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**THE ROLE OF MASS MEDIA IN AIDING INTERNATIONAL
TERRORISM: THE CASE OF KENYAN MEDIA AND AL-SHABAAB**

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Declaration

I, **MUCHOKI, GEOFFREY MBUGUA**, hereby declare that this research project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

Signed..... Date.....

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This project has been submitted for examination with my approval as University Supervisor;

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Abstract

Never before has terrorism been so rife and evident than in the last few years, and especially after the 9/11 attacks in the US. Transnational terrorism and crimes have gained prominence with the advent of new media and international media broadcasting round the clock. States are not only being challenged on their own territories, but their stature in the international arena is equally coming under attack from new actors like terrorist organizations. And even more so by the power of media to not only set the agenda, but to now influence public and foreign policy of states.

This study examined the role of media as enablers of international terrorism by failing to gate-keep and inevitably set an agenda for the terrorists who have marked media as one of their critical tools in meting violence on the people. The study examined this relationship, a '*fatal attraction*' as described by Lumbaca and Gray, between Kenyan mainstream media and the terrorist group al-Shabaab.

This study interviewed media and international conflict scholars, media practitioners and graduate students of communication from the University of Nairobi. The study found that mainstream media has largely aided in pushing and propagating the al-Shabaab's agenda in Kenya through skewed coverage as compared to counter-terrorism initiatives by the government and other state actors. The study further recommends striking a balance between reporting objectively – media freedom - and deviance amplification and promotion of international terrorism. Proper training of journalists reporting on terrorism issues is, too, recommended.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

NTV	Nation Television
KTN	Kenya Television Network
ICU	Islamic Courts Union
CNN	Cable News Network
KDF	Kenya Defence Forces
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
IDIS	Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies
MCK	Media Council of Kenya
#KOT	Kenyans on Twitter
ICG	International Crisis Group
KNUT	Kenya National Union of Teachers
TSC	Teachers Service Commission
IS	Islamic State
ACK	Anglican Church of Kenya
PLO	Palestinians Liberation Organization

Dedication

This project is dedicated to the men and women of goodwill who have put their lives in the line of danger to keep Kenya and the world safe from acts of terrorism. The thousands of Kenyan uniformed men and women in the frontlines of war, at home and in Somalia; the patriotic journalists who first interrogate facts and only publish that which is for the common good of the people and nation; the honest government officers who refuse entry to terrorists even when the allure of bribes is almost overwhelming; and all those who seek to make this country and the world a better and safer place for all. This is for you.

1. CHAPTER ONE: STUDY SETTING

1.0 Background

*“We are in a battle and that more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media. And that we are in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of our Umma,” Ayman al-Zawāhirī (Successor to Osama bin Laden) in a letter to Abū Muṣṣab al-Zarqāwī, head of al-Qaeda in Iraq.*¹

Terrorism as a concept is quite elusive and contested. The classification/ categorization of an act as terrorism has been a contested issue depending on the parties involved, and also based on ideological standpoints. Generally accepted definitions, though, have described terrorism as the ‘rejection of authority...politically (or ideologically) motivated violence with the aim of achieving a demoralizing effect on publics and governments.’² Schmid observes that “Terrorism refers, on the one hand, to a doctrine about the presumed effectiveness of a special form or tactic of fear-generating, coercive political violence and, on the other hand, to a conspiratorial practice of calculated, demonstrative, direct violent action without legal or moral restraints, targeting mainly civilians and non-combatants, performed for its propagandistic and psychological effects on various audiences and conflict parties.”³

Often, terrorism has been used as a weapon by non-state actors like terrorist organizations, liberation movements and other clandestine organizations fighting for recognition and intending to advance sectoral/ political and ideological agenda. States and other state backed actors, too, have also engaged in direct terrorism or state-sponsored terrorism. The concept and term terrorism gained much usage and ‘universality’ with the French Revolution of 1789, albeit associated with state engineered terrorism.⁴ However, there has been tremendous evolution of

¹ http://www.fas.org/irp/news/2005/10/letter_in_english.pdf

² Viotti R. and Mark V. Kauppi (2001) *International Relations and World Politics: Security, Economy, Identity*, (Second Ed.), Prentice Hall, New Jersey. Pp 250

³ Schmid P (Ed.) (2011). *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*. London and New York: Routledge.

⁴ Viotti R. and Mark V. Kauppi (2001) *International Relations and World Politics: Security, Economy, Identity*, (Second Ed.), Prentice Hall, New Jersey. pp 251

terrorism and the incorporation of different techniques and tools in the modern world. The fall of the Berlin wall and collapse of the Soviet Union has led to the emergence of contending ideological and philosophical standpoints which seek to dominate the world.⁵ These contending ideologies and ‘civilizations’ have sought to project their influence in the world through both pacific and violent means.

From the revolution movements, to independence struggle organizations, and the neo-ideological Islamists’ movements dominating the world of global terrorism today, different periods of history have experienced different forms of terrorism; and in each period whatever has been categorized as terrorism has, often, been contested. In the recent past, the issue of terrorism gained global prominence with the September 11 attacks in the United States of America (USA). From then, the war against terror became global, violent, and the terrorists were inadvertently elevated into international actors whose influence and transnational actions could no longer remain backwater issues. Today, international law and relations discourse is almost dominated with terrorism and counter-terrorism issues.⁶

No better agent shapes these perceptions of terrorism than the mass media. The role of mass media in global or national terrorism is as historical as terrorism is. In order to achieve their overall objectives (often physical and psychological damage), terrorist organizations have employed the use of mass media, either directly – using their terror channels - or indirectly by attacking vulnerable and publicity generating targets – thereby attracting endless media coverage, which creates the desired awareness, fear and impact. Because victims of terrorist attacks are not the *actual* targets of the attackers, but rather ‘serve as message generators, more or less unwittingly helped by the news values of the mass media, to reach various audiences and conflict parties that identify either with the victims’ plight or the terrorists’ professed

⁵Hauntington, S. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*

⁶Maogoto J, (2005) *Battling Terrorism: Legal perspectives on the use of force and the war on terror*. Ashgate Publishing, Hampshire.

