi Muslims in the region and around the globe. The newly introduced doctrines formed the basis of the revolt agenda against the Ottomans and had political and religious angles. After the takeover of the Arab peninsula by the Saudis, there was a shift, and the focus remained mainly on the religious justification

⁵⁹ Murphy, pp. 21–22. (2018)

and building of new doctrines to shape the Muslim world on the view established by the Saudi academia, which stemmed from days back to its founders Muhamad bin Abdulwahab and the chief Saudi.

The Wahabi doctrines formed the primary source of the ideological underpinning of most Islamist radical groups, and they have relied on the teachings for their activities and the call for Islamization of the world. Several key doctrinal standings of the Salafist/Wahhabi proponents have been identified and formed the backbone of their actions. Citing the many proclamations of the major radical figures locally and internationally, it's evident that many of these revolutionary leaders are reading from the same script and quoting from books and teachings mostly affiliated with the Wahhabi/Salafist academia. One of the most classical sources derived from the Islamic State in Syria (ISIS) or the Daesh leader Abubakar Al Baghdadi during his media speech in 2014,⁶⁰ a critical analysis of this median speech will reveal a trove of doctrinal underpinnings of the group. By extension, many radical groups are equally oriented to these justifications. The 4 hours speech articulated the vision and mission of ISIS and the intended objectives, which are to be executed by all its members across the globe.⁶¹ The speech provided the whole encasement of the doctrinal framework, which will provide the basis for understanding the radical moral fabric, a prerequisite in fighting the terrorist, and de-legitimization of their actions.

The major doctrinal issues which came out of the speech covered an array of issues touching on the need to establish the Islamic caliphate (governance), Monotheism as prescribed by their religious leaders (Salafist/Wahhabi), Hijrah (migration to the lands of Muslims), the Muslim lands (Darul Islam), the infidel lands (darul Kufur), Alwala wal Bara (Love and Hate) hakimiyah doctrines (the

⁶⁰ "Islamic State: 'Baghdadi message' issued by jihadists". BBC News. Retrieved 29 November 2022.

⁶¹ https://sitemultimedia.org/video/SITE_IS_Baghdadi_Sermon_Mosul.mp4 accessed on 15 October 22

Sharia law) and many others which might need exponential Islamic jurisprudential indulgence. These provide the foundational reasons why terrorist Islamists indulge in their campaigns. The ideological precipitation counts to these doctrines, providing the basis for fighting back the radicals. Many counter-violence extremism efforts have failed to identify these drivers and often miss their coverage; hence, decimal gains on the winning of would-be terrorists. The doctrines carry a potency bound to the foundational beliefs of Islam, making any violation of the doctrines, render one a non-Muslim according to their conviction. This has allowed the radicals to engage in campaigns in predominantly Muslim countries like Somalia, Syria, and Iraq with impunity killing fellow Muslims due to perceived violation of the doctrines.

2.4 Drivers of Islamic Religious Radicalization amongst the Youth

Adolescent boys and young men in East Africa, Europe, and America have secretly left their homes to join the Al-Shabaab militia in their training camps. Various factors have influenced the radicalization of the youth in Al-Shabaab. Firstly, the Internet of Things has facilitated the radicalization process. The Internet enables exposure of the youth as viewed from different perspectives. This is because people in homogeneous groups have similar attitudes, alternative views are not stated, and their arguments are one-sided. Secondly, the internet allows youth to experiment with identities that are vital in establishing mature identities. The internet has homogeneous echo rooms where participants share certain political or civic viewpoints, potentially exposing them to radicalization opportunities. Notwithstanding, it is very debatable how the internet allows the youth to try and embrace other points of view, especially with the availability of echo rooms.⁶²

Globally, serious concerns regarding core religious views among Muslim youth and homegrown radicalization have led to violent extremism. According to research, several systemic causes exist,

⁶² ibid

including feelings of ambiguity, perceived hostility, and perceived injustice.⁶³ These findings align with another study on the determinants of youth radicalization in the Netherlands that ascertained that personal uncertainty, perceived injustice, and group threat factors determined the radical belief system that predicts attitudes towards violence and violent personal intentions.⁶⁴ Radicalization has further been triggered by the political instability in Somalia, family instability, and local networks, which extremist recruiters take advantage of. These situations create contextual risks for the radicalization of Somalis, and other communities resettled as refugees in America, Europe, East Africa, and other parts of the world. Additionally, there is a lack of conceptualization of terrorism prevention efforts that the community may interact with to influence radicalization and recruitment.⁶⁵

According to a study conducted by Margarita on youth radicalization as a global concern to counter-terrorism, it was noted that terrorists are no longer made up of foreigners from marginalized and less developed Countries. There is now an increase in Americans, Canadians, and British youth joining the ranks of Violent Extremist Organizations. Radicalization of youths from these developed countries is becoming an essential threat to international terrorism today. The study noted reasons for young men to fall victim to radicalization as being socially isolated and lack of identity, whereby disenchanted young men turn to extremism. The majority of the recruited youths are second-generation Muslims that were born in those countries or that have recently converted to Islam. These youths can travel worldwide without being exposed to rigorous visa requirements, as no one would suspect them.⁶⁶

⁶³ Verkuyten, Maykel. "Religious fundamentalism and radicalization among Muslim minority youth in Europe." *European Psychologist* 23, no. 1 (2018): 21.

⁶⁴ Doosje, Bertjan, Annemarie Loseman, and Kees Van Den Bos. "Determinants of radicalization of Islamic youth in the Netherlands: Personal uncertainty, perceived injustice, and perceived group threat." *Journal of Social Issues* 69, no. 3 (2013): 586-604.

⁶⁵ Weine, Stevan, John Horgan, Cheryl Robertson, Sana Loue, Amin Mohamed, and Sahra Noor. "Community and family approaches to combating the radicalization and recruitment of Somali-American youth and young adults: A psychosocial perspective." *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* 2, no. 3 (2009): 181-200.

⁶⁶ Bizina, Margarita, and David H. Gray. "Radicalization of Youth as a Growing Concern for Counter-Terrorism Policy." *Global security studies* 5, no. 1 (2014)

In a report documented by Yusuf Moeed on Youth radicalization in Pakistan and its implications on US Foreign Policy, it was noted that the high potential for youth radicalization resulted from a poor education system coupled with disparate economic opportunities in the society. Additionally, there is an extremist infrastructure, with social networks of Islamic political and militant outfits and policies that favour/enhance Islamist influence. These are warning signals for boys and young men to be lured toward extremism.⁶⁷

2.5 Chapter Conclusion

The chapter has exhaustively discussed the role of religious sects in radicalization. It has given the history of the Islam religious sects, outlined the extremist sects, and outlined the drivers of youth in the extremist sects being lured into radicalization based on internal and external factors. The internal factors are hostility, uncertainty, and injustice, while the external factors are the internet, political instability, social isolation, poor education system, and lack of economic opportunities. There is a need for a comprehensive approach to deal with the problem of radicalization amongst the youth. These could be through community engagement, building trust in the law, and social and local population workers.

⁶⁷ Yusuf, Moeed. "Prospects of youth radicalization in Pakistan." *Brookings, Analysis Paper* 14, no. 7 (2008).

CHAPTER THREE

THE USE OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN THE RADICALISATION PROCESS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the role and importance that terrorist organizations place on propaganda by using the media to expand their appeal and recruit members to join their organization's cause. Consequently, the media and its instruments can have both a positive and a negative impact on radical organizations such as the Al-Shabaab, the subject focus of this study.

As a way of addressing the primary objective of this chapter, it is crucial to define what the media is and what strategies are entailed in radicalization. The media is critical in connecting individuals with likeminded perspectives on religion, politics, and cultural geniality. Still, it can also generate perceptions of what terrorists and potential sympathizers may find more tolerant of their worldviews. This can, in turn, create or foster a feeling of closeness to terrorists and their causes. The virtual connections perpetuated through media communications may provide practical guidance in facilitating terrorism⁶⁸.

To demonstrate how seriously terrorist groups take their connection to the media, Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden's second in command, Ayman al- Zawahiri was cited in 2011 as saying:

"We are in a battle, and that more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media. And that we are in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of our Umma" (Shuji, 2012: 4).

⁶⁸ Neumaan, (2013).

Similarly, a statement made by the Al-Shabaab militia outfit in July 2010 also demonstrates their firm commitment to the media and communication networks; they are cited as saying:

*“...the media battle being waged by the Mujahidin is now at one of its fiercest and the most important stages”*⁶⁹.

Consequently, it is possible to argue from the inception that terrorism is a strategy. One may go as far as to say that contemporary terrorism is directly linked to the media. Leading scholars have defined terrorism as a violent strategy or process individuals undertake to achieve particular political goals⁷⁰. This means that terrorism is a strategy on its own. Louise Richardson has, for instance, extended that observation by adding that terrorism has a strong political motivation and that there is often a media strategy employed to accompany the violence invoked by the radicals towards innocent non-combatants⁷¹. The media strategy aims to spread its message to a broader audience about its targets and achievements.

3.2 Radical Communication Strategies Employed by the Al-Shabaab

The Somali-based insurgency group Al-Shabaab's primary objective is to seek a revolution from the current democratically elected central government. The insurgency seeks to rid Somalia of foreign forces and eventually institute an Islamic governance system based on a religious ethos known as Sharia. To actualize its plans, the terrorist group has three radical media communication strategies.

