THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION AND THE MEDIA IN INTER-RELIGIOUS CONFLICT BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN KENYA

BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that this Research Project Report is my original work and that it has not been presented in any other institution for any award.

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Declaration by the supervisor

This project has been submitted for examination with my approval as supervisor at the University of Nairobi.

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MAGAYU K. MAGAYU   **DATE**

SUPERVISOR

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to the many people in Kenya of different faiths, persuasions and

occupations who have constantly worked for tolerance and peace between men of all faiths

and creeds.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study set out to investigate the critical role that religious leaders and the media play in bringing about or exacerbating religious tensions and conflict in Kenya. In particular, the study sought to establish what role communication plays in creating animosity and in fomenting conflict between followers of the two major faiths in Kenya – Christianity and Islam. The role of spiritual leaders from the Christian and Muslim traditions in the conflict, and how the slanting of media reports on religious issues affects perceptions that could either stem down or raise religious tensions. The study based itself on the Two-Step Flow Theory of Paul Lazarsfeld and his colleagues, which basically states that opinions expressed in the mass media are first synthesized by opinion leaders, who then influence the rest of the people. Within the context of this study, Christian and Muslim religious leaders would be the critical opinion shapers who influence perceptions of their followers regarding other faiths, consequently determining whether adherents of these two religions live together in peace or not. The findings of the study indicate that materials intended for mass consumption addressing the issue of inter-religious tolerance are few and far between. Regular newspapers do not tackle this sensitive societal issue with the same level of seriousness accorded less dangerous territory such as sports or travel. Reporting on religious issues is also heavily slanted in favour of Christians, and does not portray the level of knowledge and sensitivity required of such an important coverage. While religious groups have been holding inter-religious dialogue for years, the study found that more needs to be done if rising inter-religious violence is to be nipped in the bud. Religious leaders, the study found, generally have a strong influence on their followers, and it is important that those involved in campaigns for peace between Christians and Muslims should be more focused if they are to counterbalance their more radical counterparts. Arising from this study, it is recommended that current efforts at inter-religious dialogue need to be strengthened in order to counter the rising tide of inter-religious conflict and the negative influence of some radical spiritual leaders. Moreover, media houses will need to re-examine and strengthen the reporting of religious issues in order to overcome the many weaknesses pointed out in this study. These recommendations will help Kenya to avoid sliding down the path of serious religious confrontation between Christians and Muslims, a danger that the country has so far avoided despite the lack of a clear strategy and focus.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Interfaith relations are a sensitive matter in Africa as a whole. Looking at the recent history of the continent and events in countries as far afield as Nigeria and Egypt, Tanzania and Mali, it is evident that if not well handled, interfaith relations present a powder keg that could erupt on the continent in the coming years, with disastrous results.

This situation is even more serious when we consider globalization, which has enabled the networking and coming together of disparate terrorist networks. Already, the Al Shabaab extremist group in Somalia is said to be co-operating with the global terrorist network Al Qaeda and other extremist groups across Africa. In June 2012, media reports quoted the commander of the US Africa Command (Africom), Gen Carter Ham, as saying that three of the "most dangerous" groups in Africa – North Africa's Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Nigeria's Boko Haram and Somalia's Al-Shabaab, were co-operating and trying to co-ordinate their activities.

Although Kenya has not faced interreligious violence on the scale of Nigeria, recent events show that there is cause for alarm. Interreligious dialogue and existing initiatives have not helped the nation to escape the bouts of hatred and intolerance experienced in recent days and years, culminating in increased tensions, loss of lives and destruction of property.

With a rising population and greater competition for scarce resources, religion is one of the areas where this competition has manifested. Previously marginalized areas that happen to be largely inhabited by Muslims have blamed their marginalization on religious discrimination. This simmering discontent has taken a dangerous trend, where violence is increasingly being witnessed.

Unlike in Nigeria and other countries where disagreement on religious matters has led to deadly bloodbaths, in Kenya the situation has not degenerated to that level. Underlying tensions have so far not led to serious conflict, although matters at times appear to almost move to that point. The entry into the fray of international terrorist networks that fan religious animosity across borders has created a particularly disturbing scenario.

That the clouds of religious animosity have been ominously gathering is not in doubt. The killing of Muslim cleric Sheikh Aboud Rogo on August 27, 2012, for instance, provided the trigger for the worst inter-faith violence ever witnessed in Kenya. Following his death, Muslim youths immediately rioted in Mombasa, burning down churches and vandalizing others even as religious leaders on either side called for calm.

On a couple of occasions later in the same year, riots erupted in Nairobi's Eastleigh suburb. The violence this time was directed toward the Somali community, which the mob associated with frequent terror attacks in the neighbourhood.

These incidents reveal a dark side to Kenyan life that is just beginning to emerge: Deeply-ingrained negative religious sentiments between the two major faiths – Christianity and Islam.

That these negative sentiments are deeply ingrained in the psyche of many citizens is not in doubt. When two grenades were hurled at worshippers at two churches in Garissa on the morning of Sunday, July 1, 2012, killing 17 people and injuring more than 50 worshippers, the slain Muslim cleric, Sheikh Rogo, declared at a Mombasa mosque during the following Friday's prayers that the attacks were just retribution by Muslims. Police did not arrest him.

Three weeks after the Garissa attacks, police also seized explosives that were meant to be used against the Assumption of Mary Catholic Church in Umoja Parish of Nairobi, Kenya's

capital city. The two men arrested with the explosives had reportedly smuggled grenades, bomb powder and weapons from a neighbouring country into Kenya.

Even before the attacks in the town, Christians in Garissa had become accustomed to having Muslim youths throwing stones at church buildings. Tensions have therefore marked Islam's uneasy co-existence with Christianity in Kenya over the years; the only difference is that this time, the tensions are boiling over into open confrontation.

The new developments in Kenya present a challenge that was not entirely unexpected. The country's military involvement in Somalia since October 2011, where the army is fighting the Al Shabaab militant group, opened the country to the possibility of increased terrorist attacks. These attacks, in turn, are worsening already existing tensions between the two major faiths in Kenya, Christianity and Islam.

In stoking religious tension, strategists of the Islamic militant group Al Shabaab must obviously have been acutely aware of Kenya's fragile situation. While estimates have it that about 80 per cent of the country is made up of Christians, Muslims make up a significant minority at about 11 per cent of the population, according to 2009 census figures.

But it is not only Christians who have reason to be angry; Muslims are equally unhappy, only that their concerns receive much less attention in the media and elsewhere, Kenya being a country with a dominant Christian population. Indeed, there has been rising disquiet about this alleged marginalization among the Muslim community.

The bulk of the Muslim population lives in the Coast and North-Eastern Provinces. Historically, these are some of the areas that have been worst affected by the bad governance of successive post-independence governments. At the Coast, for instance, the land question has been a festering wound over the years. With the coming of independence, land that had

been alienated from the indigenous population did not revert to the locals but was instead appropriated by members of the ruling elite, mostly from central Kenya.

Having obtained huge tracts of land in central Kenya for himself and his cronies, Kenyatta had no more land to issue to Mau Mau fighters returning to the villages from the Mt Kenya and Aberdare forests, from where they had waged a war of liberation against the British government. There was increasing pressure for land among the Kikuyu in central Kenya, yet whatever little became available was being grabbed by the ruling clique. The solution? Kenyatta's genius was to settle Kikuyus in the Rift Valley and Coast Provinces.

The North Eastern Province was not affected by this problem, mostly because this is a largely semi-arid area with little potential for agriculture. The area is also far from any significant commercial activity, unlike the Coast that is at the centre of Kenya's tourism industry. Nevertheless, residents in the region have tended to attribute their marginalization to their Islamic faith, pointing out the utter neglect of the area when it comes to development initiatives.

To purchase land at the Coast and in the Rift Valley, land buying companies were started, settlement schemes initiated and government loans provided for these purposes. Local populations looked on helplessly as their land was transferred from white colonialists to occupiers from other parts of the country. It is this situation that has provided fodder for recurring ethnic clashes since 1992, culminating in the post-election violence of 2007/08 in which the Rift Valley and Coast Provinces were among the worst-affected areas.

More recently, the $29 billion Lamu Port and New Transport Corridor to Southern Sudan & Ethiopia (LAPSSET) project – Kenya's biggest ever socio-economic venture since independence – has once again stirred tensions at the Coast. Powerful individuals positioned themselves to benefit from the project, getting huge allocations of land in the area. This contributed to

clashes experienced in 2014, leading to the cancellation of land titles for about 500,000 acres by President Uhuru Kenyatta in an effort to calm tensions, as reported on the president's official website (www.president.go.ke).

About a half of the Coast's population is made up of Muslims. Given the history of marginalization of the Coast and North-Eastern Provinces, it has often been the feeling that consecutive governments were deliberately sidelining Muslims from participation in the national economy. In the Somali-populated North-Eastern Province, whose people are predominantly Muslim, the extent of marginalization has probably been the worst in the country. Even obtaining a national identity card – a fairly straightforward exercise in the rest of the country – is a nightmare for residents of this province. They are often required to prove that they are Kenyan citizens by producing their grandparents' birth certificates. The government justifies such extreme measures by saying it was preventing infiltration into the country by non-Kenyan Somalis. It is quickly pointed out by opponents, however, that the measures applied to Somalis were discriminative since they did not apply to other border communities such as the Maasai and the Luhya.

Some of the terrorist activities in recent years have in fact been targeted at Christian houses of worship. In turn, this has drawn the ire of Christians and their leaders, leading to occasional clashes between adherents of the two faiths.

Tensions between Christians and Muslims in Kenya are not new, but these have largely been latent. These tensions have partly been caused by claims by Muslims of marginalisation in the allocation of national resources. Increasingly, however, these tensions are threatening to boil over into the kind of religious conflict seen in such countries as Nigeria.