cause', the critical role of mass media in actualization of terrorists' motive becomes even more profound.⁷

The symbiotic relationship existing between mass media and terrorism is played out in various aspects of media reporting, angling of issues and balance in coverage.⁸ Further, media coverage in use of images, words and even replication of terrorists' own words and images only leads to aiding terrorism. Prominence of this coverage, even when attacks have not happened, leads in amplifying terrorists' intentions and objectives. For example, the *Sunday Nation*, Kenya's and East Africa's largest circulating Sunday newspaper, carried a splash on what it described as al-Shabaab's intended attack on Kenyan parliament.⁹ The published story went into details on how the terrorists intended to carry the attacks, their number and how previous attempts had been foiled. Scholars argue that this kind of reporting, especially when such attacks have been foiled, and repetition of previous attacks, or attempts inevitably works to amplify and actualize some of the objectives of the terrorists organizations and organizers.¹⁰ Thus, such reporting, oblivious of 'terrorists' values and norms' only aims at enabling actualization of their agenda – that of either physical or psychological attack.¹¹

In an study of the coverage of two 'investigative' documentaries by two local television stations, KTN and NTV, Abraham Kisang noted that the two stations continued to replicate and project the al-Shabaab messages to the audiences, and often quoted verbatim, or replayed terrorists' video messages, which were in the first instance subject of investigations, or in some cases (had) resulted in targeted attacks against Christians in Kenya.¹² The question, thus, has been how to create a balance between media blackout and enabling terrorism.

⁷Schmid P (Ed.) (2011). *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*. London and New York: Routledge

⁸Farren R. (1990) *Terrorism and the Mass Media: A Systematic Analysis of a Symbiotic Process*.

⁹*Al-Shabaab 'is plotting to blow up Parliament'*, Sunday Nation, March 1, 2015.

¹⁰ Herman G, Herman CF (1998). *Hostage taking the Presidency and stress*, Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

¹¹ Howard (2001) *Values and Norms of Terrorists*

¹² Kisang A. (2014) *Reporting terrorism among Kenyan media: Should journalists be cautious?*, Kenyatta University, Nairobi.

On September 26, 2013, a day after the Westgate terrorist attack in Kenya, the Sunday Nation ran a splash photo of a bloodied victim which not only drew anger and widespread condemnation, but an apology to the country and the victim's family; unknown to the newspaper, the victim had subsequently died and the image had greatly been celebrated within the terror circles.¹³ Notable in the subsequent apology by the management of the media group was the fact that the paper never intended to glorify the terrorists' acts, which inevitably had happened. This use of images, especially, has been critical in the al-Shabaab's propaganda war. The killings in Mandera, again, witnessed the use of victims' pictures in the mainstream newspapers and in television broadcasts. But while these are some of the reports after the terrorists' acts, the use of television images and reporting on terror related activities has raised even more questions on the enabling role of mass media in promotion of terrorism.

For example, in his popular investigative documentaries, *JichoPevu*, KTN's Mohammed Ali has on several occasions blurred the lines of balanced reporting in use of images and words. In one of the programmes on the anti-terrorist war in the coast, the producer and narrator of the programme used images, consistently, of al-Shabaab training in Somalia, replayed their messages encouraging conscription into the groups, reproduced the words of blacklisted terror suspects and Sheikhs encouraging killing of Christians and open warfare against the state. In the programme, the suspected terrorists are broadcast asking their followers to kill 'Kafirs' (*Dawa ya Kafiri kwa hii dunia ni bunduki*). Further, the programme continues to broadcast the preaching of another suspected Sheikh asking Muslims to go to Somalia and train on use of weapons and terrorist. In the same documentary, images of a killed Muslim cleric are shown in their graphic nature and the reporter uses the words 'shahid' (Martyr) to repeatedly describe the killed sheikh.¹⁴ And in an almost similar production, NTV would broadcast an investigative piece of

¹³ Link available here - <http://www.buzzfeed.com/rachelzarrell/outrage-over-newspaper-images-of-kenyan-attack#.qo2BOL85y> (accessed 31-3-2015).

¹⁴ KTN, *Wagigisiwa Mauaji*, aired on January 14, 2014 (also available on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GMERO18jUsw> – last accessed 31-3-2015)

similar nature and replicate the same language, words and images as had been used by the terrorists.¹⁵

The use of words and imagery intended to create fear and promote violence or terrorists' ideologies is considered in many states and jurisdictions as unethical, and in others, actionable. In Kenya, the Media Act prohibits such form of reporting.¹⁶ The Constitution of Kenya, on the other hand, grants people the freedom of expression and the right of the media to operate without any undue influence or regulation.¹⁷ And it is this right, which was at play when the state attempted to regulate the content published by the media in reporting on issues of terrorism through the Security Laws amendment 2014.¹⁸ The judges upheld the right of the media to self-regulate and considered it unconstitutional the attempt by the state to control what the media wished to publish.

This study examined this interplay between terrorism, media and the rise of these non-state actors in the international relations. The study will thus seek to interrogate the role of Kenyan media in (inadvertently) enabling terrorism, especially al-Shabaab and how the realists' position of the state as the only critical and important actor has been challenged by non-state actors like al-Shabaab with the help of mass media. Further, this study sought to show how liberal democracies which allow free speech, and a free media, are getting challenged in authority, both domestically and internationally through agenda setting in the media.

1.2 Problem statement

In the last four years Kenya has become prone to terrorist attacks targeting civilian populations, and most of which are committed by the Somalia based al-Shabaab terror group. The latest such terror attack was on 2nd April, 2015 at Garissa University where about 147 students were killed

¹⁵ NTV, Foul Winds, aired on May 24, 2014 and also available on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T_CAM9gglrQ – last accessed 31-3-2015

¹⁶ Media Act 2010, and Code of Conduct for Practice of Journalism in Kenya

¹⁷ Constitution of Kenya: Articles 33 and 34.

¹⁸ The Security Laws (Amendment) Act, 2014

and several others wounded .This was the second deadliest terror attack in Kenya's history after the al-Qaeda attack on the US embassy in Nairobi in 1998.The continued terror attacks have attracted both national and international media attention which has, inevitably, played into the terrorists' strategy of global attention and awareness.