3.2.1 Strategic level

The first radical communication strategy of the insurgency group is designed and operated at what can be termed a strategic level. It primarily aims to communicate strategic content, the militias' vision of

⁶⁹ Shuji, (2012:4).

⁷⁰ Strube, 2005; Edwards et al, 2013

⁷¹ Richardson, (2000).

establishing an Islamic state in Somalia. Their messages at this strategic level are complex. Like a corporate organization, the group is more concerned with its image as a legitimate, well-organized, and focused organization. They appeal to other more prominent and well-resourced terror organizations, such as Al-Qaeda. Still, also the larger Islamic State (ISIS) for solidarity ventures, and the aim here is to have a global or universal appeal for Muslim solidarity.

At the strategic level, Al-Shabaab dedicates a lot of time and resources to ensure that its messaging services and the language of radicalization is acceptable to its international audience. The literature they release is appropriately edited, and care is taken to demonstrate their knowledge of international affairs and try and connect their grievance ideologically against the clutches and evils of globalization, particularly the spread of Westernization and modernization's infidelity to the Sharia code of conduct.

The militia makes a serious effort to depict themselves as vanguards of jihad and the righteousness and justice seekers for Somalia as a country and the wider Muslim community worldwide. At the strategic level, the group also tries to dismiss other political terror organizations as weak and strategically inferior. At this strategic level, the militia group uses a combination of sophisticated and complex software for communication to reach each other and other international terror organizations. This software is ordinarily beyond reach for the Al-Shabaab local operatives, and assistance is offered at a high level by other mother organizations such as Al-Qaeda or ISIS.

3.2.2 Operational level

The operational level is the second level of radical communication initiated by the Al-Shabaab insurgency. At this level, the militia's programmatic activities are designed to maintain 'confidence' and demonstrate 'competence' in their local area of operation. The aim is to showcase the militia group's seriousness regarding their warriors' abilities in executing their duties by carrying out attacks. Messages at this operational level are concerned with boosting their attacks during terror operations,

such as the number of those killed and injured and the damage caused to properties of those they perceive as their enemies, such as the AMISOM or Kenya's Defense Forces (KDF). The media messages that the group releases many times have no bearing on the actual truth on the ground. Nevertheless, the group is more focused on misinformation that portrays it favorably or victoriously in the conflict.

The Al-Shabaab uses its radio Andalus to air audio messages that strengthen what listeners imagine or hear around themselves, and there is a lot of posturing at this operational level. At the operational level, the insurgency is keen to demonstrate its concerns about local issues and simultaneously showcase the governments or the enemies' shortfalls as deliberate. The enemies are denied a voice for a balanced media reportage.

Arguably, since around 2008, when the militia group captured and controlled large sections of the southern parts of Somalia and made a success at instituting civil mechanisms of administration, this radical communication strategy has worked well in terms of propaganda for the group. They have managed to portray with some success the Somali Federal Government, AMISOM, the KDF, and other governing administrations of the regional states within Somalia as weak, unstable, and without a clear agenda for the Somali community. At the same time, the Al-Shabbab has appeared, at least in using the deceptive lens of media propaganda, as more concerned and caring by their visibility and their attempt at engaging and resolving development issues at the local level. At this level, one finds that the local leadership of the insurgency engages with itself dynamically. The leadership tries to address and quell any issue that arises at the local level.

3.2.3 Tactical level

The third level of radical communication strategy employed by the Al-Shabaab operates at the tactical level. The communication strategy at this level aims to propagate narratives that discredit the enemy

or Western influence. Secondly, at this level, the strategy aims to amplify any small victories made during operations. The group tries to accept or claim responsibility for attacks such as those undertaken during the Westgate Mall in Kenya in 2013. Al-Shabaab's amplified its terrorism through its then leader Ahmed Godane targeting Kenya after 2011 when Kenya's Defence Forces entered Somalia.

The attacks in Kenya were carried out by local militia, a minor franchise of the leading Al-Shabaab group in Somalia. The franchise was composed of nationals from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. The tactical strategy was initiated as part of the insurgency's tactical shift from a rebellious religious group that controls parts of southern Somalia to a more deadly and tactically organized insurgency that can inflict severe damage to populations in the wider East African region.

3.2.4. Restricted and Classified communication

It is evident that the militia group uses the internet to communicate sensitive operational details to its cells to proceed to execute a particular mission. Using emails or coded messages on specific chat platforms is a common way that al-Shabaab terrorists use to communicate their planning content. A study by Timothy Sikorski⁷² that evaluated the effectiveness of al-Shabaab's propaganda by examining the correlations between the insurgency's media propaganda and its strategic effectiveness concluded that the output of Al-Shabaab's radical communication strategies and propaganda do not translate into effects. The study further demonstrated that the insurgency's overall propaganda effort was counterproductive.

⁷² Sikorski, T. *Airwaves and Microblogs: A statistical Analysis of Al-Shabaab's Propaganda Effectiveness*. US Naval College (2014).

3.3 The Media as a Strategy of Terrorism

Contemporary terrorism activities executed by groups such as the Al-Shabaab of Somalia can be equated to media terrorism in that the groups seek maximum publicity for their violent acts whenever they strike. On the one hand, the media houses are also quick to publicize the information as breaking news items whenever terrorist organizations like Al-Shabaab strike havoc on society. This is because these terrorist acts are often dramatic or even spectacular in terms of public interest and often earn them an increase in viewership, giving them an economic or commercial advantage. Terrorist organizations such as al-Shabaab or sometimes referred to as the Mujahidin Youth Movement (MYM), together with their allies remain acutely aware of this, and very often, they tend to exploit the media's thirst for coverage of their shockingly violent militia activities.

Whereas it is often expected that the role of the media in most democratic countries is to act as the fourth estate, in other words the media is a democratic dispensation is expected to act as a watchdog of the state or its government by informing the public on what the government is doing without prejudice. However, the media many a times does not adhere to the expectation of accurate reporting and therefore informing the public, it at times takes specific sides or stand on particular issues and is often guided by its editorial policy which is also driven by the conception of profit generation. Therefore, the media, its technological infrastructure, and its networks have what can be described as a symbiotic relationship to terrorism.

Divergently, when it comes to terrorist groups, the primary objective of such groups and their activities are often determined by disturbing orderly processes of everyday society. They aim to gain media and public attention by disrupting ordinary political, social, and cultural life. The strategies of the terrorist outfits are to raise the alarm in society by using and abusing the media platforms while simultaneously physically wounding the image of the state and government.

Terrorism in contemporary times may not exist had it not been for the media and the idea of mass communication and mass audiences. Generally speaking, the media fascinates the public with what can be described as abnormal stories with headlines such as ‘man bites dog’ and so forth. Terrorist organizations such as the al-Shabaab have understood and subsequently went on to exploit the media’s unquenchable thirst for repulsive violence. Terrorist outfits have made media strategies to advance their radicalization and recruit members. It would be far simpler to dismiss terrorist organizations such as the al-Shabaab as criminally insane, psychopaths or sociopaths, or other diseased parasitic mass murderers. It is possible to argue on the contrary that terrorism unleashed through bombings and another target set of violent acts would have minimal impact on the terror groups had it not been for the media exposure that terrorists crave and are often granted by the media.

3.4 The Sociology of Radicalism by the Al-Shabaab

In sociological terms, terrorism is understood as a socially constructed phenomenon. From this understanding, terrorism is an interpretation of events and their presumed causes. Scholar Austin Turk (2004) has argued that it is crucial to understand this sociological perspective in that it gives a background as to why terrorist groups such as the al-Shabaab have deployed media strategies as part of their radicalization campaigns, recruitment drive, and global status postures.

Saha et al.⁷³ observe that when the media captures an individual through the reporting as either a terrorist or engaging in terrorist activities, this is usually a war of words. It may as well be the case that the terrorist outfit identifies that individual as a liberator or a martyr. Therefore, labeling or name-calling is a war between those engaged in terrorism and those fighting them. The government’s definition often wins the day against non-state actors such as the al-Shabaab.

⁷³ Saha, K., Chandrasekharan, E., and De Choudhury, M. Prevalence and psychological effects of hateful speech in online college communities. In *Proceedings of the 10th ACM conference on web science* (pp. 255–264) (2019)..

Political scholars pointed out that after 1945 personal communication was far more excellent than any other mode of public communication⁷⁴. He meant personal touch had far more effect than television, radio, film, or print media. This understanding helps comprehend why terrorist groups like the al-Shabaab tend to pay attention to tailor-making or personalizing their messages in the media. These personalized messages tend to assist them in reaching the vulnerable members of society who become susceptible to radicalization and recruitment as potential terror cells.

Suggestively, terrorism is an intersubjective phenomenon shaped by social construction through media discourse and practices. This, in a way, creates potential for counter-terrorism measures aimed at curbing the radicalization of youth in society by groups like the al-Shabaab to be undertaken by focusing on limiting the exposure of terrorism propaganda material in the broader media circuit and networks. Therefore, one may argue that there is a strong correlation between terrorism, radicalization, and the media. The argument here is locked in two questions. The first question is does the media at present hinder terrorism? Whilst the secondary question might be does the media's restriction of publicity of terrorist units like al-Shabaab lessen their impact in terms of radicalization? These questions are important because they give rise to the reasons why terrorist groups like the al-Shabaab employ media strategies in their terrorist campaigns and targets.