If left unchecked, this situation threatens to degenerate into serious communal conflict between these two major Abrahamic faiths, with severe consequences for Kenya and the region as far as peace and security is concerned.

Had Nigeria taken the threat of Islamic militancy and religious intolerance more seriously at an early stage, probably things would not have snowballed into the religious attacks that have been reported from that country in recent years. It is therefore important for Kenya to act at this stage before the problem gets out of hand.

Indeed, just as some of the sectarian violence in Nairobi's Eastleigh suburb have shown, it is not realistic to expect that Christian faithful will accept to be slaughtered every now and then in terrorist attacks without seeking revenge. To avoid any scenario where the war against terrorism degenerates into internal religious confrontation, it is critical to recognize that these attacks represent not just an immediate threat to life and property, but also the very fabric of the nation as a united people. Remedial and pre-emptive action is therefore important. This is an area that represents a gap in research in a critical area concerning Kenya's peace and wellbeing.

It is known that conflict – including that arising from religious tensions – can be greatly minimised or increased by the role that communication plays. This is why the role of the media in Rwanda prior to the 1994 genocide is so pivotal. In Kenya's post-election violence of 2007-8, the media is also said to have played a critical role in igniting ethnic tensions. It is therefore critical to find out just how the media has been treating religious conflict in its coverage to know whether it is on the right track and what changes need to be made.

There have been numerous efforts at promoting inter-religious dialogue and tolerance in Kenya, especially between Christians and Muslims. These efforts have been spearheaded by the Inter-Religious Council of Kenya and have involved leaders from across the religious

divide. Unfortunately, the efforts have not been sufficient to stem the rising tide of religious fundamentalism and intolerance that fuels conflict, making it imperative to conduct further research that can guide this process.

Indeed, in consideration of the fact that religious conflict in the modern world tends to transcend national boundaries, religious leaders from across the five countries that make up the East African Community – Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi – have now come together to form the Inter-Religious Council of East Africa.

From the foregoing, it is clear that there are tangible issues affecting relations between Muslims and Christians in Kenya. These problems – whether real or psychological, justified or not – present a real challenge that needs to be confronted by the society if a religious implosion is to be avoided.

The study was based on a content analysis of copies of the *Daily Nation* newspaper. This newspaper is Kenya's leading daily, with sales of up to 200,000 copies. It is owned by the Nation Media Group, a cross-media ownership organization with interests in both print media and broadcasting across East Africa. Started by the Aga Khan in 1960, the media house today boasts among its stable several other publications – *Taifa Leo*, the *Business Daily* and *The EastAfrican*. The management of the daily newspaper is also split, with three different managing editors taking charge of the weekday publications, the Saturday paper, and the Sunday edition.

This means that the influence of religious messages passed through other influential mass media such as radio and television cannot be gauged from this study. There are also popular but less prestigious newspapers that were not included in this study.

The Aga Khan remains the Nation Media Group's major shareholder. Today, the Group is listed on the Nairobi, Kampala and Dar es Salaam security exchanges. Its interests across the region include ownership of the Monitor newspaper and broadcasting station in Uganda, and Mwananchi publications in Tanzania.

It is still too early to gauge the impact *The People* newspaper will have following its relaunch in mid-2014 as the country's first free newspaper. Its owners claim to distribute about 80,000 copies daily, but these claims have yet to be independently verified.

The main print media in Kenya include the daily newspapers – *The Standard, The Star, The People,* the *Kenya Times* and the *Business Daily*. The weekly newspaper *The EastAfrican* targets the upmarket business, academic and political elite in East Africa. A plethora of other smaller newspapers and magazines targeting readers in specific sectors such as agriculture, transport and education are also available.

The *Daily Nation* far outsells its rivals. Its closest rival, *The Standard*, sells about 50,000 copies, a quarter of the sales of the *Daily Nation*.

The broadcast industry has grown by leaps and bounds, and today there are numerous FM radio stations broadcasting in every major local language. They include Kameme FM and Inooro FM broadcasting in Kikuyu, Chamge FM in the Kalenjin language and Mwago FM in Meru. There are also stations that target various segments of the population, such as the youth (for example Kiss FM). In addition, major Christian and Muslim groups have also set up their own radio and even TV stations. Such radio stations include the Catholic Church-sponsored Waumini FM and Hope FM, which is owned by the Christ is the Answer Ministries. All these attract a varied but significant following. Muslim outlets include IQRA and Radio Salaam.

Televisions stations, while not as numerous as the radio stations, also represent a significant level of investment and offer great variety. These include the state-owned Kenya Broadcasting Corporation as well as privately-owned stations such as Citizen TV (owned by the Royal Media Services), NTV (owned by the Nation Media Group), and Kenya Television Network (owned by the Standard Group). Television stations owned by religious groups include GBS and Family TV. Kaaba TV was launched in 2013 as Kenya's first Islamic television channel.

In today's world, moreover, the influence of social media cannot be underestimated. This is constantly evolving and includes such sites as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram. WhatsApp, a free messaging service, has also taken its place as a popular messaging service.

An exhaustive study on the use of the media by religious leaders in Kenya and how this contributes to religious tension and conflict would have to consider a representative sample of all these varied sources of information. The present study was not intended to venture into such detail, but only to point out the likely direction of such influence from one influential outlet.

Moreover, apart from possible religious conflict, this study was not concerned with other forms of conflict or violence in society. But it is often difficult to draw a clear line since events do sometimes have multiple causes, meaning that it cannot be wholly ascertained that inappropriate religious messages would be the sole cause of tension or conflict between Christians and Muslims.

Time and resource constraints could not allow a more in-depth study of this problem, but it is hoped that the present study will have shed enough light to create a reasonable understanding of the phenomenon of religious violence in Kenya, and to provoke interest in this area by other researchers.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Rising incidents of terrorism in Kenya in recent years have brought to the fore the issue of Christian-Muslim relations and associated tensions, made worse by increasing attacks on churches coupled with claims that some Muslim clerics were indoctrinating large numbers of Muslim youths, making them intolerant against other faiths. In addition, the stereotyping of Muslims internationally as terrorists has also been taking place on the local scene, where Somali Muslims in particular are viewed with suspicion by the security machinery and the rest of the population, contributing to the rising tensions and conflict between Christians and Muslims.

1.3 Objectives

Overall objective:

The overall objective of this study is to identify measures to stem inter-religious tension between Christians and Muslims in Kenya

General objectives:

The general objectives of the study are:

1. To identify the principal causes of religious conflict in Kenya.

2. To assess the attitudes and misgivings of the adherents of the two main protagonist religions – Christianity and Islam – toward one another.

3. To identify points of convergence that could be used as a basis for initiating peace and harmonious coexistence between the two faiths.

1.4 Research Questions

The research sought to answer critical questions touching on inter-religious conflict in Kenya. These are questions that have preoccupied religious leaders, politicians, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders involved in peace efforts. A systematic study of these questions in order to come up with tangible solutions has not been exhaustive considering that inter-religious tensions have only become a major concern in Kenya in recent years.

Main Question: How can communication assist in stopping religious conflict and enhancing interreligious dialogue and harmony in Kenya?

Other questions to be investigated would include:

• What factors contribute to religious conflict between Christians and Muslims in Kenya?

• What initiatives exist to stem the rise in religious hatred and violence, and why haven't these initiatives succeeded?

• What can be done to strengthen current initiatives to enhance peace between Christians and Muslims?

• To what extent have perceptions of marginalization contributed to religious intolerance between Christians and Muslims?

1.5 Justification

As negative sentiments by Christians and Muslims against each other come to the fore, they will affect relations between the adherents of these faiths in a manner that will adversely affect national cohesion, security and development.

This makes it imperative to study closely the phenomenon of inter-religious conflict between Christians and Muslims in Kenya, in the hope that the rising tension can be nipped in the bud.

Initiatives to ensure peaceful and harmonious co-existence between Christians and Muslims in Kenya have been present for years, but these have failed to stop the boiling over of tensions into increasingly open conflict – leading, for example, to the burning and ransacking of church buildings at the predominantly Muslim Coast and North Eastern provinces. There is a need, therefore, to find out why existing initiatives are insufficient and what can be done to stop the slide to anarchy.

With a potent mixture of internal and external factors working to create religious animosity, what will save Kenya from going down the path of Nigeria? We need to undertake measures that will sufficiently quell the flames of animosity. These measures can best be determined through empirical research and not biased or whimsical thinking.

Moderate peace-loving Christian and Muslim leaders have tended to come out and calm tensions during crisis situations. The security services have equally been alarmed, especially by the rising radicalisation of Muslim youths that makes them easily recruited by international jihadist groups. New solutions are now called for, and it is expected that the results of this research will therefore be beneficial in complementing the work being done by a wide range of groups interested in forging a lasting peace between Kenya's major faiths: Religious leaders of both Christian and Muslim persuasions, religious and communication scholars, other scholars engaged in the social sciences, non-governmental and semi-religious institutions concerned with peace initiatives, security and intelligence agencies, and governmental organizations such as the National Cohesion and Integration Commission.

1.6 Research Hypothesis

This research hypothesis is intended to unearth the causes of religious conflict in so far as dialogue and communication are concerned, thus leading to a better understanding and formulation of strategies for necessary dialogue and communication initiatives:

In short – That partisan communication foments religious conflict.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This research is based on the Two-Step Flow Theory of Paul Lazarsfeld and his colleagues. Simply put, this theory states that reports and opinions expressed in the mass media are first synthesized by opinion leaders, who then pass on their interpretations to the rest of the people. Most people, then, form their opinions based on the influence of opinion leaders, who would have coloured what the mass media reports with their own perspectives.

Based on this theory, the term "personal influence" came to illustrate the process intervening between the media's direct message and the audience reaction to that message.

The study indeed shows that the opinions and utterances of religious leaders as captured in the media have a profound impact on their followers, leading to religious confrontation and violence.