And while these attacks have continued to escalate, so has the intention by the Kenyan government and related state agencies to curtail what media published in relation to these attacks. Such one attempt was the passing of the 2014 Security Amendments Laws, which sought to restrict publication of certain messages and images in relation to terrorist attacks. Broadly, the relationship between the media and terrorism on one hand, and media and state on the other is the subject of intense legal and policy debate both in Kenya and around the world. The role of media in the promotion and enabling of global terrorism, vis-à-vis the freedoms enjoyed by the media in a liberal democracy like Kenya, is a subject that is a source of intense debate.

This study sought to interrogate this interplay especially the enabling role of media in acts of terrorism. The study seeks to examine how the freedom to disseminate information by the media in functioning and liberal democracies has aided in disseminating terrorists' messages and propaganda and inevitably aiding their course. The study seeks to examine the effects of this bias in news selection and dissemination – through selective interpretation and creation of perceptions - vis-à-vis states' representation in their counter-terrorism initiatives, and its impact on statehood both internally and internationally.

1.3 The study's objectives will be:

The main study question is: Is mainstream mass media an enabler of international terrorism in Kenya?

Objectives:

1. To examine the role of mass media in the promotion of al-Shabaab's agenda in Kenya,
2. To examine to what extent strategic deployment of mass media has enabled al-Shabaab to anchor itself as a critical non-state actor in Kenya, and

3. To examine the impact of this media strategy on Kenyan government's ability to marshal domestic support on war against international terrorism.

1.4 Literature review

The study of mass media and international terrorism has gained ground in the last two decades, mostly, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and emergence of a unipolar global order. The rise of western civilization and emergence of capitalism has however not been without challenges from both state and non-state actors, including global terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda, ISIS/L, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab and others. While some of these actors have a global foothold, like al-Qaeda, some like al-Shabaab and Boko Haram are state and regional in nature. However, the common denominator of most of these terrorist organizations is their affiliation to Islamic fundamentalism and desire to challenge the global balance of power which is tilted in the favor of western civilizations and cultures; a clash of cultures and identity, a quest for definition.¹⁹ Like many other evolving concepts, and often contested, terrorism as a concept is both controversial and ideologically defined. However, with time, scholars have arrived at a generally acceptable definition, which is almost by consensus, academically accepted. This definition is shared by Schmid Alex who observes;

Terrorism refers, on the one hand, to a doctrine about the presumed effectiveness of a special form or tactic of fear-generating, coercive political violence and, on the other hand, to a conspiratorial practice of calculated, demonstrative, direct violent action without legal or moral restraints, targeting mainly civilians and non-combatants, performed for its propagandistic and psychological effects on various audiences and conflict parties.²⁰

Schmid further posits that terrorism is manifested in three contexts: as an illegal repression by the state, or as propagandistic agitation by non-state actors in times of peace, and as an illicit tactic of irregular warfare employed by state and non-state actors.²¹

¹⁹ Huntington S. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*

²⁰ Schmid Alex P. (2011) *Handbook of Terrorism Research*. London, Routledge,

²¹ Ibid.

But the critical role of media in international terrorism is more pronounced in the ‘impotence’ of any terrorist act deprived of heightened media attention and publication. L. John Martin argues that this symbiotic relation enables terrorists carry out their attacks knowing the generated attention and subsequent fear will serve their overall objective of both direct and indirect harm to both victims and larger populations.²² Schmid further argues that the news value criteria applied by media in coverage of news enables the perpetuation of terrorist actions beyond the actual victims since unlike in assassinations, the victims of terrorist attacks only “but serve as message generators, more or less unwittingly helped by the news values of the mass media, to reach various audiences and conflict parties that identify either with the victims’ plight or the terrorists’ professed cause.”²³

Globally, the Middle East and North Africa remain the largest sprouting points of terrorist organizations with tentacles round the world. The region, largely fueled by the Israeli-Palestine conflict, and now the clamor and agitation for Islamic Caliphate have produced the highest number of terrorist networks and sponsors of terrorism in the world.²⁴ Within the Horn of Africa region, the Somalia based Al-Shabaab group, which began in 2007 after the defeat of the Islamic Courts Union, ICU, by Ethiopian forces is the region’s most prominent and lethal terror group with affiliation to al-Qaeda. The al-Shabaab is both a product of religious extremism and also of state collapse and mismanagement.²⁵

Like many other terrorist organizations, al-Shabaab is aware of the critical role of media in its campaign. The group operates several social media accounts, has recruited several clerics who use audio and visual CDs to reach as much audiences as possible. Further, their coverage in the mainstream Kenyan media has been successful and impact almost achieved with each single act

²² Martin, L. John, The Media’s Role in International Terrorism, available here:
<http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~surette/mediasrole.html>

²³ Schmid, A. P (1989) *Terrorism and the Media: the Ethics of Publicity*; Schmid Alex P. (2011) *Handbook of Terrorism Research*. London, Routledge.

²⁴ Ciment, J. (2011) *World Terrorism: An Encyclopedia of Political Violence from Ancient Times to the Post 9/11 era*, Routledge, New York.

²⁵ Kisiangani, E. (2011) *Comparing Somalia’s Al-Shabaab and Uganda’s Lords Resistance Army: A toxic Mix of Religion, Politics and Violence*. Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria.

of terrorism. The coverage of terrorism by two mainstream papers in Kenya, Daily Nation and the Standard for the period April 2014, showed that there was a general tendency to cover the acts 'positively' with government's counter-terrorism interventions receiving lukewarm or negative response altogether. Maina notes that this 'negative' tone and 'issue framing' by the media reinforced the terrorist's objectives of spreading fear and enhancing propaganda, which inevitably undermined government's ability to counter the al-Shabaab as envisaged.²⁶

The symbiotic relationship, and perhaps ability of terrorists' groups to manipulate media, is in the actions, which are bound to generate media interest due to their news value and drama. Media will select and report on issues due to their ability to draw attention and create public interest. On the other hand, the terrorists will strike in areas and targets where such interest is bound to generate media attention and widespread coverage.²⁷ The principle intention of any terrorist attack, beyond the actual violence, is to 'influence the scale and tone of media attention to their attacks'.²⁸ Thus, in most cases, terrorist will design and plan their attacks with the intended media attention in mind to ensure that the intended message reaches both the targeted actors, and in some cases draw new sympathizers. Walsh further posits that, like the findings in Maina that this coverage, due to

more competitive and decentralized media management', gives 'the public a distorted picture of the threat from terrorism and reducing the ability of the authorities to explain their policies and to put the problem of terrorism in an appropriate context.'