In a study by the Prison and Probation Service that looked at the role of the Internet in radicalizing extremists offenders in British prisons, scholars concluded that the Internet played a central role in the radicalization process of the youth population in prisons in both England and Wales. The increasing rise of social media platforms was also blamed for the increase in radicalizations⁷⁵. Another study undertaken earlier by other scholars also concluded that the rapid expansion of the media facilities,

⁷⁴ Hamm, M. S., and Spaaij, R. *The age of lone wolf terrorism*. New York: Columbia University Press, (2017).

⁷⁵ Kenyon, J., Baker-Beall, C., and Binder, J. Lone-actor terrorism: a systematic literature review. *Stud. Conflict Terror.* (2021a). 1–24.

especially the internet, has significantly changed processes of communication that militia organizations like the al-Shabaab use to conform to an equally evolving world. These changes brought about by advancements in technological communications systems are leading to new threats connecting to the spread of radicalism and fanatical ideologies within societies⁷⁶.

3.5 Al-Shabaab's Media Strategies

A media strategy is simply a way or approaches an insurgent outfit uses to market itself and advance its mission and operations. Military scholars argue that it is crucial to understand the political and socio-historical background of countries such as Somalia, where the terrorist group al-Shabaab emerged from. Somalia is situated at what may be termed as strategic intersections of Africa and the Middle East; it is a country that has scars from decades of intra-clan warfare that has affected the entire Horn of Africa region, which stretches to the Red Sea peninsular, a region that has also been dented with Salafi-Jihadi and other blue-economy struggles.

The region where the al-Shabaab operates has significant geopolitical interest to the United States hegemony and its allies, with substantial military and commercial interests spread across the region. For instance, the United States has a massive active counterterror operation facility in Djibouti that monitors extremisms in Africa and the Middle East. That said, one may posit that the antiterrorism departments initiated by the US hegemony in the region have aided in globalizing the al-Shabaab militia into a global or a significant affiliate of a well-known terrorist group in the Middle East.

As pointed out earlier, the extremist phenomena in Somalia have always existed but were mostly kept under check by the former Siyyad Barre Government vigil. However, after the overthrow of Siyad

⁷⁶ Bastug, M. F., Douai, A. and Akca, D. Exploring the “demand side” of online radicalization: Evidence from the Canadian context. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 1–22. (2018)

Barre's government in 1991, the extremist tried to fill the vacuum to win the adjudication space since most of the religious orientation was handled by the Ahlul Sunah Wal Jamah (ASWJ) who are Sufis moderates and apolitical by design. The Somalis, by then, were referring most of their adjudication of cases to the ASWJ sheiks and institutions, which by default, the extremist narrative was always under check. Following General Aideed's forces combined with the Mogadishu people's revolt in 1991 to overthrow Said Barre's government, the extremist has been trying to replace any subsequently elected government in Somalia⁷⁷.

3.5.1 Information Technology

The evolution of information technology is one of the strategic factors that has led to an equal rise in technology adoption by militia outfits fighting religious and political conflicts worldwide. This has led terrorist outfits to increase the number of those they can reach as supporters, engage in recruitment drives, a source for finances, engage in propaganda, and train recruits to unleash extreme or deadly violence in societies.

3.5.2 Spreading the 'Ummah Consciousness.'

Al-Shabaab has advanced its media strategies to ensure that its radicalization and recruitment messages and its spread of fear reach as many people in the world as possible. The organization relies heavily on social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Its primary target has been the Muslim community in Somalia, across Africa, and the diaspora.

These communication Media are used to spread the militia organization's profile as a caring and determined organization to defend the battlefield on behalf of Islam against what it perceives as

⁷⁷ Lloyd, M., and Dean, C. (2015). The development of structured guidelines for assessing risk in extremist offenders. *J. Threat Assess. Manag.* 2, 40–52.

Westernized infidels and the West's neoliberal political agenda that they find culturally and religiously corrosive and offending.

In intergalactic terms, the al-Shabaab presents itself in media as being engaged in a battlefield of civilizations between good and evil or right and wrong. This is what has been termed as a religious consciousness raising or more specific in the present context as rising the 'ummah consciousness' that is aimed at encouraging potential recruits to join Islamic missions worldwide.

3.5.3 Radicalization

As part of its media strategy, the al-Shabaab outfit ensures its messages have heavy undercurrents of radicalization. Propaganda and messages with indoctrination tend to accompany their literature on the religious transformation embedded with extremist ideologies on the internet.

In a study by the Prison and Probation Service that looked at the role of the Internet in radicalizing extremists' offenders in British prisons, scholars concluded that the Internet played a central role in the radicalization process of the youth population in prisons in both England and Wales. The increasing rise of social media platforms was also blamed for the increase in radicalizations⁷⁸. Another study undertaken earlier by other scholars also concluded that the rapid expansion of the media facilities, especially the internet, has significantly changed processes of communication that militia organizations like the al-Shabaab use to conform to an equally evolving world. These changes brought about by advancements in technological communications systems are leading to new threats connecting to the spread of radicalism and fanatical ideologies within societies⁷⁹. The media, as such,

⁷⁸ Kenyon, J., Binder, J. F., and Baker-Beall, C. Understanding the role of the internet in the process of radicalization: an analysis of convicted extremists in England and Wales. *Stud. Conflict Terror.*, 1–25. (2022b).

⁷⁹ Bastug, M. F., Douai, A. and Akca, D. 'Exploring the "demand side" of online radicalization: Evidence from the Canadian context. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 1–22. (2018).

remains a vital militia tool for radicalization and recruitment. Some forums are also used to debate the direction of Jihad's struggles.

3.5.4 Media Propaganda

Propaganda is one of the most common and easiest media strategies employed by the Al-Shabaab militia in its radicalization ploy. Propaganda means spreading falsehoods about a particular position, such as religion, to advance a specific work deliberately. This is also a media strategy to communicate ideological and practical explanations to justify the terrorists' goals or objectives.

3.5.5 Terrorism Fundraising

The Al-Shabaab, like other terrorist organizations, has a media strategy aimed at fundraising for its terror operations. The internet plays a critical role in communicating an appeal to a broader audience, especially in the Islamic diaspora community, to assist the militia in achieving its Jihadist goals. The strategies include direct solicitation from possible sympathizers, promotions of charitable events or organizations used as proxies, etc. Companies such as Paypal and Skype are known to be used to facilitate transactions in addition to other payment facilities.

3.5.6 Recruitment of Youth and Minors

The militia group uses the internet to publish material, especially videos and enticing and inciting literature with images to solicit sympathy and recruit potential members or cells. The recruitment messages are propaganda used in secured websites and other internet chat groups designed in such a way as to recruit, albeit clandestinely. Minors are often targeted since they are often the heaviest online content users compared to other age groups. Therefore, cartoons and stories about children that elevate things, such as martyrs in video games, are also used.

3.5.7 Training

The al-Shabaab militia also uses online media platforms to promote its organizational culture and profile itself through paramilitary training programs showcased on selected videos uploaded on Youtube and Facebook, and other social media platforms. This training gives details on how to build bombs using readily available materials from supermarkets as well as explosives and how to handle firearms.

3.5.8 Cyberattacks

Terrorism carried out by militia groups like al-Shabaab is increasingly also focusing on the internet and websites specifically. Militia groups increasingly exploit ways to target their enemies through their websites and other online platforms. They do these by hacking into systems and providing malicious misinformation to governments and other actors they perceive as enemies. Also, in their cyber-attacks, computer viruses, and malware are common for militia groups.

3.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the role and importance that the Al-Shabaab terrorist outfit places on propaganda by using the media to expand its organizational appeal and recruit members to join their militia activities. The chapter found that terrorist organizations tend to employ media strategies by targeting the use of the media and its instruments, especially the internet, to not only spread their propaganda messages aimed at recruiting new members but also to fundraise and carry out their violent missions. Al-Shabaab's media strategy appears inseparable from its political strategy aimed at unleashing terror on states and governments that do not conform to its religious persuasion of Islam.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES ON COUNTERING IDEOLOGICAL NARRATIVES IN COUNTER-RADICALISATION AMONG THE AL-SHABAAB

4.1 Introduction

The overall objective of this study is to explore the nature of Al-Shabaab ideologies and the extent to which ideologies have catalyzed radicalization in the Al-Shabaab terror group. As such, this fourth chapter presents the challenges and opportunities in countering ideological narratives in counter-radicalization among the insurgency.

This chapter is divided into two. The first part examines, by way of examples, the challenges experienced during some Operations that Kenya activated following the 28th attack on Kenya by Al-Shabaab in the horrifying Westgate Mall siege that left 67 persons killed and scores others injured⁸⁰. It also discusses other similar counter-radicalization efforts designed to counter ideological narratives from similar Jihadist groups to the Al-Shabaab in other jurisdictions. The second part of the chapter scrutinizes existing opportunities in the counter-radicalization efforts.

In the previous chapter of our project, we discussed in detail the various stages that Al-Shabaab employs, culminating in strategic, operational, and tactical media strategies deliberately designed to spread out its vile radicalization and recruitment propaganda messages using the media to expand its organizational appeal as well as to recruit members to join in their deadly militia campaigns.

The chapter concluded that the insurgency tends to employ media strategies by targeting the use of the media and its instruments, especially the internet, to not only spread their propaganda messages aimed at recruiting new members but also to fundraise and carry out their violent missions. Propaganda is

⁸⁰ Williams, P. 'After Westgate: Opportunities and Challenges in the War against Al-Shabaab', *International Affairs*, 90: 4. (2014).

one of the most common and easiest media strategies employed by the Al-Shabaab militia in its radicalization ploy. It means spreading falsehoods about a particular position, such as religion, to advance a certain specific position deliberately. Al-Shabaab's media strategy appears inseparable from its political strategy aimed at unleashing terror on states and governments that do not conform to its religious persuasion of Islam.