In 1948, Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet published *The People's Choice*, a paper analysing voters' decision-making processes during the 1940 presidential election campaign in the United States. The researchers sought to answer the question, "Why do people vote as they do?"

Whereas the researchers expected to find empirical support for the direct influence of media messages on voting intentions, in agreement with the magic bullet theory that was then prevalent, they were surprised to find that this was not the case. The study's findings suggested that communication from the mass media first reaches opinion leaders, who filter the information gathered to others, in the process passing on their own interpretations of events. The role of human agency is therefore important.

Having been developed in the 1940s, this theory was current well before the emergence of strong electronic media – radio, TV and Internet – as powerful audience influencers. Indeed, some major news stories seem to be spread directly by the media with little (if any) personal contact.

The theory perceives opinion leaders as primarily active media seekers, while their followers are passive media "sponges." This distinction between the behaviour of leaders and their followers is however not always the case. Opinion leaders have been found to be both active and passive. They are not always atop every issue, and their desire to influence the audience will depend on how passionately they feel about an issue.

The theory appears to suggest that the media only has an influence when opinion leaders have been influenced, which is only partially true.

The foregoing shortcomings led subsequent researchers to negate some of the tenets of the Two-Step Flow Theory. This is why although Lazarsfeld and his colleagues argued for a two-step model, this in time gave way to the Multi-Step Flow Theory of Mass Communication.

While the Two-Step Flow Theory only allowed a vertical flow of influence downwards from media to leaders and then followers, this latter theory allowed the inclusion of other optional directions of the flow of influence, such as horizontal (among both leaders and followers); direct, linking two actors directly; indirect, linking actors through a third party or chain of intermediaries; and upward, from opinion leaders to media, followers to influencers, and marginal actors to central actors.

Despite the criticisms levelled against this theory, it remains relevant in many situations, including for this study. Critics as well as supporters of Lazarsfeld credit him and his colleagues with having come up with a theory that showed the media only has limited effects,

and that other factors such as the influence of opinion leaders come into play as well. The extent to which these other factors are important – and the inter-play between them – is of course debatable and the subject of much research. The fact that the media do not have direct, immediate, and uniform effects on audiences is however hardly debatable today, thanks to Lazarsfeld and his team.

When it comes to matters of faith, people are influenced by their religious leaders in this than perhaps any other area of human endeavour. Throughout history, religious leaders have been known to play a critical role in the direction of human affairs. The history of Europe is replete with examples of this, from papal-led military crusades to wars between Catholics and Protestants.

That religious leaders command fanatical loyalty that politicians can only admire is beyond question. People who are entangled in doomsday cults have been known to take poison, for example, on the advice of their religious leaders, generally with the promise of a better life hereafter. When it comes to religious wars, the alluring promise of martyrdom and a rich reward in the after-life is normally one of the factors that motivate young men and women to attack their opponents ruthlessly.

While the mass media has today penetrated all aspects of society throughout the world, the prevalence of armed conflicts around the world that are partly fuelled by religious differences shows that religious authority continues to be firmly entrenched in the human psyche. While most media houses tend to exercise reasonable judgment and will not promote hatred directly – or may even actively promote the pursuit of peace – it takes the simple word of a Muslim imam or Christian bishop to set a whole community aflame.

Still, the mass media provide an avenue for the reporting of activities by religious leaders and their organisations. The publicising of religious activities, in particular the reporting of

activities of religious leaders and how this is done, is bound to have a deep influence on subsequent actions by followers.

In religious matters, the people who get the limelight in the media are largely the recognized leaders, especially those with a huge following. They are also the same people who interpret the news for their faithful, who will largely blindly agree with that interpretation. In matters of faith, as stated earlier, followers tend to be fanatical and will readily perform what is required of them by their leaders without much ado. By undertaking a content analysis of these messages carried in the media, it will become clear what kind of messages are being passed to Christians and Muslims by their religious leaders regarding the other religion; it will then be easy to assess the impact of those messages on peace and conflict in the religious arena.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

This study focuses on reports published in the *Daily Nation* over a three-month period. Since this is the daily newspaper with the largest circulation in Kenya, the results obtained do to a large extent reflect the situation across the country. This is supplemented by a few materials consisting of literature produced by religious organisations; again, because an exhaustive investigation of the whole country would have been extremely expensive and time-consuming, this was confined exclusively to Nairobi.

The study does not examine other outlets of the print media, nor does it examine any electronic media outlets whatsoever. It also ignores social media, whose influence is steadily rising. This is due to constraints of time and resources, which are way beyond the scope of a study of this nature.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 History of Conflict between Christianity and Islam

The history of the interaction of Christianity with Islam is one that is largely characterized by conflict. Granted, there have been many areas of cooperation, trade and common pursuit of various areas of human endeavour, but when history is written these have tended to be overshadowed by the enormous competition between these two major Abrahamic faiths.

Current conflicts between Christians and Muslims cannot be isolated from the wider global history of conflict between adherents of these two religions. In Kenya as in the rest of Africa outside North Africa and Ethiopia, Islam has been in existence for centuries, much longer than Christianity. Along the Kenyan coast, Arabs settled in the area and introduced Islamic teachings even as they traded in various products, which included the slave trade.

The advent of the Portuguese under the famous sailor Vasco da Gama did not do much to dent the Muslim tradition. It was only in the nineteenth century that missionary activity penetrated the hinterland, with the advent of colonialism, and with this the conflict between Islam and Christianity in East Africa started becoming more pronounced.

Elsewhere, this conflict has a much longer history. From its inception, Islam almost instantly got into conflict with Christianity, often taking advantage of existing weaknesses, religious and societal divisions in Christian societies. By the time Islam began in Arabia, large swathes of the Middle East, North Africa and surrounding areas were inhabited by Christians. The brand of Christianity practised in the Eastern Church was at variance on many points with the Catholicism of Western Europe – such as on the contested supremacy of the Bishop of Rome over other church leaders and the question of whether the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, as Rome insisted, or only the Father – but Christianity it still was. Of

course, there were small independent groups of believers who time and again thrived, but these were largely subject to killings and persecutions from Rome. In addition, there were pagan tribes in these areas, and Christianity had the challenge of evangelizing these. This challenge was made worse by the arrival of Islam and its rapid spread. The renewed movement of Vikings out of the Scandinavian peninsula also threatened the Western church with destruction. As Earle E. Cairns (1996) writes:

> In addition to meeting the challenge of these migrants, the Western church had also to take the task of evangelizing the Teutonic tribes… Those who had accepted an Arian form of Christianity and who had settled in Spain, North Africa and Italy presented a further challenge to Christianity. This task of winning the pagans and the heterodox Asians and the challenge of the rival religion of Islam taxed the growing resources of the church to the limit. Between 590 and 800 the Western church made great gains in the northern and western areas of Europe; but, in contrast, Eastern Christianity did little more than hold its own against the Muslims who, at times, came up to the gates of Constantinople.

> The Muslims, energized by the dynamic of a newfound faith, the hope of plunder in the name of religion, and a zeal to convert the unbelievers to their faith, rapidly expanded from Arabia into North Africa, Asian, and even Europe by the way of Spain…. The Muslims finally wiped out the church in North Africa and weakened the church in other areas of Africa. They eventually brought about the downfall of the Eastern empire in 1453 and put the Eastern church under Muslim political control.

In its battle with the Christian world, Islam rapidly won a string of successes. The greatest victories came in the hundred-year period between 632 and 732. Syria was won by 640, and the Mosque of Omar was erected in Jerusalem in 638. Egypt was conquered in the next decade, and Persia (present-day Iran) fell under Muslim control by 650. This rapid crescent-shaped expansion to the West and East threatened Christianity more than anything the faith had ever experienced before, but expansion on the eastern side was stopped by the brave defence of Leo the Isaurian in 718. Muslim expansion on the Western wing of the crescent

was halted by the defeat of the Muslims by the armies of Charles Martel at Tours in 732. Cairns writes:

> The church had undergone great losses as the conquered people were faced with the choice of the sword, tribute, or Islam. Muslims were not always intolerant, however, for they often permitted people in tribute-paying areas to practice their faith.
>
> Both the Eastern and Western sections of the church were weakened by losses of people and territory to Islam, but the losses of the Eastern churches were greater than those of the West. The strong North African church disappeared, and Egypt and the Holy Land were lost. The Eastern churches were able to do little more than hold back the Muslim hordes from sweeping past Constantinople… The Eastern churches also had to deal with the problem of whether images as well as pictures could be used in the church. This issue, known as the iconoclastic controversy, came about partly because the Muslims were accusing Christians of being idolaters, as they had pictures and images in the church (Cairns, 1996).