This is also likely to create preferences and biases, including political pressure by public on states' counter-terrorism interventions.²⁹

²⁶Maina, B. (2014) Assessment of Print Media Coverage of War against Terrorism in Kenya: A Case of the Daily Nation and Standard Newspapers in Kenya. (MA Project, IDIS, University of Nairobi). Pp 41

²⁷Tuman, J.S. (2003) *Communicating Terror: The Rhetorical Dimensions of Terrorism*. London: SAGE Publications

²⁸ Walsh, J (2010) Media Attention to Terrorist Attacks: Causes and Consequences. Institute for Homeland Security Solutions

²⁹ Ibid, pp2

In an examination of terrorist attacks and corresponding media attention, citing Rohner and Frey, Walsh draws attention to the positive correlation between an increase in media coverage of terrorism and an increase in the attacks; a form of deviance amplification which is aided by the media.

In examining the response by states from these kinds of media coverage, Walsh cites several studies conducted in both Israel and the US where the citizens became more 'emotionally connected' and demanded more violent responses by the government. For example, the study observed that most voters in the US supported President Bush's military response to terrorism. In Kenya, while no concrete studies have been conducted on the relationship between media coverage of terrorism and government response, there exists some evidence to show a heightened *violent* response by the state to attacks by al-Shabaab. For example, the 'Operation Linda Nchi', the Kenya military's offensive into Somalia launched in 2011 was a culmination of extensive media coverage on the terror group's abductions and attacks against Kenyans and foreigners. The subsequent attacks in Kenya equally elicited an even harsher tone from the mainstream media and called for retaliatory attacks against al-Shabaab.³⁰

In what has come to be described as the 'CNN effect', the role of media in influencing both domestic and foreign policy of states is becoming even more pronounced through 'agenda setting' and framing of issues into public policy agenda. Warren Strobbel describes it thus:

Here it is, the nexus of media power and foreign policy, where television's instantly transmitted images fire public opinion, demanding instant responses from government officials, shaping and reshaping foreign policy at the whim of electrons. It's known as the CNN Effect...is a loss of policy control on the part of policy makers because of the power of the media, a power that they can do nothing about.³¹ The power of the media, not just

³⁰ Sunday Standard, October 6, 2013: Donald Kipkorir, Al-Shabaab deck of cards: It's our time for revenge. Available at: <http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000094973/al-shabaab-deck-of-cards-it-s-our-time-for-revenge> (accessed on April 22, 2015); Daily Nation: Crush Shabaab Menace, Editorial February 27, 2015.

³¹ Strobel, W. (1996) *The CNN Effect: How much influence does the 24-hour news network really have on foreign policy?* American Journal of Foreign Relations, Washington.

CNN, to use images and messaging to ‘condition response’ is an issue of greater interest in the field of international studies.³²

And this media influence on government actions, policies and responses on counter-terrorism issues is evident even in Kenya where the response from attacks has been almost media influenced; the attacks have resulted in even harsher tones and harsher retaliations. For example, the attacks in Garissa, April 2, 2015, resulted in wide media coverage and calls for tougher response and answers from the government.³³

The Kenyan media have been quite forceful in covering terrorism and such stories have been granted prominence and widespread coverage. Maina observes that, in April 2014, the Daily Nation Newspaper carried 108 terror-related stories, while the Standard had 101, totaling to 209 stories on terrorism in 30 days only; 75% of these stories were news while 6% were carried as editorials. This was the highest concentration of any one theme by the newspapers during the month.³⁴ International Crisis Group also observed that post Westgate attacks elicited the same widespread coverage and influenced policy changes which led to escalation of the war by KDF in Somalia and an increased desire to relocate the Somali refugees from Kenya. Further, these attacks led to the much publicized ‘*Operation Usalama Watch*’ which targeted Somali residential areas, particularly Eastleigh area of Nairobi.³⁵ These responses have been rekindled in the April 2015 Garissa attacks where KDF was reported to have escalated bombings in Somalia and the Kenya government gave a three months ultimatum to UNHCR and related agencies to relocate Somalia refugees from Daadab in Kenya.³⁶

³² Robinson, P (2013) Media as a Driving Force in International Politics: The CNN Effect and Related Debates. Global Policy Journal. (available: <http://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/blog/08/10/2013/media-driving-force-international-politics-cnn-effect-and-related-debates>)

³³ Garissa attack: Hard questions that just won’t go away available: <http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000157652/garissa-attack-hard-questions-that-just-won-t-go-away> ;Saturday Nation, April 4, 2015: Uhuru should declare state of emergency in the troubled counties.

³⁴ Maina, B. (2014) Assessment of Print Media Coverage of War against Terrorism in Kenya: A Case of the Daily Nation and Standard Newspapers in Kenya. (MA Project, IDIS, University of Nairobi). Pp27

³⁵ International Crisis Group (2014), Kenya: Al-Shabaab – Closer to Home, Nairobi.