Radical media messaging by the Al-Shabaab insurgency aside, what has emerged from examining the role or the exploitative use of the media platform, particularly online forums and the broadcast and other internet communication technology, have further complicated efforts by governments and security agencies in terms of preventing and countering radicalization of community members from terror groups like the Al-Shabaab. We argued that the success of counter-ideological and counter-radicalization narratives might lie in a multi-stakeholder approach, not just the KDF and other security agencies under the stewardship of the Ministry of Interior.

4.2 Challenges in Countering Jihadi Narratives

In this section, we want to contextualize the reaction to the Westgate Mall attack in Nairobi and argue that counter-ideological narratives and other counter-radicalization strategies can be hampered by wrong analysis and subsequent or expressive response. In this study, ideological narratives are understood as a worldview adopted by jihadists like Al-Shabaab to convince their potential members that it is worth it to join the violent cause. On the other hand, counter-narratives or alternative narratives are tactics employed by the state and its agencies to confront the propaganda perpetuated by insurgencies. It is important to note that insurgencies spend a lot of their time designing their propaganda narrative and materials and target a specific, often vulnerable group of individuals with a history of grievances with the state as they market their 'ideal' worldview, which very often tends to be coded in the violent extremist ideological narrative.

Scholars have pointed out that Al-Shabaab, for instance, is known to package its extremist narrative in a persuasive, creative, and artistically attractive⁸¹. Williams argues that Al-Shabaab's media strategies for radicalization and potential recruitment are designed to persuade ordinary folks to join them and to inspire them. Therefore, it is essential to understand the insurgency's ideological and radicalization narrative and media strategy "if the counter-narrative is to succeed in presenting an alternative to the propaganda of violent extremist groups."

4.2.1 Flaws in Counter-Ideological Narratives

4.2.1.1 Story telling 'Hawakati'

One of the fundamental weaknesses of the current counter-ideological narrative approach is that it is grounded on a weak foundation. The argument here is that those perpetuating the violent jihadist gospel on behalf of a group like the Al-Shabaab are gifted ideologues who have read the Islamic faith's holy scriptures. They have deliberately chosen to extract and twist the messages to suit their broader religious and political agenda under calls for Jihadi for those they perceive as obstructing their broader ambition and gain. One scholar had put it well when he observed that the terrorist ideologues of Al-Shabaab are literary authors and storytellers⁸² or what in the Arabic language is referred to as *Hakawati*.

4.2.1.2 Conditionalities of external funding

Another weakness in the counter-narrative discourse is that existing funding comes from the leading Western countries who also insist that its recipients, mainly in the developing world, including Kenya, must adopt their imposed strategies without considering local approaches. This imperial or one-way top-down approach has suffocated innovation within the defence and security sectors regarding

⁸¹ Williams, (2014), Ibid.

⁸² Ibid, p4.

counter-ideological narratives that can match the ‘trendy,’ ‘techy-savvy,’ and engaging ideological reports based on religious falsehoods propagated by the Al-Shabaab.

In the name of donors, Western funders appear not interested in the outcome of their own counter-ideological narratives and counter-terrorism approaches in terms of their impact and effectiveness. They seem more interested in financial accountability and transparency details of how their funds were utilized and not in whether their imposed strategies or the primary objective was effectively met or not.

4.2.1.3 Indigenous approaches

Therefore, in our view, to improve the current globalized formula of counter-ideological narrative, there is a need for a lot to improve upon, for instance, consideration for local input as viable strategies incorporated into the overall counter-terrorism policy and security framework instead of only using the Western template that is outdated and pays scant attention to indigenous tactical expertise and methods.

4.2.1.4 Understanding Islamic Jurisprudence

There is also a need for counter-ideological narratives to pay critical attention to Islamic jurisprudence to understand the religion's depths and the subsequent misinterpretation that terrorist ideologues run away with and weaponize in the name of Jihadi. At the root of its moral fabric, ideology plays a critical role in guiding the Al-Shabaab terror campaigns. The clan structure set up in Somalia also plays a significant role in influencing how the insurgency operates within and outside Somalia and its internal and external radicalization programs.

One important point to note is that it is possible to argue that the terrorist ideologues behind the Al-Shabaab appear to succeed in their radicalization and subsequent recruitment of psychologically

vulnerable populations across different countries is that they are simply better organized and methodical in their targeting messages and forums that they use to lure potential ‘soldiers’ and victims alike. These radical clerics tend to be well-funded by certain rich countries in the Middle East and receive heavy backing in military hardware and software under the auspices of religious or charitable support. Furthermore, some of those who support these radical ideologues are well-connected, influential individuals within Kenya's government and civil society. These individuals support the airing of revolutionary summons and receive a lot of financial support to produce literature that supports and advances their radical narratives, even in institutions of higher learning.

One may argue that since the 9th September 2001 terrorist attack at the Twin Towers and the Pentagon in America, the collective response to the war on terror appears to have lacked a strategic depth and focus on tackling the ideological agenda responsible for radicalization. “Degrading” groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS will not solve our problem. Another like-minded group will inevitably emerge if we do not delegitimize and destroy the nihilistic ideology our Islamist enemies embrace.⁸³

In another comparative study that looked at radicalization between the Al-Shabaab and the Mombasa Republican Council, Anneli Botha⁸⁴ found that natives of Uganda and Kenya were heavily involved in radicalizing and recruiting their fellow nationals into the terror group in Somalia. The study shows that the Al-Shabaab later changed tact and activated the recruited terror cells to execute terrorist acts back in their countries. The successfully radicalized and indoctrinated individuals left their countries and joined Somalia in fighting the government and other ‘foreign forces in Somalia.

⁸³ Eneboe, David. ‘It's the Ideology: How to Defeat Islamist Terrorism Once and for All’. Potomac Institute Press.

⁸⁴ Botha, A. *Radicalisation in Kenya: Recruitment to Al-Shabaab and Mombasa Republican Council*, ISS Paper 265. (2014).

4.2.2 The Nairobi - Westgate Mall Attack

Kenya suffered its first jihadist strike on 7th August 1998 when Islamic terrorists executed attacks on the US Embassy in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. Both attacks were attributed to the infamous al-Qaeda terrorist group, A-Shabaab, an active affiliate. The 1998 terrorist attack was the first real experience of Islamic terrorism in East Africa⁸⁵. Since then, especially after the KDF entered Somalia in 2011, the Somalia-based Al-Shabaab insurgency has escalated its attacks on the military and security agencies. Still, it has also increased its targets of civilian populations in places of worship, eateries, and other public places⁸⁶.

The Westgate Mall attack in Kenya's capital Nairobi on 21 September 2013 by the Al-Shabaab left 67 people dead and wounded more than 200.⁸⁷ The four jihadists who carried out the attacks were killed in action by Kenya's security forces. Their identities were later revealed in a parliamentary report. One was said to be a Norwegian of Somali ancestry, while the other three were all Somali nationals.

4.2.3 Weaknesses identified

The parliamentary report further noted that at that time (2013), Kenya had been targeted by the Al-Shabaab insurgency 28 times since the KDF undertook its mission in Somalia in 2011 and later joined the AMISOM forces in 2012. More importantly, the report identifies weaknesses that left Kenya vulnerable to such an attack and further suggests ways for the security fraternity to avoid such pitfalls. The report identified the vast and near open border with Somalia as a problem. Also, the security agencies were said to have been at ease, and their level of preparedness was poor at best⁸⁸.

⁸⁵ Botha, Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Williams, P. 'After Westgate: Opportunities and Challenges in the War against Al-Shabaab', *International Affairs*, 90: 4. (2014).

⁸⁸ Ibid.

The report by the Joint Committee on Administration and National Security; and Defence and Foreign Relations concluded that there was a ‘nationwide systemic failure’ by various security agencies that led to embarrassing cases of looting at the mall by some military and police officers during the four-day attack by the insurgents. The report also identified youth radicalization as a significant problem that must be addressed strategically. The report noted that there were more than 500 youth from Kenya that had been recruited into the Somali-based insurgency. Furthermore, it was reported that there was an increase and availability of small arms and light weapons in addition to an increase of more than six hundred thousand refugees from Somalia in Kenya at the time.

4.2.3 Measures to Address Institutional Weaknesses

4.2.3.1 Operation Linda Nchi

Many reasons drove Kenya to initiate a military operation termed “*Operation Linda Nchi*.” Firstly, the fragility of the state in Somalia created a sanctuary for jihadists. Secondly, the vast and challenging to-control border between Kenya and Somalia gave insurgents easy access to Kenya to execute their deadly targets. As soon as the operation began, Kenya saw an increase in retaliatory terrorist activities in Kenya. Most prominently, the West Gate Mall attack, and again in Mpeketoni in Lamu, there was also an attack on a public service bus in Garissa and another at a local University in the same town that killed 148, mostly students and their teachers together with other civilians.

Two decades earlier, Kenya experienced what can be described as a paradigm shift in terms of terrorism. As we have explained earlier, the country saw an increase in several domestic or homegrown terrorists, unlike much earlier periods where the idea of terrorism was quickly linked to transnational groups in the Middle East.