The Christians would in later centuries launch the crusades, which were an attempt to recapture land lost to the Muslims and especially the Holy Land. The crusades caused enormous suffering and further deepened the rift between Christians and Muslims. David Ayerst and A.S.T. Fisher (1977) write that priests told those being sent on their crusades that their entry into heaven was guaranteed:

> I implore and urge you both poor and rich—and it is God, not I, who implores and urges you as Christ's heralds—to be quick to drive that vile breed from the country inhabited by our brothers, and bring aid to those worshippers of Christ before it is too late. I say it to those present, I will proclaim it to the absent, but it is Christ who commands…
>
> If those who go lose their lives on the journey either on land or sea, their sins will be forgiven them immediately. I grant this by the power God has given me…

The competition between Christians and Muslims, which from its early days took on a military perspective, continued through the centuries. There were some critical turning points,

such as the Fall of Constantinople to the Muslims in 1453. Regarding events around the sixteenth century, Justo L. Gonzalez remarks*:*

> Until that time, Christianity had been generally hemmed in by Muslims to the south and east—with the notable exception of Russia, which continued to expand eastward as the power of the czars also expanded—and by the Atlantic Ocean to the west. When Christians thought of the world-wide mission of the church, they thought almost exclusively in terms of the conversion of Muslims. And when they thought of challenges to the faith, this too they did in terms of the challenges of Islam. This worldview seemed to be corroborated by the Fall of Constantinople and the advance of Turkish power, which seemed the greatest menace to the survival of Christianity itself.
>
> Yet in the course of a century, things changed drastically. Toward the east and south, the challenge of Islam was seemingly countered by the completion of the Spanish Reconquista in 1492, by the failure of the Turkish armies to take Vienna in 1529, and by the battle of Lepanto in 1571, in which the joined navies of Spain, Venice, and the papal states, under the leadership of Don Juan de Austria, dealt a crushing defeat to the Turkish navy, which until then had been the dominant force in the eastern Mediterranean.
>
> At the same time, the Atlantic ceased to be a barrier to the expansion of Western civilization, and of Christianity with it. Sailing westward, the Spanish conquered lands enormously larger than Spain itself, and in those lands established the Roman Catholic faith. Sailing south around Africa, the Portuguese established trading colonies and missions in the Far East. Islam, which once seemed the greatest barrier to Christian expansion, now saw its heartland hemmed in by the increasing economic and military might of Western powers. Eventually, many of the traditional Muslim lands in North Africa and in western Asia would become European colonies. When they finally gained their independence in the twentieth century, and particularly as oil revenues enriched them, some of these lands would become centres of a militant and anti-Western Islamic reaction (Justo L. Gonzalez, 2010).

Gonzalez further records that for centuries it was assumed that the existence and survival of a state demanded religious agreement among its subjects. That notion, which Christians had once rejected when they constituted a minority in the Roman Empire, became prevalent following the conversion of the emperor Constantine. All who live in a Christian state must

be Christian, and faithful children of the church. The only possible exceptions were Jews and, in some areas of Spain, Muslims. But such exceptions were seen as anomalies, and did not protect the followers of those religions from civil disenfranchisement and repeated persecution. Gonzalez (2010) writes, this view of national unity linked with religious uniformity was at the root of many wars of religion that shook both the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries:

> Eventually, in some areas sooner than in others, the conclusion was reached that religious agreement was not necessary for the security of the state, or that, although desirable, its price was too high. This happened, for instance, in France, where the Edict of Nantes recognized the failure of the previous policy requiring all the king's subjects to fit a single religious mold. In the Low Countries, for different political reasons, leaders such as William the Silent also denied the need for religious uniformity. Thus began a long process whose consequences would prove enormous, as one after another the various European states—even those that still had an official church—came to adopt the policies of religious tolerance. This eventually led to the more modern idea of the lay state—that is, a state with no religious connections—that was decried by some churches and hailed by others (Gonzalez, 2010).

It is worth considering that in modern times, most of the Near East and the north coast of Africa were at the beginning of the nineteenth century under the control of the Ottoman Empire, whose capital was Constantinople—renamed Instabul in 1930. By the opening of World War 1, Great Britain, France and Italy had control of the north coast of Africa, and the Ottoman Empire was about to disappear. This led many European churches to consider the possibility of beginning missionary work in those areas and in other traditionally Muslim lands. Naturally, these activities led to the intensified rivalry between the two faiths that continued into the twenty-first century.

Trimingham J. Spencer (1979) explains why Christianity has failed to win converts in significant numbers from the Arab world over the centuries:

> Although spiritual motives are rarely of any significance in commending Christianity to social groups, one reason for its lack of appeal and thus its failure to act in depth on Arabs, was that in its God-Man focus of worship and divine-human relationship it was just as alien to Arab consciousness as it was to Jewish consciousness… Islam chose a more effective way, the legalistic way of Judaism, to enforce her uncompromising Monotheism.

But disagreement between Christians and Muslims was not always centred on religious beliefs. Quite often, these disagreements were rooted in competition for economic resources. Justo L. Gonzalez (2010) says that for centuries, Muslims blocked European expansion toward the south and southeast. Beyond the Muslim lands on the north coast of Africa were barren lands, and beyond these were tropical areas deemed unhealthy for Europeans. Therefore, Europe came to see Africa and the Muslim world as obstacles to reaching the riches of the East.

2.2 Recent conflicts between Christians and Muslims around the world

Having explained the history of conflict between the world's two greatest religions, it should now be noted that this age-old conflict between Christians and Muslims has continued into today's world. As recently as at the Fall of the Soviet Union, open military conflict has been witnessed. As Gonzalez records:

> Various countries formerly held together by Communist rule broke apart. This was particularly true in Yugoslavia, where civil war ensued and—even though Patriarch Pavle of Serbia called for an end to violence—religious conflicts among Muslims, Orthodox, and Catholics led to gross violations of human rights and crimes against humanity. In Albania and in some other areas formerly under Communist rule where the majority was Muslim, Orthodox leaders protested that the new governments placed undue restrictions on them and their followers (Gonzalez, 2010).

Gonzalez (2010) does in fact argue that Islamic militancy was responsible for the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York, and

suddenly a nation that was still celebrating its victory over the Soviet Union "found itself facing the more insidious and frightening enemy of terror, which had been espoused as the weapon of choice by small but fanatical groups within the Muslim community."

This chain of events between Christianity and Islam since ancient times, which has now become more deadly in modern times and especially since the attacks in New York, has been responsible for increased terrorist attacks around the world, including in Kenya. Obviously, too, the rise of a radical and violent brand of Islam has poisoned relationships between adherents of the two faiths in many countries around the world.

2.3 Inter-Religious Dialogue between Christians and Muslims

Owing to the long history of conflict between Christianity and Islam, and in an attempt to stop the bloodshed that has characterized relations between the two faiths over the centuries, numerous attempts have been made to establish peace between the followers of these religions.

In recent times, various international organizations have taken an active role in promoting this dialogue, including the World Council of Churches (WCC). Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder (1999) have recorded part of this contribution. Writing about a meeting held in Switzerland in 1969, they say:

> The WCC also instituted a series of conversations with Muslims. The long history of antagonism between the faiths, the sensitivity of the situations in the Middle East, and the growing number of Muslims in traditionally Christian countries all made such a dialogue essential. The obvious starting point was to seek common ground, namely, belief in one God, the Abrahamic faith, and shared concern over modern social problems.
>
> The participants of the meeting agreed that the dialogue between Muslims and Christians is necessary, and that it should be established at various levels. This necessity arises out of several factors, e.g.:
>
> the specific historical roots which the two religions have in common;

the attitude of self-criticism which is inherent in each religion;

the increased mobility and mixing of populations which has made meetings of Christians and Muslims much more common, and has increased the responsibility of the two religions to find ways of living together in (the) same society;

the special present situation, especially the common responsibility of both religions with regard to the political problems in the Near East.

The aim of the dialogue consists first in leading both religions to greater mutual respect and better understanding of each other. Their relations are made difficult by a centuries-old history characterized by many misunderstandings. Further, the dialogue must aim to raise the questions which can lead each of the religions to a deepening and a renewal of its spirituality. Finally, such dialogue can lead to accepting and fulfilling common practical responsibilities….

The encounter of the two religions is taking place in a world which finds itself in the midst of rapid change, in which the traditional religious conceptions are being called into question. Islam and Christianity stand before the task of formulating their belief in God in the present world and, above all, of living it in a convincing way. The dialogue contains a special promise, if it does not confine itself to a comparison of traditional positions, but rather turns to this task. The common roots can, in discussion with the modern world, appear in a special way. This discussion includes problems of social ethics as development, peace and education. In particular, it must concern itself with the question of knowing what serves the true liberation of man…

While it outlined key concerns, however, it is clear from the above report that the envisaged dialogue did little by way of concrete measures to inculcate a culture of inter-religious tolerance. General statements such as this one have done little to stem intolerance and violence. Moreover, as can be seen from the statement, the dialogue has often veered into trying to find common ground in the belief systems of Christianity and Islam, which is immaterial as what is required is merely tolerance of the rights of others to practice their faith without hindrance.

2.4 Historical situation in Kenya

Many studies have been undertaken touching on Christian-Muslim conflicts in Kenya, East Africa and Africa as a whole. Many of the studies undertaken so far have leaned more toward examining the historical circumstances that have led to conflict.

Not only globally but also locally, the conflict between Christians and Muslims has deep roots that cannot be easily wished away. This assessment is shared by F.N. Mvumbi (2009), who says, "Contemporary conflicts between Christians and Muslims, whether real or imagined, are a product of, and embedded in historical antecedents that have governed the relations between the two faith communities."

When it comes to competition between Christianity and Islam at the local level, it is noteworthy that the colonial government was created by Christians. The Muslim rulers who were there before the colonial administration were ruthless − merchants of death who perpetrated the slave trade against local populations. This means that neither the colonial history nor Islamic expansionism was humane. This history of ruthlessness is hardly mentioned or acknowledged by followers of Christianity or Islam, but especially Muslims. Although both religions preach peace, Christianity and Islam have not prevented either from being ruthless.

This conflict between these two major faiths has resulted in mutual suspicion between the Christian and Muslim communities in Kenya. Even though many Kenyan communities are economically marginalised, for example, Muslim communities have tended to blame their marginalisation on their faith vis-à-vis the Christian majority. This resentment has then led to separatist tendencies, which has manifested through movements seeking to unite Muslims politically or even total secession to form a separate Islamic state.

These suspicions have come into the limelight in various ways over the years. During the debate preceding the referendum that ushered in Kenya's new (2010) constitution, for example, the issue of Kadhis' courts caused major disagreement between Christians and Muslims. Christian leaders argued that Kenya being a secular state, matters of religion should be completely kept out of the constitution. Muslims and others supporting them on this issue, on the other hand, argued that Kenya's whole constitutional order was based on the Westminster model, which is intrinsically Christian; Muslims, they said, were therefore entitled to accommodation within this Christian construct. In any case, the courts had been officially recognized and funded by the Exchequer ever since independence. Eventually, Kadhis' courts were included in the new constitution.