³⁶ CNN, (April 11, 2015) Relocate World’s largest refugee camp or we will; The Telegraph, UK (April 6, 2015) Kenya Bombs Shabaab camps in retaliation for Garissa attack

This media agenda setting role is a subject which has been studied widely since the beginning of the 1970s after scholars observed the impact of media reporting on US presidential elections. It is borne from the understanding that media have to engage in careful selection and isolation of issues considered important, then these ‘media issues’ are transformed into ‘public issues’ and ultimately into ‘policy issues’ through careful framing and prominence in reporting. McCombs and Shaw (1972), in their research on agenda setting function of the media, drawn from several US presidential election campaigns, posited that the media filter and shape the issues based on their own agenda, and that they concentrate on only the few issues they have identified as critical for the masses. The scholars also found that there existed dissonance between what audiences thought was important with what the media gave attention and prominence, the actual media content. They further posited that media exercised significant influence on what people thought were the important issues surrounding them. But just as not all terrorist attacks attract media attention, so is it that not all media attract similar influence in framing issues and public debates – agenda setting.³⁷ This media ‘potency’ and ability to influence policy and public attention on an issue is a critical factor whenever terrorists plan attacks. Their intention is to gain the widest possible attention and publicity. Thus, in their choice and target of attack, the aftermath coverage and attention is a critical factor. And the ‘news values’ elements of media are at the heart of any terrorist attack.³⁸

Kisang argues that post Westgate media coverage, in some sections of mainstream media, had framed the issues into ‘Muslim versus Christian’ conflict which had created a situation where ‘Kenyans were united in fighting terrorism’ but greatly divided on the ‘strategies’ to use in combating the vice.³⁹ This framing of the terrorist agenda has created a social and religious cleavage which has equally impacted on government’s ability to combat terrorism especially

³⁷McCombs, M., & Shaw, D. (1972). *The Agenda Setting Function of Mass Media*. Public Opinion Quarterly.

³⁸Farren R. (1990) *Terrorism and the Media: A systematic analysis of a process*

³⁹ Kisang A. (2014) *Reporting terrorism among Kenyan media: Should journalists be cautious?*, Kenyatta University, Nairobi

where Muslim groups have used the media, and opinion shapers to project an image of victimization.⁴⁰

Schimid interrogates the ethical issues in the publicity of violent and terrorist acts by the media and the relationship of such reporting. Usage of images and media messaging in reporting issues of terrorism has the potential to escalate or legitimize such courses and hamper a clearer and honest interrogation of issues, especially when such reporting is viewed and perceived as supportive of such courses.⁴¹ In comparing terror attacks in Mozambique, devoid of media attention, versus those in the Middle East which attracted widespread media attention and focus, Combs posit that this ‘amplification’ by the media plays into advantage of terrorist who gain and may in some instances lead to escalation of attacks and thus deviance amplification.⁴²

Acceptance of these messages among the sympathizers and other publics is as a result of well crafted messages by the al-Shabaab in their media messages. The group has aroused a ‘Muslim consciousness’ – ‘*Umma consciousness*’ – which seeks to marshal Islamic support by amplifying their ‘suffering’ and courses among the public: that faith necessitates action.⁴³ Thus, while the Somalia’s al-Shabaab has propagated both a local Somali and religious war, it’s the aspect of clash of Western and Islamic civilizations, also posited by Huntington, which is at play with the al-Shabaab gaining widespread acceptance as a regional and global jihadist movement. And it is in this aspect, and ‘differentiated’ audiences and messaging – *us versus them, a transnational identity for Muslims* - which the group has used to mobilize and create awareness even in selecting its targets for attacks.⁴⁴ Meleagrou-Hitchens identifies al-Khataib as the official al-Shabaab media, which is used to disseminate messages about the group. And knowing that it not possible, often, to get one-on-one interviews with terrorist, groups like al-Shabaab use social

⁴⁰ Reuters (April 11, 2015) After attack and backlash, Kenya faces battle to win over Muslims. Available: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/11/kenya-security-idUSL5N0X807N20150411>;

⁴¹ Scimid A. (1989) Terrorism and Media: the Ethics of Publicity

⁴² Combs C and Slann M (2007). Encyclopedia of terrorism. Revised edition. New York.

⁴³ Meleagrou-Hitches A, et al (2012) Lights, Camera, Jihad: Al-Shabaab’s Western Media Strategy. ICSR, University of Maryland.

⁴⁴ Ibid

media to reach the mainstream media and project their messages and agenda. Foreexample, the al-Shabaab has had several Twitter and Facebook accounts, as well as several websites, upon which it has used to disseminate its information. Mainstream media in Kenya, especially, have been active users and dependents of these accounts to convey the group's messages.

Observing overreliance of such media channels by mainstream journalist, especially in the case for al-Shabaab, Ann-Marie Jansen van Vuuren, et al observe:

this scenario demonstrates another case study in which journalists have to check the facts they receive on Twitter as the information can be obscured to suit the interests of the party who sends it out. The media should also contextualize the information they report on in such a way that the audience can form their own opinions of what is (really) happening out there.⁴⁵

This 'conveyer-belt' journalism, where media publishes every piece of information notwithstanding its source, objective and impact, is a cause of (domestic) concern in the war against international terrorism. Kisang recommends that even where media do not agree with the state, there is need to strike a common strategy and messaging in order to combat terrorism. And, he further posits, media need not give a platform to any messages, which aid and enable terrorism.⁴⁶

Lumbaca observes that in every attack, like the 9/11 in the US, the terrorists aim to extract the highest coverage and create a huge psychological impact on the world: "terrorist therefore plan their operations in a manner that will shock, impress and intimidate, ensuring that their acts are sufficiently daring and violent to capture the attention of the media, and in turn of the public and government as well."⁴⁷ Accordingly, the further note, in planning their attacks, terrorists will plan

⁴⁵ Jansen van Vuuren A. et al (2013) The susceptibility of the South African Media to be used as a tool for information warfare. Pretoria.

⁴⁶ Kisang A. (2014) Reporting terrorism among Kenyan media: Should journalists be cautious? Kenyatta University, Nairobi

⁴⁷ Lumbaca S. and David H Gray (2011) Media as an Enabler of Terrorism. Global Security Studies. Available here: <http://globalsecuritystudies.com/Media.pdf>

and execute their plans on days of the week when they can attain maximum attention and publicity bearing in mind the demographics of the media industry in the target country.