4.2.3.2 The Challenge of Constitutionalism and the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2012

It is a combination of these increased incidences of terrorism activities over the past few years that urged the national assembly to introduce the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2012⁸⁹. The Act was considered an improvement from the previous proposed legislation in that it accommodated the Bill of Rights situated at Chapter four of the 2010 constitution. Unlike another Bill introduced in 2003.

Important in our present context, the Act prohibits all forms of participation in either the recruitment or training of terrorists. It also criminalizes all forms of terrorism. Care is taken to ensure that action can be taken against sympathizers and those who assist terrorists by sometimes concealing information from security agencies. Furthermore, the Act addresses issues of radicalization in schools at other places of worship and forbids any engagement that may support terror activities.

The Act strives to create a semblance of balance. On the one hand, it attempted to protect civil liberties and, on the other hand, combat insurgencies from groups like the Al-Shabaab. The Judiciary in Kenya has been instrumental in upholding the culture of constitutionalism, especially in counter-terrorism measures. There has been very little success in terms of convictions of terrorists in Kenyan courts. There are many cases where the judiciary has granted bail to individuals suspected of terrorism⁹⁰. Legal scholars⁹¹ have pointed out that the legislation enacted to prevent terrorism and initiate counter-terrorism structures is sometimes a problem in that it hampers efforts undertaken by security authorities and the military.

In other words, antiterrorism legislation and other security frameworks are constrained in a democratic state such as Kenya, with the threshold determined by the constitution with a progressive bill of rights

⁸⁹ The Prevention of Terrorism Act, No. 30 of 2012 .

⁹⁰ Klare, E. 'Legal Culture and Transformative Constitutionalism' *South African Journal on Human Rights*.146. 14., (1998).

⁹¹ Klare, E. 'Legal Culture and Transformative Constitutionalism' *South African Journal on Human Rights*.146. 14 (1998).

chapter. This chapter sometimes limits the introduction of security legislation and policies that appear to restrict citizens' rights. Civil society organizations often initiate calls that the introduction of such laws be subjected to the constitutionality test. This has adversely affected counter-radicalization, counter-ideological narratives, and other military strategies aimed at reducing the influence through radicalizing psychologically vulnerable populations.

4.2.3.3 Extrajudicial killings

Extrajudicial killings or killing someone without the authority of the law became common in Kenya in cases concerning terrorism suspects. It can be argued that when it comes to fighting the war on terrorism, there is an inevitable tension that will occur for the state. On the one hand, the state is responsible for engaging in its affairs by adhering to the rule of law. On the other hand, the state is equally responsible for maintaining safety by preventing terrorism. One may argue that it is, in fact, this grey area that may have led to the rise in extrajudicial killings in Kenya. This goes against the right to a fair hearing, as the Constitution prescribes.

Despite the Mombasa Republican Council's (MRC) lack of involvement in terrorist activities, it is sometimes assumed that the group is connected to the al-Shabaab in Kenya's coastal area. The organization was briefly banned, and its members were detained in October 2010 due to demonstrations asking for the region to secede from Nairobi.

Scholars point out that those extrajudicial killings in Kenya began long ago, with the recent war on terrorism. Politicians and those with dissenting political views have suffered such fates from the 1960s to the 1970s and 80s⁹². In recent years, individuals of Somali ethnicity and selected groups of Muslims

⁹² Muraya, J. (2015). Joseph Muraya, KNCHR: Kenya police guilty of extra-judicial killings, September 15, 2015; See Kenya National Commission on Human Rights Report, 'The Cry of Blood' Report on Extra-Judicial Killings and Disappearances, September, 2008.

have been killed or disappeared without a trace due to the war on terror. Security agencies have been accused of extra-judiciary killings, especially in the coastal region, including Nairobi's Mombasa City Eastleigh area. It has been reported that security agencies would pick up Muslim youth in certain parts of the country and religious leaders considered extremists, and their whereabouts would become unknown⁹³. This has been counterproductive in countering ideological narratives and counter-radicalization strategies since it has played in the hands of Al-Shabaab's propaganda machinations for recruitment.

4.3 Existing Opportunities in Counter-Radicalization

In this second section of this chapter, the study looks at the sociology of group behavior. It suggests these important features shape the character's ideological and religious inclination. Given Kenya's complexity and diversity, there is a need to rethink pathways to counter-ideological narratives and counter-radicalization strategies because the current "one size fits all" approach is ineffective.

4.3.1 Fair Administration of Justice

The extrajudicial execution of specific ethnically profiled individuals labeled as 'problematic,' whether radical Islamic scholars or unemployed Muslim youths, should be reconsidered. A recent comparative study examining the Al-Shabaab and the MRC in Mombasa City concluded that it was counterproductive. The analysis using data drawn from those recruited by either the MRC or the Al-Shabaab showed that members of these radical organizations increased their recruitment drives by hundreds to their organizations ensuring a new wave of radicalism and renewed energy among its members in their tenacity regardless of threats of violence or imprisonment as deterrents. Botha observes that "an effective counterterrorism policy and strategy should appreciate the broader context

⁹³ Ibid.

in which violent actions or attacks occur and seek to meaningfully and non-violently attend to the problems thrown up by this context”⁹⁴.

4.3.1.1 Human rights discourse

Human rights law is an integral part of the war on terrorism. The court system must reflect a degree of fairness even to individuals considered despicable in the eyes of many. Human rights must not be violated in the name of fighting terrorism by security agencies or their personnel. If when human rights are violated in the manner of battling terrorism, it will simply be self-defeating. Al-Shabaab works hard at portraying its enemies as violators of human rights, and it uses its media strategies, one of which is tactical, to spread its radicalization messages to potential foot soldiers. Therefore, an environment lacking justice can easily become a breeding ground for radicalism and terrorism.

4.3.2 Alternative narratives

There is a need to amplify the alternative voices who understand the dangerous summons or one-sided and often misguided interpretation of the Holy Scriptures from the Koran. Therefore, credible voices must be incorporated to counter the ideological narrative being spread out by the insurgency.

It is essential to deconstruct the toxic worldview prominent in extremists such as Al-Shabaab jihadists by presenting an alternative based on moderation, tolerance, and diversity. As argued earlier, Islam has several sects with similar fundamental and foundational beliefs with divergent applications and interpretations of Islamic law. As the religion expanded, several sects emerged as non-Arabic cultures, and desert environments influenced them. Islamic religious sects are groups of individuals who share beliefs. Religious sects are started by founding individuals whose ideas within the provision and set laws of the religion evolve and change over time (typically from orthodox to unorthodox) due to the

⁹⁴ Botha, 2014, Ibid. p70

interaction with cultural and environmental dynamics. As other individuals join and leave the group, their ideas change through interactions.⁹⁵ Thus, a group's shared beliefs dynamically evolve. This belief changes dynamically, making these groups so intriguing to study as it will point to the advent of the sects' extremist genome, providing clarity on its problematic extremist path.

Religious sects within the Muslim are not jurisprudential movements, as many make a mistake in reflecting the Sunni and Shia divide as sects. Sunni has four schools, Hanafi, Shafi, Maliki, and Hanbali. Shia has two schools, Jaafri and Zaydi. These schools are regional and have been termed sects, aligning with the problematic movements within the Muslim divide.

4.3.3 Youth Engagement

Effective engagement with young people is essential in mysterious, violent, passionate voices through social media and other forums on the internet. The youth can encourage and initiate Social and political actions by addressing their own issues and challenges. A study by Abbas and Siddique⁹⁶ that looked at South Asian Muslim living in the city of Birmingham city in the United Kingdom pointed out that social, economic, as well as cultural exclusion were profound determinants in their worldview; they felt excluded in mainstream British society and were disengaged in many things within the community. This isolation level drove some to look elsewhere, which offered comfort. This sometimes came from radical ideological narratives from groups like the Al-Shabaab.

4.3.4 Good governance

Promoting good governance is a critical feature that ensures that public services are tangible and accessible to all citizens within the state. One thing that Al-Shabaab has capitalized on is to

Botha, 2014, Ibi
d. p70

T. and Siddique, A. 'Perceptions of the processes of radicalisation and de-radicalisation among British South Asian Muslims in a post-industrial city', *Social Identities*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (2012).

demonstrate using its propaganda that the state in Somalia is incompetent in service delivery and does not care because it is also a puppet regime installed by foreigners and not ordinary Somalis. To therefore demonstrate otherwise is the big counter-ideological narrative that portrays the state as a fragile entity lacking legitimacy.

4.4 Chapter conclusion

This fourth chapter has discussed the challenges and opportunities in countering ideological narratives in counter-radicalization among the insurgency. There is a need to apply a multi-sectoral approach in counter-ideological and counter-radicalization strategies, including the judiciary and other stakeholders.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter critically discusses the research project and summarizes the study's main findings and a conclusion. The chapter then makes recommendations based on the study's objectives. The general aim of this study was to examine the role of ideology in the radicalization of the Al-Shabaab terrorist group. Specifically, the study sought to investigate religious sects' role in radicalization in Kenya. It also sought to scrutinize the communication strategy used by the terrorist group toward radicalizing potential recruits. And finally, it identified challenges and opportunities in countering-ideological narratives in counter-radicalization among the Al-Shabaab.