Arye Oded (2000) writes that, "Mutual suspicions and denunciations came to a head with the formation of IPK [the Islamic Party of Kenya] in 1992, which led to outbreaks of violence on the coast." Oded looks at the factors that have led to bad blood between Christians and Muslims over the years, giving the arguments advanced by each side of the religious divide.

As a political party, IPK drew its support base from the Islamic communities at the then Coast and North-Eastern Provinces. The Kenyan government was quick to proscribe it and to deny it registration, saying it was dangerous for the country to have religion-based parties.

While Muslims may have won the day on the question of whether to include Kadhis' courts in Kenya's new constitution, many other times they have been left holding the short end of the stick. In fact, this problem is not only found in Kenya but also in Tanzania where Muslims form a substantially higher proportion of the population, as Ernest Makulilo (2010) has observed.

In the course of fighting terrorism, for instance, there have been numerous accusations against the Kenya police force of ethnic profiling of Somalis. Following a terrorist attack on

the Westgate Shopping Mall in the Westlands suburb of Nairobi, a police operation codenamed Operation Usalama Watch was undertaken in which thousands of Somalis – including Kenyan Somalis – were indiscriminately herded into the Kasarani Stadium just outside the city.

The land question in Kenya's Coast Province has also been a simmering problem since independence. Coastal communities – many of whom are Muslim – accuse upcountry communities and especially the influential Kikuyu elite of grabbing vast tracts of land at the Coast, including prime beach plots. This is why writers such as Makulilo (2010) agree that numerous governance issues have created friction between the adherents of the two major faiths, with Muslims feeling that they had been subjected to injustice and oppression.

These historical facts have stubbornly refused to go away, arising in every conflict where Muslims are affected. While it is true that many non-Muslims in Kenya are equally marginalised, the communities where Muslims are a majority tend to see their disadvantaged position from a religious perspective. This has led to bottled up resentment by Muslims against Christians, which surfaces every now and then in the form of violent confrontation.

This could explain why writers such as Luigi Clerici (2005) offer solutions that focus on removing the underlying suspicions: "Mature religious Muslims as well as Christians must work hard at overcoming repressed animosity and hatred of any kind." Symbolic gestures, Clerici says, have to be followed up by a general and persistent building up of mutual trust and good human relationships between the two faiths in order to overcome the "deplorable" state of mutual apprehension.

According to Wanjohi et al (2005), "Dialogue is the most basic and effective means of securing human solidarity, collaboration and respect… the way to resolve the tension between one individual and another within society is through the practice of dialogue…"

Another scholar, Sharma, has in the same book joined those who argue for some sort of inclusiveness in religion, one that considers all religions as leading to God. "There is no doubt that every religion worships God. But the confusion arises when every major religion offers a historical person as the only saviour and mediator to God, and the common man is bewildered as to which one to accept and which one to reject." (Wanjohi et al, 2005)

This latter solution, of course, is unlikely to be accepted as people hold on unwaveringly to the tenets of their faith. What is required, then, is a culture of tolerance. The initiatives toward inter-religious dialogue and various strategies that have so far been employed to enhance tolerance having only partly succeeded, it is imperative that new solutions be urgently sought to solve the emerging problem of inter-religious conflict in Kenya.

These studies give a well-rounded view of the history of religious conflict and current challenges. They do not, however, examine what role communication by the mass media may have played either in increasing or abating tensions. Yet, the impact of the mass media – both the national mass media and specific media controlled by religious organisations – would undoubtedly have played a role in shaping the views of Christians and Muslims toward one another.

Of these media, it is perhaps obvious why those media houses controlled by religious institutions have not effectively played the role of defusing tensions between Christians and Muslims. These media propagate the policies of the sponsoring institutions, which often harbour deep resentment against opposing religions. For instance, Family TV carries regular programmes on the Middle East that portray Israel as God's chosen nation and its Arab neighbours as troublemakers. The station, as would be anybody's guess, has nothing positive to say about the Muslim religion.

But it is equally important to recognise that even for those media that are not directly controlled by religious organisations, the majority of staff members tend to be Christians. It is only human that these would approach the task of news reporting and editing with their existing perspectives and prejudices, which essentially betray a Christian perspective and anti-Muslim bias gained from the wider society. The more influential TV stations include Citizen TV, NTV, KTN and K24, while daily newspapers include the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, *The Star* and *The People*.

This situation also betrays an ignorance of other religions by journalists operating in newsrooms. Because these journalists do not possess a higher level of knowledge on religious issues than the wider society, their reporting of religious issues tends to be superficial and does not show a deep understanding of the underlying issues. Such reporting can only further embed existing opinions and biases against other religions.

2.5 Religious literature

Apart from the mass media, the religious literature employed by various groups can also serve to give a fairly accurate view of the perspectives of those groups toward other competing groups within the same religion, as well as other religions.

The most common are weekly newsletters that are handed out to believers by major congregations during their regular services. These newsletters will also tend to carry news that is sometimes not reported by the mass media, or to offer insights that the regular press would be more cautious about.

For example, the weekly newsletter produced by Nairobi's Jamia Mosque, *The Friday Bulletin*, reported in its issue of August 10, 2012 that "Islamophobics" had demolished a mosque in Kajiado District, poured human waste in the mosque and set on fire copies of the

Koran, the Muslim Holy Book. The mosque was being built at Olkejuado High School and was nearing completion.

In a second incident, the bulletin reported that the school head of Kangeta High School in Meru sent 15 students home after they insisted on observing the Islamic fast of Ramadhan, defying orders from the head teacher.

Such reports, and the manner in which the reporting is done, obviously infuriate their readers and contribute further to the growing rift between the two major faiths in Kenya. Added to fiery sermons from either side, tensions can often reach uncomfortable highs. An example of such fiery sermons was provided by Citizen TV in reporting on the slain Muslim cleric Sheikh Aboud Rogo. In his sermons, Rogo called for the slaughter of "kaffirs" (or unbelievers, which would include the country's Christian majority).

Muslim leaders, on their part, have been worried that their concerns are often swept under the carpet by Christians as well as the mass media. Abu Ayman, the editor of *The Friday Bulletin* and media officer at Jamia Mosque, told the *Christian Century* magazine in 2012 that while Muslim leaders were vocal in condemning attacks against churches, this was not reciprocated by Christian leaders. "Issues affecting Muslims are not even mentioned by the church. Cases of intolerance are building up. If the simmering tension is left unattended, it will have serious consequences for the country."

The equating of terrorism with Islam has particularly irked Muslims, who have time and again come out vocally to argue that crime was not a monopoly of followers of the Islamic faith. These complaints are not without merit. It has not escaped the attention of Muslims and human-rights groups that while crimes by Christians were treated as crimes, those by Muslims were considered acts of terrorism.

For many years, a criminal gang by the name Mungiki has terrorised residents of central Kenya. The police have handled members of this gang as criminals, even though there are documented cases of extra-judicial killings aimed at eliminating the gang. Members of the Mombasa Republican Council, on the other hand, have long been accused of terrorism.

Since 1992, Kenya has been involved in politically-instigated ethnic clashes that take place every election year in various parts of the country such as Nakuru, Kericho, Migori and elsewhere. These have never been blamed on terrorism. When attacks took place in Lamu County in the first half of 2014, however, these were quickly condemned as acts of terrorism. The reason why land clashes in the hinterland would remain clashes, while those at the Coast become terrorist attacks, can only lie in a highly biased perspective that has permeated the whole Christian society, from leaders to the general population.

This is why clerics such as Abu Ayman are keen to show that Muslims have been much misunderstood. "Our mosques are open to all members of the public, but only tourists take up the offer to visit. Many Christians believe that if they came to the mosque, they would be attacked by jinns and demons." It is such misgivings about Muslims that have contributed to the widespread view among Christians that Muslims are involved in terrorism.

Certain decisions by Christian leaders have not helped matters. A number of schools have prohibited Muslim girls from wearing the hijab and even defied directives by the Ministry of Education to allow the scarf in institutions of learning. These cases have been widely reported in the media.

Some schools, moreover, have been forcing Christians of varying persuasions as well as members of other religions to attend church services. Thus, Muslims see Christian leaders as deliberately frustrating Muslims, even though the disputed decisions affect members of all faiths and not just Muslims.

This intolerance of Muslims is not just by Christian leaders, but even those in political power. In a widely-reported case, a leading clergyman who later became a Member of Parliament opposed the construction of a mosque in his constituency. The local population, Muslim leaders said, was incited to demonstrate in opposition against the construction of a mosque that was meant to serve Muslims in the area.

Some of the complaints by Muslims, however, have also been insensitive of other people's cultures and traditions, simply advancing the perspective that Muslims were being oppressed without looking carefully at all the facts. Just as it would be unexpected to put up a church building in a school with a strong Islamic tradition, for instance, it is perhaps unfair for Muslims to demand that they must have their way and put up mosques wherever they please – even in institutions with a strong Christian tradition. A middle ground would be to allow either religion to put up their religious structures in the neighbourhood, but not inside the religious-sponsored institutions.

2.6 Religious Discrimination

In the pre-colonial period, Africans in general were all denied their rights. Muslims were not the only ones deprived. Kikuyus were moved from their ancestral land, and so were the Maasai. The only difference is that the coastal people did not have this marginalization addressed in the post-independence period in the same manner that other groups benefitted.

The major reason for this omission had to do with missionary education. Muslims, to a large extent, did not benefit from missionary activity. They did not get the benefit of education because they were suspicious of it and of the Christians behind it. The graduates of mission schools later took up leadership positions in independent Kenya. By a stroke of historical coincidence, they happened to be Christians and were based in Nairobi. They did not care

about Mombasa, were ignorant of Muslim interests, and only served to heighten the hue and cry from the Muslim community that has gradually led to more open conflict.