1.5 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this study is the agenda setting theory of the media, the gate-keepers theory, and the liberalist theory of international relations. This study sought to examine the strategy of ‘agenda setting and deviance amplification’⁴⁸ by al-Shabaab in Kenya; either through design or inadvertent reporting, which falls within the media-trap laid by the terror group. Further, the study also seeks to examine the role of media as ‘gate keepers’ in enabling acts of terrorism through ‘conveyer belt’ journalism where anything is reported. Finally, using the liberalism theory, the study will examine the concepts of freedom, democracy and multiplicity of actors in international relations – the emergence of (media) enabled terrorists as influential global actors. The liberalism theory of international relations will further seek to examine the role of these non state actors in both national and international war against terrorism and to what extent they have been able to advance their influence and importance alongside that of nation-states like Kenya. The study will seek to examine how the liberalists’ thoughts on multiplicity of actors and how the ‘layers of governing institutions of states and non-state actors’ have impacted on the war on terrorism and/ or promotion of global terrorism.

1.5.1 Agenda setting and gate keeping theories

The function of media in shaping opinions and behavior formations, especially on issues of public interest is important in understanding how media plays a role in either promoting or combating war against terrorism. Albert Bandura in his *Social Learning Theory* argues that people learn “through storage of observations” as framed by the media. The theory, drawing its findings from research on television effects on children, argues that people learn through attention, retention of what they have seen and then they replicate that in their behaviors.

⁴⁸ Deviance amplification refers to the ‘inadvertent’ promotion of anti-social behavior by the media, through consistent or glamorized reporting leading to escalation of similar anti-social or criminal acts by other actors with the desire to gain and generate similar media attention and coverage (and) or create panic.

Exposure to certain messages over a prolonged period of time has the effect of influencing peoples thinking and behavior.

Dennis McQuail, outlines the various steps that people, consumers of media products, undergo in changing and influencing their behavior; attention, comprehension, yielding, retention and actions. Media consumers thus have to have the interest to pay attention to the message; they must understand the message for effective communication and meaning sharing; they must yield to the message and be persuaded into accepting and adopting/ adapting; must have the capacity and willingness to retain the messages – the staying power and remembrance; and finally replication through informed actions that result into the desired behavior or effect desired. This process of media messaging is thus critical in shaping consumers' perceptions and behavior formations. This is also shared by McQuail and Windahl who argue that the agenda setting takes a three step approach. First, media's agenda is transformed into the public agenda through priming and prominence. This sustained coverage of the agenda is then able to influence policy makers into policy agenda and decisions.

McCombs and Shaw posit that what media sets as agenda is not necessarily the agenda of the mass consumers/ public and the resultant effect may not be the desired and/ or with beneficial impact. They argue that there is a likelihood of a dissonance between media agenda, and public agenda; that there was great difference between what audiences thought was important vis-à-vis actual media content⁴⁹. Katz Lang observed that while it is doubtful whether the media have great power to change people's attitudes, it has great influence on what people think about and perceive as important based on the prominence and choices of stories made by the media. He notes that there is a direct proportion between the emphasis placed on an issue and their manner of presentation in the media.⁵⁰

⁴⁹McCombs, M., & Shaw, D. (1972). *The Agenda Setting Function of Mass Media*. Opinion Quarterly.

⁵⁰Littlejohn, S. (2002) *Theories of Human Communication*. 7th Ed. New Mexico. Wadsworth.

The process of selecting which news stories to carry within the media and which to exclude involves serious gatekeeping. This is the province of media editors and managers who determine what goes to the public based on the 'news values' criteria and editorial policies of each media outlet. The gate keeping theory of the media draws from the work of Kurt Lewin, 'channels and gate keeping', albeit in examining how societies could change in a study of food habits.⁵¹ While the gate keeping theory has continued to evolve with many scholars advancing new forms of 'gate keepers', this study will concern itself with only one form – the editors and media managers who shape content in mainstream media outlets; those who determine what ultimately gets to the public, and how it is packaged. Thus, the study will seek to examine how these gatekeepers have inadvertently let the gates open to content which has ended up shaping up the agenda for the terrorists and influenced states, and state policies towards combating terrorism.

Tuman posits that granting wide publicity and attention to acts of terrorism piles public pressure on governments to give in to terrorists' demands and agenda. For example, the continued reproduction and republishing of al-Shabaab's agenda and calls for withdrawal of KDF from Somalia has put the Kenyan government on the defensive with the Shabaab's agenda being elevated into the national discourse. Could the media have framed the issues differently from that of terrorist? Could the media have excluded some of the messages from the public in their publications and broadcasts?

1.5.2 Liberalism Theory

The liberalism theory of international relations has its roots in the idealism theory. Drawing from the works of Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, the basic assumptions of liberalism theory, which seek to counter the realists' notion of absolute sovereignty and unchallengeable role and power of the state, the theory seeks to advocate for plurality of international relations actors. Other notable liberalists are Thomas Jefferson, Jeremy Bentham and John Locke. Liberalists argue that the human being is perfect/ or perfectible and even when he results to violence, it is because the structures forming the international systems are imperfect and make it inevitable to engage in

⁵¹Shoemaker, P. (2006) Media Gatekeeping. Longman.

violence. They also question the global balance of power and argue that the world can only function aptly through a system of ‘complex interdependence’ where all actors, not just the states, are accorded equal opportunities and leeway to function.⁵² Ideologies of democracy, freedom of the individual and civil societies is paramount, and private sector must be allowed to function without state’s intervention; that strong institutions are integral part of a functioning global system. The concept of freedom and rights, especially as advocated in the democratic states like Kenya, is a function and ideology of liberalists. And these rights and freedoms cut across individuals and institutions, including the media.

This study will examine how the liberalist approach to governance and management of state institutions, including public participation influences the war on terrorism and its impact on international politics through plurality of actors. The study will thus seek to examine the doctrines of democracy and freedom, multiple actors and institutions internationally and their impact on domestic and global war on terrorism; how expression of such doctrines in instances where actors like media and related institutions transmit messages which reach millions of people irrespective of their impact on both domestic and global peace.⁵³

1.6 Methodology

This section will cover the study’s research design, population and sampling, instruments of data collection and data collection and data analysis.