5.2 Methodological Premise

5.2.1 Theoretical discourse

This study adopted a theoretical framework based on social psychology and resource mobilization theories. The paradigms promoted by these theories have been broadly relevant to this research study. Social psychology theory can be traced from ancient scholars such as Aristotle, who saw human beings (including terrorists who carry out atrocities) as essentially social animals⁹⁷. It can also be seen in the works of another critical ancient scholar, Plato, who encouraged the socio-centered approach⁹⁸. He argued that many of the rebellious and deviant behaviors demonstrated by groups, including those engaged in armed struggles in society due to state constraints on individuals and groups. Later on,

⁹⁷ McCarthy, George E., ed. *Marx and Aristotle: nineteenth-century German social theory and classical antiquity*. Rowman & Littlefield, (1992).

⁹⁸ Alford, C. Fred. *The self in social theory: A psychoanalytic account of its construction in Plato, Hobbes, Locke, Rawls, and Rousseau*. New Haven: Yale University Press, (1991).

recent political scholars such as the German Georg Hegel adopted a similar theoretical position in his discourse on the social contract⁹⁹.

Social psychology theory has helped explain why social movements and militia groups like the Al-Shabaab are formed. The behavior of Al-Shabaab motivates others due to their psychological traits or external compulsion. When a particular group of people has an ideology, they are likely to influence the behavior of those around them and can recruit more people by influencing their behavior. Al-Shabaab have often taken advantage of the social contexts such as the media and mosques to teach religious ideologies that modify the behavior, emotions and thoughts of individuals who eventually start behaving as per what they observe and are trained.

The other theory that the study adopted was the resource mobilization theory. This was equally useful in understanding how the Al-Shabaab terrorist group uses its media strategies to promote itself by advertising and marketing to mobilize resources for its strategic and tactical operations.

In the context of this study, the Al-Shabaab terror group uses ideology to access resources such as money and human labor to fund their deadly terror attacks. They use ideologies and pass message to their sympathizers on how the Muslim community is endangered, displaced from their land, and denied opportunities within many a society. They appeal for support from their sympathizers and Muslims in the diaspora regarding resources and labor to facilitate their terrorist missions.

5.2.2 Data collection

Religious ideology is treated as the primary independent variable throughout the research study, while radicalization is treated as the dependent variable. The study's scope was limited to religious ideology as a driver of radicalization in the Al-Shabaab terrorist group. It, therefore, relied on secondary data

⁹⁹ Fulda, Hans Friedrich. *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831)*. Vol. 2. Beck, (1981).

sources that discussed issues of militia groups and ideologies such as Al-Shabaab, Al-Qaeda, and ISIS-linked groups.

The study systematically reviewed original articles published in English about research on ideology, radicalization, and terrorism by focusing on materials dating from 2010 to the present in the electronic database of JSTOR, Science Direct, and Google Scholar.

5.3 Discussion

This study has demonstrated that ideologies are essential in understanding a group's identity and aims. Youth radicalization is a significant concern for many governments because it threatens peace, security and the state's stability. Various studies have shown how adopting religious ideologies has led to radicalization. From a practical assessment of domestic radicalization, this study has highlighted that radicalization warning indicators such as subscribing to religious beliefs, low education level, and economic deprivation are vital factors that enable easy radicalization of youths by the Al-Shabab. Another study elsewhere has also captured supportive evidence that radicalization is primarily based on social conditions in a given environment.¹⁰⁰

It is clear then that the use of ideology has made radicalization successful, which has challenged the efforts undertaken toward countering terrorism. This has therefore necessitated the need to understand the nature and the binding fabric of the terror groups' moral component, which is underpinned by a well-elaborate ideological filament and strategies that include the media - which not only radicalizes potential recruits but also helps them to fundraise and spread Al-Shabaab's toxic Jihadi messages to different frontiers.

¹⁰⁰ Jensen, Michael, Gary LaFree, Patrick A. James, A. Atwell-Seate, D. Psoiu, J. Stevenson, and J. Picarelli. "Final report: Empirical assessment of domestic radicalization (EADR)." *College Park, MD: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism* 8 (2016).

5.3.1 The Rationality of Terrorism

In this research project, we have learned that terrorism is the outcome of rational and purposeful human action. As far as they are concerned, insurgencies like the Al-Shabaab act on what they consider sensible and purposeful impulses when they execute their deadly attacks on innocent populations. The terrorists understand that their actions will lead to the death of many innocent people and inflict long-lasting and even lifetime injuries to people who may have nothing to do with their grievance or cause.

As demonstrated in Chapter Two of our study, this is a tactical choice the terrorists undertake. Furthermore, this issue can be well understood in the theoretical context of the rational choice model. Several scholars have observed that terrorism in the modern age is dedicated to a cause. The safety of the terrorists themselves or the members of the public is insignificant to them. In other words, the end justifies the means. Terrorists like the Al-Shabaab, as our study has elaborated, are absolutists in terms of their thought processes. They do not care about anything except executing their attacks by whatever means possible or at their disposal.

5.3.2 Tracing ‘Purposefulness’ in the Al-Shabaab

We can postulate that one of the defining characteristics of terrorism is the nature and extent of its brutality. In our view, this sense of purposefulness of groups like the Al-Shabaab is the key to understanding their misinterpretation of Islam, the politicization of this misunderstanding, and the subsequent toxicity and violent outlook embedded in their worldview.

Therefore, it is crucial to understand Al-Shabaab’s sense of purposefulness as it ultimately provides us with the key to understanding them and overcoming the existential threats posed by the terrorist group. In our study, we elected to examine the role of religious ideology in the radicalization of the Al-Shabaab through the lens of the Islamic religion because it was felt that in undertaking a spiritual

analysis of the misinterpretation of Islam or the selective application of the Holy Scriptures drawn from the Quran highlights Al-Shabaab's defective sense of 'purposefulness' and rationality.

In doing so, the study finds apparent falsehoods in the group's ideological underpinnings being perpetuated as traditional Islamic religious doctrine. Based on such an understanding, this provides a different perspective on approaching the Al-Shabaab terror threat through counter-ideological and counter-narratives while simultaneously pursuing and neutralizing their deadly threats.

It is important to note that purposeful behavior, unlike irrational behavior, can be interpreted, understood, and clarified. Such an engagement focusing on proper elucidation and knowledge through appropriate explanation may not only hold the promise of enhancing counter-terrorism in specific circumstances. It may keep a much greater strategic promise to neutralize and terminate existential threats the Al-Shabaab poses.

5.3.3 State Fragility

The emergence of radicalism and the subsequent violence accompanying it as an independent tool aimed at achieving religious or political objectives, one can observe, is worsened mainly by the vulnerabilities that exist in some states. For instance, fragile African states are susceptible to specific internal and external exposures such as economic crises or natural disasters – these tend to give rise to armed groups and terrorist organizations like the Al-Shabaab.

A fragile state can be defined as a weak state that cannot undertake essential everyday governance functions. In other words, a fragile state cannot meet its toll or match the expectations of its citizens, such as providing security for its population. The Al-Shabaab has exploited some of these weaknesses in their home state Somalia and used propaganda to sway the local population into joining them in fighting the national government under the auspices that it is a puppet regime sponsored by foreign

governments and not interested in developing the country and providing public services to ordinary citizens.

In one way or another, states tend to fail in delivering public services and other development dimensions. In terms of political capital, a state's public service performance is instrumental in distinguishing it from a weak, fragile, or collapsed one, as in Somalia.

5.3.4 Weaknesses in capitalist states

Issues of state fragility and the state's withering were also pointed out by earlier scholars, most prominently the German scholar Karl Marx¹⁰¹ as breeding conflict. It can be argued that, by extension, it has also given justification or energy for terrorism activities in some regions, including Africa. Marx was an economist and philosopher credited as the founder of the Marxist theory of the state. He authored most of his work against the backdrop of the Great Industrial Revolution. Marx regarded history as a series of class battles in which the oppressed battled their oppressors. As history unfolded, Marx predicted that the victory of one class would pave the way for the future emancipation of the rest of society. Overcrowded, newly industrialized cities spread, and many working-class people became impoverished.

As a result, the Marxist theory of the state rejects the stratification model of the state-society interaction proposed by pluralists and elite power theorists, instead beginning with the assumption of hostile classes whose struggle is built into the fabric of society. According to Marxists, the economic system defines laws, the form of government, and the function of society in daily life. While most

¹⁰¹ Marx, K. *Capital*. Vol. 1. Moscow: Progress Publishers. (1867).

Lenin, V. I. *Imperialism: The Highest State of Capitalism*. (1917).

people agree that a financial plan impacts these areas, Marxists argue that it determines their specific nature. With this in mind, Marxists believe unfavorable economic systems create backward, evil societies.¹⁰²

With this background, the capitalist state is seen as repressive of the working-class resistance to oppression. Indeed, Marx himself described the function of the presidency in contemporary state structure as “a committee for managing the affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.”¹⁰³ Glasberg and Shannon¹⁰⁴ have further expounded that Marx’s perceptions of the role of the presidency raise further pertinent questions, such as does the state act as a coercive instrument of the capitalist class. In our view, Marx argues that political power in a liberal or capitalist state works as a conveyor belt under which the dominant bourgeoisie rules over subordinate classes.

Marx believed that capitalism contained the seeds of its destruction. He described how the wealth of the bourgeoisie depended on the work of the proletariat. He predicted that the continued exploitation of this underclass would create great resentment. Eventually, the proletariat would lead a revolution against the bourgeoisie. It can be further argued that the highly sharp class conflict between the exploiters and the exploited constitutes the fundamental trait of the capitalist system. Marxist theory scholars view the state as a usurper of human liberty and an instrument of enslaving human beings. They argue that Such a state will inevitably have permanent conflicts, including armed groups and terrorist organizations such as the Al-Shabaab.