There have been official attempts to address concerns by Muslims, but these have tended to be half-hearted and have not led to any far-reaching measures that would assuage Muslim concerns. As recently as in 2009, for example, President Kibaki received a report prepared by the Presidential Action Committee to Address Specific Concerns of the Muslim Community in Regard to Alleged Harassment and/or Discrimination in the Application/Enforcement of the Law. The report supported the claims of discrimination in the issuance of identity documents and passports to Muslims and found that counter-terror operations violated existing national laws. The report also found that Muslims were unlawfully deported to foreign countries, Muslim communities did not have fair access for obtaining land title deeds, and that the Kadhi courts were inadequately funded. These facts were also captured by the 2010 report on International Religious Freedom prepared by the United States Department of State.

Official inaction to address the injustices against Muslims even in the face of such reports has meant that the future indeed holds much uncertainty. So far, the country has managed to hold together, thanks to a great extent to the efforts of level-headed spiritual leaders from across the religious divide. These have been meeting and discussing issues under the umbrella of the Inter-Religious Council of Kenya. The body is sometimes chaired by a Muslim, and the chairman as at 2014 was Adan Wachu, the Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (Supkem) – the umbrella body of Muslim organizations in Kenya.

Christian leaders engaged in these efforts have included representation from such organisations as the Kenya Episcopal Conference that brings together Catholic bishops, and

the National Council of Churches of Kenya – which brings together a large number of Protestant denominations.

Since the majority of Christians and Muslims do not support religious violence, simmering tensions have not led to much violence. The rise in home-grown Islamic radicalism among the youth now threatens to upset this balance if this radical minority is not neutralised, as Prof Douglas Waruta of the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of Nairobi told the *Christian Century* magazine (2012): "The leadership of Supkem is very responsible; so are Christian leaders. They have no agenda of creating conflict between Muslims and Christians. But they have to deal with the minorities within their communities. These minorities may sometimes be paid from outside Kenya. Foreign extremists employ our young people to cause trouble in the name of religion. We need to expand the healthy leadership we have among religious communities so as not to give space to fanaticism. We have not given this as much attention as we should."

The claims of external financing and support are not without merit. The United States maintains a list of terrorist organisations and is constantly on the lookout for organizations that may be involved in financing of terror cells around the world. Indeed, jihadist organisations have themselves made no secret of their common ties with similar-minded allies around the world; this is what lies behind the co-operation, for example, between Al Shabaab and Al Qaeda.

As stated earlier, the view that Muslims have been deliberately targeted for marginalization is not wholly meritorious – even though they have been worse off than most other groups both in pre-colonial and Independent Kenya in the allocation of national resources. The issues they complain of – lack of schools, hospitals, and good roads, for example – afflict non-Muslims as well. It is only when it comes to issues such as the issuance of national identity cards that a

clear bias is discernible, since Somalis as a border community are treated differently from others such as the Maasai and the Luo. As the Christian Century (2012) reported Prof. Waruta as saying, "I don't think somebody sat down and decided they were going to create an injustice for Muslims or Christians."

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on the methods used in research, which were selected to enable in-depth examination of the subject matter so as to thoroughly understand the nature and history of the problem, the extent of this problem, and to propose solutions.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a content analysis approach of relevant materials, whereby the messages carried in printed media were analysed to determine their effect on Christian and Muslim readers.

Personal contact was limited, the primary instrument being the collected materials used by both the mass media and religious organizations in reaching the Christian and Muslim populations.

3.2 Population

The population for purposes of this study was stories with a religious perspective or having religious impact relevant to Christian and Muslim readers in print national newspapers and the religious publications of Christians and Muslims.

3.3 Sampling

A content analysis of copies of the *Daily Nation* newspaper was undertaken. This is a newspaper that can easily afford to offer its readers a wider range of articles than its competitors owing to its larger financial base and pool of writers. In that case, it offers a wider selection of all sorts of articles, from which a researcher can draw a more representative sample of articles as compared to other competing media.

For the purposes of this study, all the newspapers for the period from April 1-June 30, 2012 were studied. In selecting this period, consideration was taken to look for a period likely to give a representative picture. Between the invasion of Somalia in October 2011 up to early 2012, it would not have been easy to get a true picture of the situation because of the inflamed religious situation arising from the invasion. Again, as attacks heightened in the second half of 2012, passions were once again inflamed. The period selected had few reported attacks as well as lengthy periods of calm, thus giving a good overall perspective of the situation in Kenya.

The stories studied were those touching on inter-faith relations between Christians and Muslims. These hinged largely but not exclusively on terror-related stories. Stories on inter-faith relations and violence outside Kenya were left out of this study.

The information garnered was supplemented by studying a selection of the inter-religious pamphlets and messages produced by major Christian and Muslim organisations in Nairobi. Because a majority of sects do not produce any written publications, and some produce publications for the spiritual nourishment of the flock but not for inter-faith dialogue, the samples to be used were raised as and when such materials became available in the course of the research.

3.4 Data Collection

Data were collected through physically going through copies of the *Daily Nation* for the three months from 1st April to 30th June 2012.

More materials were collected from religious institutions, with a total of 10 pamphlets and newsletters from different Christian denominations and five from the Islamic faith.

No oral interviews were conducted, the only information being that volunteered by sources at religious organizations in the course of study.

3.5 Data analysis

The stories were initially categorised according to the following types: news stories, analyses features, opinions, and letters.

The data were analysed for the following:

1. Words and phrases that betray bias for or against any particular religion.
2. Sources, to see whether the opinion of all concerned was sought, especially where a religious perspective was stated or implied.
3. Topic of the story, to determine whether it is on a Christian or Muslim issue, or neutral.

In order to reach an objective decision regarding each story's performance in terms of responsible reporting, a score sheet was used whereby those stories with only one or two inappropriate words or phrases were given a score of 1, those with three or four words/phrases a score of two, five or six words attracted a score of three, seven or eight words/phrases a score of four, and anything above this a score of five.

Inappropriate words of phrases would in this case include such terms as "Muslim extremist", "fundamentalist", "zealots", "Zionists", and such other words or phrases that may be construed as constituting the expression of a negative opinion regarding either Christians or Muslims.

A score was thus given on each story, ranging from 1-5, to indicate the level of appropriateness in terms of engendering tolerance and writing in a fair and balanced manner. On this scale, 1 represented the highest while 5 stood for the lowest scores.

In assessing bias, the stories were analysed to see whether where the opinion of religious leaders was sought, this was representative of both Christians and Muslims or not, hence indicating whether a story was impartial or partisan in its treatment of issues. Based on whether a story addressed a purely Christian or Muslim issue, or something of general interest, the stories were also separated into pro-Christian or pro-Muslim stories.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS, ANALYSIS & PRESENTATION

4.1 Newspaper content analysis

The *Daily Nation* (including weekend editions) carried regular reports relevant to this study during the three-month period that was selected. These reports were in various forms, mainly news reports, features, and opinion articles. The length and prominence accorded the articles varied considerably. Because major media houses generally have editors responsible for various sections such as parliamentary news, foreign news, local news, education, business news and so forth, of course the judgment on which stories to carry and the related issues of placement and angling of the story depends largely on these section editors.

That said, the stories on terrorism and inter-religious conflict were carried in most sections of the *Daily Nation*. Sometimes, the same story would appear more than once but with different approaches. For instance, an important story of an attack that makes it to the prime pages would be boosted by a related opinion article or editorial on the same subject. Alternatively, there would be a related story on the page that examined the subject from a different angle.

Nevertheless, the data showed that news stories far outnumbered any other form of reporting on religious issues, representing 56 out of the 89 stories published, or 63 per cent of all religion-based articles (Table 1). Opinion articles, where religious leaders and other opinion shapers would have a free rein to vent their views, represented only 7 out of 89 articles, or 7.9 per cent of these stories.

Analyses, in which it would be expected that writers well-versed in religious issues would give authoritative comment on events, were unfortunately only 11 (12.3 per cent), meaning that readers did not have the benefit of sufficient critical appraisal and varied opinion on events reported elsewhere in the newspaper.

This situation would in turn lead to the unavoidable conclusion that readers were left to digest on their own the import of words and opinions attributed to their religious leaders in news stories. Without sufficient and well-informed counter-balancing of opinions, the views of these religious leaders would then be expected to carry the day.

The data collected revealed the following breakdown of published stories for the period under review:

Table 1: Types of stories on religion published in the *Daily Nation*, April-June 2012

Month	News stories	Analyses	Features	Opinions	Letters	Totals
April 2012	19	4	3	3	5	34
May 2012	21	3	3	2	2	31
June 2012	16	4	2	2	-	24
Totals	56	11	8	7	7	89

In addition, the stories were analysed for their coverage of each of the two main religions to see whether they were favourably disposed toward either Christianity or Islam (Table 2). Despite the fact that the major shareholder of the *Daily Nation* is the Aga Khan, a Muslim, a cursory glance at the statistics reveals that stories portraying Christians and their practices in positive light far outnumbered those directed at Muslims. This certainly reflects the local market situation, since the newspaper is expected to make sales in a Christian-majority country.

All the same, the bias goes beyond what would be expected to be reasonable, with only one story being pro-Muslim throughout the three-month period.

Table 2: Stories published in the *Daily Nation* depicting bias toward either Christianity or Islam during the period April-June 2012

Month	Pro-Christian	Pro-Muslim	Supporting neither	Total
April 2012	12	1	21	34
May 2012	9	-	22	31
June 2012	6	-	18	24
Totals	27	1	61	89

Open bias against Muslims was also evident in the actual reporting of published stories. Some of the stories and opinions were actually written by Christian religious clergy, who obviously advanced their own sectarian interests.

Fr. Joe Babendreier of the Catholic Church writes a weekly column in the Sunday Nation, as does Fr. Dominic Wamugunda of the same church. The latter is also Dean of Students at the University of Nairobi. No Muslim clergy is given the same treatment, though they do very occasionally get space in the Opinion pages. Neither do we see Islamic sermons published on the Muslim day of worship, Friday, in the manner that this happens in the Sunday Nation.