1.6.1 Research design

This study is qualitative research and has used the *Survey Research Design* to explain the relationship between media and terrorism and how this is impacting on state’s ability to combat acts of terrorism in Kenya. The Survey Research Design employed questionnaires which were administered to collect data from the selected sample population. The subjects of the study were

⁵² Nye, J. (2003) *Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History* 4th Ed. Longman, New York.

⁵³ Lumbaca S. and David H Gray (2011) *Media as an Enabler of Terrorism*. *Global Security Studies*. Available here: <http://globalsecuritystudies.com/Media.pdf>

provided with a self-administering questionnaire which was both closed and open-ended to enable collection of as much and rich data as possible.

1.6.2 Population and Sampling

The study population for this study was graduate students of media and communication at the University of Nairobi's School of Journalism, media practitioners working as editors with selected mainstream media houses in Kenya and academic experts involved in media training, counter-terrorism policy formulation and implementation. The study population was selected due to its knowledge and experience in both areas of media and international crime and ability to comprehend the interplay between media and terrorism. The population was also accessible and appreciative of the role of research in development of knowledge in society.

1.6.3 The sample size

The targeted sample for this study was media editors currently practicing, graduate students from the University of Nairobi School of Journalism and experts from academia - in media and security/ international studies - engaged in training and anti-terrorism policy formulation and implementation. A sample size of 50 drawn from was sampled for this study.

1.6.4 Sampling technique

The sampling technique for this study was simple random and purposive/ biased sampling technique for security/ academic experts due to the nature of the study and the desired study objectives. The biased study sample was selected from a pool of well-known security/ international studies experts in Kenya involved in research and policy on counterterrorism interventions. The students' sample was drawn from the Master's class, School of Journalism, University of Nairobi and was randomly sampled.

1.6.5 Data collection instrument

This study used a closed and open-ended questionnaire to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire was administered to the sampled population by hand delivery and email

correspondence where physical presentation may not be possible. The questionnaire was however pre-tested on a smaller sample drawn from the IDIS Master's class which enabled correction and validation. All data collected from the sampled respondents has only been used for the sole purpose of the study and will remain confidential; all ethical considerations were observed during and after the period of study.

1.6.6 Data analysis

Data collected was collated and sorted based on different and emerging thematic issues as outlined in the study objectives. The data was coded and analyzed. The findings of the study have been presented in form of a narrative in conformity with the qualitative study being undertaken.

CHAPTER TWO: ROLE OF MASS MEDIA IN PROMOTING AL-SHABAAB'S AGENDA IN KENYA

2:1 Overview

In underscoring the critical role of mass media in propagation of terrorism activities and objectives, former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher described mass media as the 'oxygen' upon which terrorism thrives; without mass media, the effect and impact of terrorism activities will be minimal (National Communication Association, 2012). In Kenya, the presence of a vibrant media has contributed to widespread and uninhibited coverage of terrorism activities, which has inadvertently created a perception of a lost war, or one which the state is not in control. And this was evident when the American international media channel, CNN, described Kenya as a 'hotbed' of terrorism in the wake of President Barack Obama's visit in July, 2015.⁵⁴ Media reporting may also have inadvertently, or intentionally, made would-be recruits identify with the Al Shabaab cause. McLeod notes that 'Identification occurs with another person, often seen as the model and involves taking on or adopting observed behaviors, values, beliefs and attitudes of the person with whom you are identifying'.

2.1 Mass media

The power of the mass media in promoting and countering terrorist agendas is recognized by the Kenya security forces, where the retired Chief of the General Staff Julius Karangi notes that 'the key to success in fighting terrorism is measured by media coverage.'⁵⁵ Article 23 of the Media Council of Kenya's code of ethics for journalist also advises members to '...avoid presenting acts of violence, armed robberies, and banditry and terrorist activities in a manner that glorifies such anti-social conduct',⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Include here author and the title of the article, <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/07/22/politics/obama-kenya-visit-al-shabaab-threat/> (Accessed 10-8-2015); <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/viewers-slam-cnn-calling-kenya-hot-bed-terror-article-1.2303070> (Accessed 14-8-2015);

⁵⁵ Kisang, A.K. (2014). Reporting terrorism among Kenyan media: Should journalists be cautious? *Journal of Media and Communication Studies* Vol. 6(5), pp. 78-84

⁵⁶ Media Council of Kenya (2007) Code of Ethics (cite the whole source properly).

A Media Council of Kenya Report titled '*Deconstructing Terror: Assessing Media's Role in Religious Intolerance and Radicalisation*' posits that the media has promoted terrorist agenda by their choice of news sources. AbubakarSharrif 'Makaburi', a radical coast Muslim, for example, was herolised by the media when they started using him as news source over Muslim radicalization. The Media Council report mentions a respondent asserting that:

The late Makaburi was not a Muslim Imam but just a mosque caretaker ... but journalists often sought his comments in every matter relating to radicalization and war on terror. Such people should not be given airtime ... or if they are given, then the media should seek alternative other authoritative sources.⁵⁷

2.2 Social media

Al Shabaab uses social media tools and channels that resonate very well with Kenyans who are very active on most social media network sites. By the end of 2014, four million people were using social media.⁵⁸ Kenyan twitter users, with acronym #KOT, have proudly identified the social site and used it to pass information and engage in social campaigns on different issues; a platform also manipulated by all and sundry, including terror groups like al-Shabaab. This has made social media an ideal platform for al Shabaab terrorists to propagate their ideas too as was evident during the September 22, 2013 al- Shabaab attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi. In this attack, the al-Shabaab used their twitter account and websites to rally their message and claim success, information which the Kenyan media picked and published in the papers, electronically and in their social sites, inadvertently aiding the terrorists' course.⁵⁹

Weimann notes that al-Shabaab recognizes the power of the mass media in its operations and al Shabaabhas used it very effectively. It justifies its use of violence using three rhetorical structures: 1) portraying themselves as underdogs; hunted and persecuted by state operatives; 2) demonizing and delegitimizing their perceived 'enemies'- shifting the responsibility for violence

⁵⁷Media Council of Kenya (2014), Vol. 19.