¹⁰³ Marx, K. and Engels, F. *The Manifesto of the Communists*, International Publishing Company, England. (1886).

¹⁰⁴ Glasberg, D. S. and Shannon, D. *Political Sociology: Oppression, Resistance and the State*, London: Penguin. (2011).

Terrorism of a political nature is designed to bring about social and political change within a state or another. In a fragile or failed state, such as is the case in Somalia which is host to the Al-Shabaab group, there is evidence of violent contestation, communal discontent, and a plethora of dissent by other warring factions in addition to the Al-Shabaab itself. The rationale of this infinite variety of violence is anti-social in the Marxist theoretical context and expresses an essentially irrational urge to strike something or at someone.

5.3.5 Transformation and Stability

Fragile states need to create linkages between the state's securities, its political climate, and purposeful development actions visible to the general population. This can be done by, for instance, promoting Social Political Cohesion - this is useful in diluting or neutralizing the problems associated with the 'toxicity' of ethnicity, the so-called "mtu wetu" political culture. This will be good for long-term productivity and growth.

Secondly, to achieve state stability and reduce the perception of fragility, the state can address the causes and dimensions of poverty and corruption – poverty alleviation programs such as the current 'Hustler fund' policy initiative is vital in addressing fragility and instability among the youth who are a critical and active age-group that can do more given proper economic empowerment. Regarding security, the state should ensure citizens feel safe and can engage in their everyday work without fear. The state should also provide the judicial system works appropriately to increase people's access to justice.

5.4 Summary of Findings

5.4.1 The Role of religious sects in radicalizing youth towards Al-Shabaab

The study has established that various factors have influenced the radicalization of the youth in Al-Shabaab. The internet plays a massive role in facilitating the radicalization process. The Internet

enables exposure of the youth as viewed from different perspectives. The internet has homogeneous echo rooms where participants share certain political or civic viewpoints, which expose youth to radicalization opportunities by the Al-Shabaab. This is because people in homogenous groups share similar perspectives, opposing views are not expressed, and their arguments are one-sided. Secondly, the internet offers opportunities for the youth to experiment with identities essential to achieving adulthood identity. However, the study found it unclear how echo rooms on the internet allowed the youth to experiment with different views.

The study revealed that Islam has several sects with similar fundamental and foundational beliefs with divergent applications and interpretations of Islamic law. Islamic religious sects are groups of individuals who share beliefs. Religious sects are started by founding individuals whose ideas within the provision and set laws of the religion evolve and change over time (typically from orthodox to unorthodox) due to the interaction with the cultural and environmental dynamics. As the faith expanded, several sects emerged as non-Arabic cultures, and desert environments influenced them.

Furthermore, religious sects within the Islamic faith are not jurisprudential movements, as many make a mistake in reflecting the Sunni and Shia divide as sects. Sunni has four schools, Hanafi, Shafi, Maliki, and Hanbali. Shia has two schools, Jaafri and Zaydi. These schools are regional and have been termed sects, aligning with the problematic movements within the Muslim divide.

In the Kenyan context, it is essential to note that Islam is not a monolithic religion like Christianity. It also has variations or denominations. In Kenya, the two major groups, the Sunni and the Shias, are divided into two divisions - the sub-sects which follow under the two central umbrellas are the Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaa (the party of the Sunnah who are predominantly the Sufis and the moderate Muslims) and the Wahabi Salafis, and these divisions are under the Sunni umbrella.

5.4.1.1 Promoting the Wahhabism Ideology

In comparison, most Shias belong to the twelve sects that subscribe to the teachings of the twelve divinely guided imams. The Al-Shabaab terrorist group subscribes to the teachings of these groups that have heavy promotion and support emanating from Islamic scholarship under the explicit guidelines of Saudi Arabia. This is mainly the source of the contention concerning the misinterpretation of the religious text and today's terrorism in Kenya.

We can point out that various scholarships into issues of religious extremism and terrorism in Kenya have pointed a figure in the direction of a revivalist movement under the leadership of Chief Kadhi Kassim Mazrui, who, in the 1930s, began the struggle to modernize, democratize or reform the leadership at the Mosques across the country as one of the sources of contemporary problems associated with the misinterpretation of the Holy Quran and therefore problematic sermons that encourage extremist views and radicalization of youth in joining the Al-Shabaaab. Saudi Arabia has been offering scholarships and sponsoring Islamic education, Madras, and other institutions of learning that profess or advance their ideological misrepresentation of the Holy Scriptures that has been fed onto the radical jihadist narratives.

Kenyan nationals who undertook studies sponsored by Saudi Arabia came back indoctrinated with the reformist agenda and ideologies that call for abolishing Western education, similar to the Boko Haram terrorist group reaping havoc in Western Africa. They began preaching sermons that encouraged jihadist calls for violence against certain groups of people who do not conform to their worldview. They gave the green light to terrorists, describing such individuals as infidels and fair targets for violence or death. Over time, these radicalized Imams and scholars of the Wahabi-Salafi denomination took over the Mosques' dominance across Kenya.

Recently, with its vast petrodollars sums, Saudi Arabia has taken a strong lead in directly promoting its traditionalist version of Islam by actively funding research institutions across East Africa, including some specific universities in Kajiado County, Kenya. The particular rationale is that these institutions and mosques are paid to promote and spread the Wahhabi ideology actively.

5.4.1.2 Funding sources

Several research documents show that since the 1980s, Saudi Arabia has spent, on average, USD 4 billion to contribute to Kenya's Muslim matters. This money is spent explicitly on bolstering the country's image and promoting mosques, madrassas, preachers, students and textbooks that spread the Wahhabi ideology in East Africa. Whereas the Saudis have been directly funding Islamic institutions in Kenya, the Somali diaspora community, primarily made up of business people based in the Middle East, plays a far more critical role in spreading the ideology of Wahhabism in Kenya and the East African region.

5.4.1.2. Foreign youth radicalization

The study found much evidence from case studies worldwide that youth radicalization and terrorists are no longer made up of foreigners from marginalized and less developed countries. There is now an increase in Americans, Canadians, and British youth joining the ranks of terrorist organizations like Al-Shabaab. Radicalization of youths from developed countries is also becoming an essential threat to countries like Kenya. Indeed, one of the terrorists that executed the Westgate Mall attack in Nairobi that left nearly 70 persons dead was a Swedish citizen.

5.4.2 The Use of communication strategies in the radicalization process

The study sought to analyze the communication strategy employed by the Al-Shabaab towards radicalization. It is well-recognized that terrorist organizations have a symbiotic relationship with the media. Indeed, one of the most important objectives of a terrorist organization is to ensure that its

attack is captured by the media and reported widely. Terrorists seek publicity to advance their cause. In some cases, publicity is the primary objective of the attack. The media plays a valuable role for terrorists by seeking to shock the emotions or amuse its audience aside from reporting the news.

The study found that the media is critical in connecting individuals with likeminded perspectives on religion, politics, and cultural geniality. This in turn create or foster a feeling of closeness to terrorists and their causes, the virtual connections perpetuated through media communications provides practical guidance that facilitates terrorism. Still, it also generates perceptions of what terrorists and potential sympathizers find more tolerant of their worldviews.

The terrorist group uses the communication Media to spread its profile as a caring and determined organization ready to defend the battlefield on behalf of Islam against what it perceives as Westernized infidels and the West's neoliberal political agenda that they find culturally and religiously corrosive and offending.

In intergalactic terms, the al-Shabaab presents itself in media as being engaged in a battlefield of civilizations between good and evil or right and wrong. This is what has been termed as a religious consciousness raising or more specific in the present context as rising the 'ummah consciousness' that is aimed at encouraging potential recruits to join Islamic missions worldwide.

As part of its media strategy, the al-Shabaab outfit ensures its messages have heavy undercurrents of radicalization. Propaganda and messages with indoctrination tend to accompany their literature on the religious transformation that is embedded with extremist ideologies on the internet.

5.4.2.1 Strategic communication

The study found that Al-Shabaab uses three radical communication strategies at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. At the strategic level, the insurgency group communicates strategic

content and its vision of establishing an Islamic state in Somalia. Their messages at this strategic level are complex; like a corporate organization, the group is more concerned with its image as a legitimate, well-organized, focused organization. They appeal to other more extensive and well-resourced terror organizations, such as Al-Qaeda, with which they are already affiliated. Still, the larger Islamic State (ISIS) for solidarity ventures aims to have a global or universal appeal for Muslim solidarity.

At this strategic level, the militia group uses a combination of sophisticated and complex software for communication to reach each other and other international terror organizations. This software is ordinarily beyond reach for the Al-Shabaab local operatives, and assistance is offered at a high level by other mother organizations such as Al-Qaeda or ISIS.

5.4.2.2 Operational communication

The study found that at this level, the militia's programmatic activities are designed to maintain 'confidence' and demonstrate 'competence' in their local area of operation. The aim is to showcase the militia group's seriousness regarding their warriors' abilities in executing their duties by carrying out attacks. Messages at this operational level are concerned with boosting their attacks during terror operations, such as the number of those killed and injured and the damage caused to properties of those they perceive as their enemies, such as the AMISOM or Kenya's Defense Forces (KDF). The media messages released by the group often have no bearing on the actual truth on the ground; nevertheless, the group is more focused on misinformation that portrays it favorably or victoriously in the conflict.