There were also regular stories on the intrigues and politics of Christian organisations, but none on the Muslims. For instance, the *Daily Nation* for June 3, 2012 carried a story headlined, "The Vatican scandal reveals power struggle to succeed Pope." But rather than assess the issues of the scandal – corruption, mismanagement, and internal conflicts and power struggles among top cardinals reported in information leaks, the story falls for Vatican propaganda attacking the manner in which this information was obtained – that the Pope's papers were stolen. It also takes a reassuring tone, quoting Fr. Vincent Wambugu of the

Kenya Episcopal Conference (the apex Catholic body in Kenya) as saying that, "In terms of faith, we are sound despite the reports."

The newspaper used terms that were pregnant with meaning, and sometimes did not even bother to hide slanted reporting. This also extends to the Opinion pages, where open bias is given free rein. For example, the Sunday Nation of June 3, 2012 carried a story, "Terror attacks put Iteere's Vigilance reign in sharp focus". The story repeats claims made by Police Commissioner Matthew Iteere in an opinion piece published the previous week on May 29, 2012, in which the police chief had stated that, "It concerns me deeply that a few misguided imams have become enemy agents."

Iteere, in that article, also went on to say that, "We have credible intelligence that in their criminally inclined sermons, they have been betraying the cause of the Republic by calling upon the youth in their congregations to fight against their motherland, deliberately misrepresenting such betrayal of their country as holy war."

Such unsubstantiated attacks against one religion's leaders, without similar condemnation of like-minded spiritual leaders on the other side of the religious divide, cannot be said to be objective or fair.

One other article said that terrorist "targets were characteristic of a people against a particular social and Christian way of life. Some preachers are exalting their religion by demeaning other people's." These sort of general but irresponsible statements would obviously have an inflammatory effect on readers, who in the absence of specific details may determine that their religion and its leaders were under attack.

This and similar articles attributed terrorist attacks and religious tensions to hate speech by religious leaders, principally radical Muslim clerics, and the effect such speech was having on adherents.

Abu Ayman, a Muslim leader at Jamia Mosque in Nairobi who was interviewed in August 2012, complained that even when stories touching on Christians committing crimes against Muslims were reported—which was not common in the first instance—no corresponding language of this sort was used.

A good number of stories were very insensitive of the victims in their reporting and use of pictures. Following a terrorist attack at the Coast, one letter said that "the behaviour of Mombasa residents did not portray a scared people." It went on to state that these residents "were not surprised by the attacks—actually you could say the attacks were long overdue." The victims, who are Christians, would obviously be enraged by such a statement and likely to construe it as an attack on their religion—obviously by Muslims, in their opinion.

Little consideration was given about the possible effect of stories. As has already been pointed out, some of the articles were capable of further inflaming passions, but still others must have given the terrorists a lot of satisfaction. The element of conflict sensitivity was missing almost completely in most stories. The reporters simply wanted to give the graphic details to the greatest possible extent, many times without even balancing the story with relevant comments from other sources.

In terms of sensitivity to the factors discussed above—responsible and non-inflammatory reporting that is also fair and balanced—the score was equally disappointing (Table 3). Overall, only 27 stories (30 per cent) were fully sensitive to religious sensibilities and did not contain any questionable or provocative issues. A total of 12 stories (13.5 per cent) were particularly bad. That these stories could see the light of day and came from the country's

largest newsroom speaks volumes about the training of reporters and editors on sensitive matters affecting religion, and subsequently peace and security.

These stories would include the opinion piece by Matthew Iteere and subsequent references to it, which failed to alert readers as to the article's provocative yet unsubstantiated allegations regarding Muslim leaders.

Following an attack on an open-air Christian prayer gathering in Mombasa, a letter to the editor on April 2, 2012 observed that, "One would not expect any dangers as mosque prayers adjacent to the Mombasa Stadium go on peacefully just across the road." The obvious inference is that the letter seeks to draw attention to religious differences – insinuating that this was an attack by Muslims on Christians.

Another story that falls in this category was one published on April 2, 2012 headlined, "Al Shabaab warn of more attacks in Kenya." The story reported Al Shabaab's propaganda boasts about what they were capable of doing, raising the issue of whether it is proper and ethical to report such a deadly enemy's bravado in a time of war. For instance, it quoted the militia group as saying, "The more Kenyan troops continue to persecute innocent Muslims of Somalia, the less secure Kenyan cities will be; and the more oppression the Muslims of Somalia feel, the more constricted Kenyan life will be." The effect of such an article is not only to give undue publicity to a murderous organisation, but also to lend credibility to its propaganda that it was indeed championing the interests of Muslims vis-à-vis Christians.

On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the highest and 5 the lowest, the stories were categorized as follows:

Table 3: Irresponsible reporting of religious issues, April-June 2012, on a scale of 1-5 (with 1 showing least bias)

Month	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5	Totals
April 2012	9	3	4	8	10	34
May 2012	6	10	10	4	1	31
June 2012	12	5	5	1	1	24
Totals	27	18	19	13	12	89

Muslim leaders also complained that reports about attacks by Christians on Muslim interests that were reported to the local media were not reported, an example being the desecration of the mosque at Olkejuado High School and burning of copies of the Koran. This was interpreted to mean a lack of concern for Muslim interests by editors. Any criminality by Muslims, even before verification whether terrorism was involved or not did, however, raise immediate attention in newsrooms. Thus, a profile was created in newsrooms about Muslim youths and terrorism, and this profiling gradually found its way into the major newspapers' pages.

An example is the main letter to the editor published in the *Daily Nation* on May 1, 2012, and which called upon Muslims to be "at the forefront in castigating these terrorists since they are spoiling the good name of their faith." The letter went on to state, patronisingly, that "Christianity learnt its lesson in earlier centuries that violence is not viable in the conversion of fellow humans to a particular faith." This letter therefore attributed criminality by Muslims to their faith, something never done when Christians are caught up in crime. In addition, it failed to realize that criminals were bent on destruction and not conversion. Any reader

would also not fail to see through the insinuation that Christianity is superior to Islam, and informed readers would no doubt be aware that the Christian religion has throughout its history been just as violent and inhumane as Islam.

This mental bias becomes even more apparent when one examines issues that ordinary readers would ordinarily ignore, such as the balance in terms of sources for stories, in addition to actual coverage of religious issues. It would appear that except where it is completely unavoidable, the unwritten rule is to avoid seeking sources for religious stories from Muslims. An example or two will suffice.

A story headlined, "Make public reports on blasts," published in the *Daily Nation* of May 2, 2012 quoted a Bishop Albert Mulemi as asking the government to make public its findings on grenade attacks, especially in light of increased attacks against Christian worshippers. The same story quoted the Nairobi region chairman of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK), Bishop Joseph Kilioba, as calling upon the government to provide "frequent security patrols" in places of worship to stop attacks. No Muslim leader was interviewed on this matter, a trend that repeated itself again and again.

Stories on Christian denominations and personalities included an inside magazine (DN2) cover story on Nigeria's Bishop David Oyedepo published on May 2, 2012; a story on May 5, 2012 about a defrocked priest by the name Bishop Peter Njogu who moved from the Catholic Church to the splinter Renewed Universal Church; and a story on May 28, 2012 about yet another splinter group from the Catholic Church, the Reformed Catholic Church, ordaining a deacon in a ceremony led by its leader, Bishop Godfrey Shiundu. The question then arises: Are there no interesting features and stories about Muslim personalities and events, both at home and abroad, which would be of interest to the significant Muslim minority population and newspaper readership?

Although radio and television were not the subject of this research, the complaints against newspapers by Muslim leaders were also raised against these other media.

The frequency of stories on religious conflict was irregular. When there was an attack, several stories would be carried on various pages for a number of days, but these would gradually decline and finally vanish from the pages until the next attack took place. This means that unlike sports, business and other sections of the newspaper where readers get regular updates, religious reporting is only given priority when there is conflict. Yet, this is a core area when it comes to peace and security in Kenya and the region.

About 25 per cent of stories had direct references to religion, even when the stories did not have an immediately evident religious angle. This would be through terms such as "Islamic militants" and "Muslim extremists." Moreover, apart from police sources, these stories heavily sought the opinions of religious leaders.

There were isolated references to historical injustices against Muslims, but none on other religious minorities in Kenya. These however lacked in-depth research and analysis, only referring to the problem of marginalization in the predominantly Muslim North-Eastern and Coast Provinces.

It was apparent from some of the reports that writers and editors dealing with stories on religious conflict lack sufficient knowledge about religious matters to handle such reporting effectively. Reporters betrayed their restricted worldview with the phrases and terminology they chose in their reports. For instance, church services of Protestant Christian denominations were sometimes referred to using the term "mass," which refers specifically to services conducted by the Roman Catholic Church. One article also referred to a message delivered by a Muslim cleric as a "sermon," which though probably broadly acceptable betrays a Christian denominational perspective.

Perhaps because matters of faith are close to the hearts of many people, including reporters, the stories were largely insensitive to the situations at hand. The writers seemed keen to give prominence to issues such as clashes, fighting, and deaths arising from conflict, while almost completely ignoring peace initiatives. Where these were reported, they were merely an appendage and not given prominence.

It was clear from the stories sampled, therefore, that reporters and editors merely considered the newsworthiness of stories involving conflict and did not weigh the repercussions of publication in a particular way or using certain terminology. This insensitivity would almost certainly have led to further inflaming of passions. This lack of good sense is perhaps due to lack of training in conflict-sensitive journalism by most practitioners.

4.2 Religious Literature

A study of the religious literature of both Christians and Muslims revealed an uneasy tolerance toward each other. While it is to be admitted that both Christian and Muslim groups have huge differences within each religion as evidenced by the large number of sects and denominations, concerns regarding inter-faith conflict seemed to cut across the board.

Muslim literature was much more concerned about inter-faith matters than Christian publications, which were more general. The main issues discussed in Muslim pamphlets and religious hand-outs with regard to inter-faith relations were threefold: The profiling of Muslims and their arbitrary arrest by security authorities, including arresting Muslim leaders; the lack of respect for Muslim rights and unequal treatment before the law; and a perceived lack of tolerance for their faith by some educational institutions, especially faith-based schools sponsored by Christian denominations. While giving their monthly newsletter for use in this research, a Muslim imam did in fact single out the Catholic Church as the biggest

culprit when it came to religious intolerance in schools, saying that Muslim students were even being forced to attend mass.

The Islamic publications and newsletters have also tended to deal with issues affecting Muslims even where these are not of a religious nature. Following the extension several times of a curfew imposed on Lamu County due to insecurity in the area, Supkem said in a newsletter: "The chairman of the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (Supkem), Prof Abdulghafur El-Busaidy, described the extension of the dusk to dawn curfew by Inspector General of Police David Kimaiyo as oppressive and discriminative. "We are very disappointed by the extended curfew. This we consider as intimidation and suppression of the residents of Lamu County," he told a news conference. Accompanied by a group of imams and businessmen from Lamu, the council threatened to move to court if the blanket time limit would not be reconsidered and lifted to allow residents to resume their normal lives. Prof El-Busaidy claimed that what happened in the isle had happened elsewhere in the country. He cited Samburu where 40 security officers were killed and their firearms taken, but no curfew was declared."

The Christian publications appeared more conciliatory, preferring to leave matters at the level of generalities. "Where is peace? Where did the rain start beating us? Some of us may wonder? But to believers of Christ Jesus, all is not lost. He remains our peace, our hope and comfort," wrote the Caritas Kenya newsletter, a publication of the Catholic Church.

Muslim pamphlets and newsletters, too, encouraged tolerance and mutual respect for other faiths. Sabahi, a Muslim publication, pointed out that the unintended consequences of the security operations against terrorists "have put a wedge between Christians and Muslims which al-Shabaab could easily use to foment sectarian strife and create an environment of instability to achieve their violent goals."

The weaknesses observed were compounded by the fact that most messages are done in a language in which a significant proportion of the population lacks fluency. *The Standard*, an English daily newspaper, does not have a Kiswahili equivalent. The Nation Media Group has the Kiswahili daily *Taifa Leo* in its stable, but this newspaper suffers from a low circulation and original reporting since it relies mainly on translations from its English sister newspaper.

Moreover, because most of the population cannot afford to buy newspapers on a daily basis due to Kenya's high poverty levels, religious publications are probably the easiest way to disseminate peace messages. Religious pamphlets and newsletters are distributed free of charge or at minimal cost and get to people who can never be reached through newspapers. Unfortunately, these messages are also largely in English, with an occasional Kiswahili publication. Local language publications are rare and irregular.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

From the data that were gathered, it was apparent that there exists much underlying tension between Christians and Muslims in Kenya. It is this underlying tension that often spills over into open violence, but such cases have been few and far between. Such an uneasy peace is precarious and has resulted in the destruction of churches in the past few years. On a few occasions, it has also led to street battles, for example in Eastleigh where Somali youths were at one time being hunted down by other local communities due to increased bomb attacks in the area.

It was evident that materials for dissemination of peace messages were few and far between. The major newspapers have little by way of regular articles touching on religion in the same way that they carry articles on other areas such as sports, travel or motoring. Where such regular columns exist, they tend to be sectarian and do not address issues of religion from a holistic perspective. Father Barbendrier's column in the Sunday Nation, for example, is written from a Catholic perspective and is mainly devotional. It cannot, by its very nature, attract readership from a cross-cultural, multi-religious readership.

Religious organizations and institutions did not also have regular published material on inter-faith matters. Such topics were dealt with when there was an issue raising debate in the country, such as attacks on churches by Muslim youths or attacks by international jihadists. Other times, matters of inter-religious engagement took a backseat.

This points to lack of a clear policy on inter-faith relations by religious organizations, or at the very least lack of an effective communications strategy to pursue whatever policy there may be on inter-faith relations.

Moreover, there is a lot of ignorance on inter-faith matters by most of those who ought to be at the frontline in reaching out to the masses with conciliatory messages. This ignorance is to be found both in the media and among religious leaders.

The lack of effective messages can be partly attributed to the lack of seriousness by media houses in dealing with religious messages. This has meant that there are no specialist writers on religious topics who can give balanced and authoritative comment.

A lack of good sense afflicts reporting on religious conflict, perhaps because matters of faith tend to be treated with a lot of emotion by many people. Writers are therefore unable to divorce themselves from their personal beliefs and circumstances when reporting on matters to do with religious conflict. There is therefore bias; since Christians make up a much larger proportion of the general population and of the journalists in media houses, Muslims have tended to get the short end of the stick.

In fact, it was clear from the stories sampled that reporters and editors merely considered the newsworthiness of stories involving conflict and did not weigh the repercussions of publication, or temper their reports for purposes of not inflaming passions further. This showed lack of good judgment and perhaps lack of training in conflict-sensitive reporting.

But even worse, it is highly likely that such reporting inflamed passions, leading to an escalation of conflict. What could have been contained through clear-headed reporting and good judgement ended up creating additional danger to the affected communities in areas facing a crisis. When combined with other factors such as ingrained biases and fiery preachers, the situation at times appeared to reach boiling point.

There is therefore a need to further investigate the phenomenon of inter-religious conflict in Kenya in greater detail than the scope of this investigation permitted. Such an investigation

would perhaps also consider seeking the views of other religious groups such as Hindus and traditionalists, all of whom have tended to be ignored when tensions flare up between Christians and Muslims.

Moreover, the lack of printed media in local languages for disseminating information on inter-religious initiatives has curtailed the distribution of these messages. This observation applies to both religious institutions and newspapers. A large section of the population is therefore not getting these messages in a language that they can understand.

The fact that inter-religious conflicts were a subject of discussion every now and then despite the peace messages emanating from moderate spiritual leaders is an indication of the stranglehold that radical spiritual leaders have on the minds of their followers. It goes toward pointing that the religious propaganda leaflets issued by religious leaders have a serious impact on the faithful, and that confrontational messages attributed by the media to these leaders were having serious effect. This is also seen by the reactions of followers in stories covering their spiritual leaders or suspicious deaths, such as that of Sheikh Aboud Rogo, which caused riots by Muslims.

It is hoped that this research will be useful in developing the most appropriate communication strategies for peace messages and efforts to address problems in Christian-Muslim relations so as to enhance inter-religious dialogue and mutual tolerance.

5.2 Recommendations

Arising from this study, a number of recommendations can be made regarding Christian-Muslim relations in Kenya. These recommendations cover, in addition, issues arising from the current state of affairs on inter-religious discourse in Kenya, even where some matters may not have been the subject of specific investigation in this study.

1. Inter-religious engagement through the Inter-Religious Council of Kenya (IRCK) should be strengthened and regular meetings held of senior clergy, especially Christian and Muslim leaders.

2. IRCK should initiate joint broadcasts and publication of peace messages, especially in times of crisis, such as when terror attacks have occurred.

3. Individual denominations should take a more active role in spreading peace messages, which should include the publication of newsletters containing messages of inter-religious tolerance at regular intervals.

4. Peace messages encouraging inter-religious tolerance should not only be done in English and Kiswahili, but in local languages as well so as to reach a wide cross-section of Kenyans using religious institutions and other avenues such as public barazas and health centres.

5. Accepting that religious tolerance does not amount to compromising one's faith but is merely an acknowledgement of everyone's right to practice their faith without undue interference by others, messages of reassurance need to be tailored suitably so as to attract the support of a wide base of adherents of the Christian and Islamic faiths.

6. Newspapers should be urged to devote space for regular coverage of news on religion. The same should apply to other media such as radio and television broadcasting stations.

7. Newspapers should balance the reporting of religious news to reduce the disparity that to a very large extent favours Christians at present.

8. The option of newspaper articles reporting on and advancing the doctrines of specific faiths or denominations should be opened to all faiths.

9. Considering that regular newspaper columnists who are religious leaders advance the doctrinal interests of those particular faiths, these should be discontinued in the

interests of fairness, or turned into an open space that rotates among the numerous religious interests in the country.

10. Reporters and editors should be sensitized on conflict-sensitive journalism to avoid inflaming passions, hurting victims or making other inappropriate judgments in the course of their work.

11. Newspapers should appoint specific editors to be in charge of religious news so that this sensitive area is given enough weight, and those appointed to such positions should be people who are fair-minded, able to separate their own personal beliefs from religious reporting, and knowledgeable in issues to do with the major world faiths.

12. Knowing that regional integration is now a dawning reality upon East Africa, the formation of the proposed East African Community Inter-Religious Council should be speeded up, in line with the recommendations arrived at during the second East African Peace and Security Conference held in Bujumbura, Burundi, in November 2013, and a similar conference held in Kigali, Rwanda, in September 2014. This regional Inter-Religious Council will be expected to play a key role in comparing experiences and advancing the cause of religious tolerance and harmonious existence by people of various faiths throughout East Africa.

13. A reference guide containing important information that can assist the media to better grasp basic religious matters of importance to Kenya should be produced by IRCK and circulated among media houses to minimise misreporting of basic facts by journalists regarding the religious faiths they write about. An expanded one covering the whole of East Africa should be produced later by the new EAC Inter-Religious Council.

14. Again in line with recommendations of the Bujumbura conference mentioned in recommendation 13 above, a database of religious organizations and institutions in East Africa should be created and shared among all these organizations as well as with relevant authorities, including regional governments and other important actors engaged in peace and security in East Africa.

15. Recognizing that the phenomenon that manifests itself as religious confrontation often has deeper roots that are often social or economic, efforts at inter-religious harmony will not bear much fruit if these other factors are not addressed, including fighting corruption and addressing historical grievances.

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