The Al-Shabaab, since around 2008, has arguably managed to portray with some degree of success the Somali Federal Government, together with AMISOM, the KDF, and other governing administrations of the regional states within Somalia, as weak, unstable, and without a clear agenda for the Somali community. This is after the terrorist group captured and controlled large sections of

the southern parts of Somalia and made a success at instituting civil mechanisms of administration. This radical communication strategy has worked well in terms of propaganda for the group. This is, therefore, to counter this strategy by initiating a sound counter-narrative.

5.4.2.3 Tactical Communication

At this level, the communication strategy aims to propagate narratives that discredit the enemy or Western influence. Secondly, at this level, the strategy aims to amplify any small victories made during operations. Al-Shabaab's amplified its terrorism through its then leader Ahmed Godane targeting Kenya after 2011 when Kenya's Defence Forces entered Somalia. The group tries to accept or claim responsibility for attacks such as those undertaken during the Westgate Mall in Kenya in 2013.

The study found that Al-Shabaab's media strategy is inseparable from its political strategy aimed at unleashing terror on states and governments that do not conform to its religious understanding of Islam.

5.5 Countering Ideological and radicalization narratives among Al-Shabaab

The study found that propaganda is one of the most common and easiest media strategies employed by the Al-Shabaab militia in its radicalization ploy. The militia group deliberately spreads falsehoods by misinterpretation and selective use of the Holy Quran to put forward a particular position that advances its structural objective.

It is clear from the study that the success of counter-ideological and counter-radicalization narratives may lie in a multi-stakeholder approach, not just the KDF and other security agencies under the stewardship of the Ministry of Interior.

The study found that Al-Shabaab's media strategies for radicalization and potential recruitment are designed to persuade ordinary folks to join them and to inspire them. Therefore, it is crucial to

understand the insurgency's ideological and radicalization narrative and media strategy "if the counter-narrative is to succeed in presenting an alternative to the propaganda of violent extremist groups."

5.5.1 Weaknesses in Counter-Ideological Strategies

The study identified several weaknesses in the counter-ideological and counter-radicalization strategies. One fundamental weakness was identified as the whole counter-narratives are grounded on a weak foundation. Another weakness is that the counter-narrative discourses are dominated by external funders from Western countries who insist that nations like Kenya adopt their imposed strategies without consideration for alternative local approaches. This imperial or one-way top-down approach has suffocated innovation within the defence and security sectors in terms of counter-ideological narratives that can match the 'trendy,' 'techy-savvy' and alluring ideological narratives based on religious falsehoods propagated by the Al-Shabaab.

5.5.2 Islamic Jurisprudence

The study further found that there was also a need for counter-ideological narratives to pay critical attention to Islamic jurisprudence to understand the religion's depths and the subsequent misinterpretation that terrorist ideologues run away with and weaponize it in the name of Jihadi. At the root of its moral fabric, ideology plays a critical role in guiding the Al-Shabaab terror campaigns. The clan structure set up in Somalia also plays a significant role in influencing how the insurgency operates within and outside Somalia and its internal and external radicalization programs.

5.6 Conclusion

Conclusively, the study found that religious ideology is responsible for radicalization. The study also found that terrorism by the Al-Shabaab, like terrorism by other militia groups, remains one of a handful of major challenges confronting Kenya and the world today. It remains a tragedy because of the lives

it takes. Societal injuries cause social, political, and psychological destruction. Additionally, terrorism causes disruptions in so many lives and ruins specific potentials from ever being realized. That said, victims of terrorist attacks are victims of ‘purposeful’ human action. Terrorist groups like the Al-Shabaab have command structures that plan, organize, recruit, and eventually execute their deadly terrorist attacks on specific targets driven by a sense of ‘purpose.’

Therefore, care and attention must be paid to understanding their core motive and rationalizing their sense of ‘purpose’ since it justifies them to carry out murderous missions. This study sought to bring out new insights into religious ideology's role in radicalizing the Al-Shabaab terrorist group. It also sought to scrutinize the communication strategy used by the terrorist group toward radicalizing potential recruits. And finally, it identified challenges and opportunities in countering-ideological narratives and counter-radicalization among the Al-Shabaab.

It is clear from the study’s analysis that the ideological impulse used by Al-Shabaab is impregnated with misinterpretation of scriptures drawn from the Holy Quran and applies them selective to justify its call for Jihadi uprising. It is equally clear that radicalism drawn from religions contributes to the security conundrum. Islam, like Christianity, has denominations. The study has shown the different denominations or sects, their foundational beliefs, and their divergent applications and interpretation of Islamic law. As the religion expanded, several sects emerged and are now influenced by non-Arabic cultures and desert environments.

In Kenya, the current Islamic ecology points out that radical jihadists like Aboud Rogo or Ahmed Makaburi were extracts of the Wahhabism ideology, which for many years preached radical sermons in Mombasa Mosques, luring many youths into radical jihadist indoctrinations. This is the foundation of contemporary radicalization and terrorism emanating from toxic religious ideology.

The study concludes that Kenyan nationals who undertook studies sponsored by Saudi Arabia came back indoctrinated with the reformist agenda and ideologies that call for in part the abolishment of Western education, among other things, similar to the demands being made by the Boko Haram terrorist group that is reaping havoc in Western Africa. This is the source of the radicalization problem in Kenya. Over time, these radicalized Imams and scholars of the Wahabi-Salafi denomination took over Mosques' dominance across Kenya. They began preaching sermons encouraging jihadist calls for violence on specific groups of people who do not conform to their worldview. They gave the green light to terrorists like the Al-Shabaab to perceive any individual who does not conform to their worldview as an infidel and a fair target for violence or even death.

There are efforts currently being undertaken by Crown Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, that create the impression that he is attempting to address some of the ideological toxicity of Wahhabi ideology that his country has been exporting to places Kenya and Somalia that have contributed to the problems of radicalization and terrorism.

5.7 Recommendations

The Somali-based insurgency group Al-Shabaab's primary objective is to seek a revolution from the current democratically elected central government. The insurgency seeks to rid Somalia of foreign forces and eventually institute an Islamic governance system based on a religious ethos known as Sharia. To actualize its plans, the terrorist group has several strategies, including one on the media. Furthermore, given Kenya's complexity and diversity, there is a need to rethink pathways to counter-ideological narratives and counter-radicalization strategies. This is more so because the current "one size fits all" approach is inadequate for intervention. With this understanding, the study makes the following recommendations.

5.7.1 Islamic Jurisprudence

There is a need to amplify the alternative voices who understand the dangerous summons or one-sided and often misguided interpretation of the Holy Scriptures from the Koran. Therefore, credible voices must be incorporated to counter the ideological narrative being spread out by the insurgency using the Wahhabi-Salafi ideology. It is important to deconstruct the toxic worldview prominent in extremists such as Al-Shabaab jihadists by presenting an alternative based on moderation, tolerance, and diverse ideas. As argued earlier, Islam has several sects with similar fundamental and foundational beliefs with divergent applications and interpretations of Islamic law.

5.7.2 Good governance

Promoting good governance is a critical feature that ensures that public services are tangible and accessible to all citizens within the state. One thing that Al-Shabaab has capitalized on is to demonstrate using its propaganda that the state in Somalia is incompetent in service delivery and does not care because it is also a puppet regime installed by foreigners and not ordinary Somalis. To therefore demonstrate otherwise is the big counter-ideological narrative that portrays the state as a fragile entity lacking legitimacy.

5.7.3 Capacity Building of the Counter Terrorism Unit

The study finds that there is a need for countries like Kenya, which has suffered many attacks from the Al-Shabaab, to build more capacity of its counter-terrorism network to build resilience against radicalization and violent extremism. This work, to begin with, will have to entail restructuring the current counter-terrorism unit to streamline its activities and programs.

5.7.4 Extrajudicial Killings

A recent comparative study examining the Al-Shabaab and the MRC in Mombasa City concluded that it was counterproductive. The analysis using data drawn from those recruited by either the MRC or

the Al-Shabaab showed that members of these radical organizations increased their recruitment drives by hundreds to their organizations ensuring a new wave of radicalism and renewed energy among its members in their tenacity regardless of threats of violence or imprisonment as deterrents.

5.7.5 Human rights law

Human rights law is an integral part of the war on terrorism. Human rights must not be violated in the name of fighting terrorism by security agencies or their personnel. If when human rights are violated in the manner of battling terrorism, it will simply be self-defeating. Al-Shabaab works hard at portraying its enemies as violators of human rights, and it uses its media strategies, one of which is tactical, to spread its radicalization messages to potential foot soldiers. Therefore, an environment lacking justice can easily become a breeding ground for radicalism and terrorism.

5.7.6 Youth Engagement

Effective engagement with young people is vital in annexing violent, fanatical voices through social media and other forums on the internet. The youth can encourage and initiate Social and political actions by addressing their own issues and challenges. The level of isolation of the youth age groups often is a pull factor for them to look elsewhere that offers them comfort. This sometimes came from radical ideological narratives from groups like the Al-Shabaab.

5.7.7 Effective Media Strategy

There is a need for an effective media strategy to counter ideological and radicalization messages being undertaken by the Al-Shabaab. The internet, as such, plays a critical role in communicating an appeal to a broader audience, especially in the Islamic diaspora community, to assist the militia in achieving its Jihadist goals. The strategies include direct solicitation from possible sympathizers, promotions of charitable events or organizations used as proxies, etc. Companies such as Paypal and Skype are known to be used to facilitate transactions in addition to other payment facilities.

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