⁵⁸Digital Rand, (2015) State of Social Media in Kenya- Report A002

⁵⁹@HSM_Press

from themselves to their victims; 3) portraying themselves as a non violent organization that only seeks negotiations to achieve what is denied from them.⁶⁰

Shifting responsibility and portraying themselves as non violent movement was evident when al-Shabaab twitted on their Twitter account, @HSM_PR, during the Westgate Mall attack:

You could have avoided all this and lived your lives in relative safety. Remove your forces from our country and peace will come' and when they explained 'Mujahedeen'⁶¹ has no desire to kill women & children and have done everything practically possible to evacuate them before attacking.'⁶²

These rhetorical structures are also observable in their online magazines - '*Operation Protect Islam*' which ridicules Kenya's military operations in Southern Somalia and '*Gaidi Mtaani*—meaning Terrorist on the Street' which warns Somalis against the Kenyan 'terrorists' in Kismayo.⁶³ These titles are meant to demonize and delegitimize the Kenya Defense Forces in Somalia – while portraying al Shabaab as only 'protecting their religion and their streets'. Evidently, this sustained pro-al-Shabaab reporting has had an impact in shaping the public discourse on war against terrorism in Kenya. For example, after the Westgate, and Garissa University attacks the Kenyan opposition leadership began a campaign calling on the government to withdraw troops from Somalia, a position consistently advocated by the al-Shabaab.⁶⁴

⁶⁰Weimann, G. (2004),*How Modern Terrorism Uses the Internet*, (The United States Institute of Peace, Special Report 116

⁶¹Mujahedeen is an Islamic/ Arabic reference to fighters, especially those doing it to defend their faith.

⁶²Chao, R (2013). The Western Voices of al-Shabaab's Twitter Account(include full citation here

⁶³Kimutai, J.K. (2014) Social Media and National Security Threats: A Case Study of Kenya. Unpublished MA Thesis: University of Nairobi

⁶⁴ Reuters, (7th July 2014) Kenyan Opposition demands troops quit Somalia after attack; Christian Science Monitor (6th May, 2014), Facing al-Shabaab attacks, some Kenyans call for Somalia withdrawal; www.newsfromafrica.org, Kenya: Opposition's 13-point agenda for change demands troops withdrawal from Somalia (accessed 10-8-2015); New York Times (8th April, 2015) Kenya Struggles over best response to university attack.

Rollins notes that ‘Social Media are used to communicate coded messages, to arrange plans for terrorist acts, to manage the training of new terrorists, and provide logistical support and operative assistance which involve giving advice about how to go through a roadblock, build themselves and handle arms and explosives, find and use cyber weapons, dodge and counter investigation by security agencies’.⁶⁵ These are functional competences that terror attacks, including those mounted by al-Shabaab, cannot do without. Social media by virtue of it being a mass media that can be used anonymously, and has proved to be the ultimate tool for terrorist groups like al Shabaab.⁶⁶

2.3 Print media

Cepulkauskaitė refers to contemporary terrorism as ‘mass media oriented terrorism’.⁶⁷ The print media, due to its referential nature, renders itself very amenable to the extension of the terrorist agenda. The Kenya print media has unconsciously or consciously advanced the al-Shabaab cause through terrorist stories they select-types; placement - where they place al Shabaab stories in the newspaper, and messages- what messages are communicated.

A case study of how two Kenyan dailies- ‘The ‘Daily Nation’ and ‘The Standard’ reported ‘Operation Usalama Watch’ in April 2014 notes that: in the ‘Daily Nation’, the majority of al-Shabaab stories were news (71 percent), briefs (19 percent), editorial (7 percent), caricature (1 percent), features (1 percent) and pictorial (1 percent) while the ‘Standard’ had 79 percent as news, 13 percent as briefs, 4 Percent as editorials, 3 percent as features, and 1 percent for pictorial and caricatures respectively ⁶⁸. Most of the stories were in news form that gave the phenomena of terrorism a lot of attention. While this was meant to inform the public on the threats they face from al-Shabaab, it also gave the terrorist organization much needed publicity. Naturally, even those who did not know its existence started asking who al-Shabaab was and

⁶⁵Rollins J., (2011), in Alfonso MONTAGNESE (2012) Impact of Social Media on National Security Research Paper 2011 STEPI - AE-U-3, pp 18

⁶⁶Include missing footnote

⁶⁷Cepulkauskaitė, I. (2000) *The mass media and Terrorism*. Sociumas, Internet magazine,

⁶⁸Maina, B. W. (2014). Assessment of Print Media Coverage of the War against Terrorism in Kenya: A Case of the Daily Nation and the Standard Newspapers. Unpublished MA Thesis: University of Nairobi

what their grievances were. This was an ideal entry point for al-Shabaab recruiters especially when they target impressionable youths, who are naturally their targets.

On how stories are placed, Maina further notes that both the 'Nation' and 'The Standard' placed a lot of al-Shabaab stories on the first 5 pages of their papers - the Nation had 43% and the Standard had 36%. The nation had 9% of al- Shabaab stories on the last 4 pages of their paper while the Standard had only 1% on the last 4 pages of their paper. Research (Garcia & Stark, 1991) indicates that headlines are attended to more than other stories in a Newspaper.

Further research by Hansen indicates that readers are only fully involved in reading the Newspaper when reading between pages 2- 6, from where interest starts going down until the last page. The size of the al-Shabaab stories in the two publications was also quite telling - the 'Nation', at 68%, had most of its stories as half page and briefs while 'The Standard' published 63% of their al-Shabaab stories in the same format and size.⁶⁹ This is significant since research shows that newspaper readers only fully read short articles, leaving out the longer ones (Hansen, 1994; Garcia & Stark, 1991). An example of stories placement playing into the hands of al-Shabaab is the report of the bomb 'factory' find at the Samad Islamic Institute located in the Eastleigh area where the '*Operation Usalama Watch*' was conducted. The story appeared on page 4 rather than in the front pages. This not only belittled the find, but continued to emphasize, through more prominent stories in the papers, on the fact that '3000 people, residents of Eastleigh, most of whom were of Somali origin' were detained at Kasarani sports complex for interrogation.⁷⁰

Kisang(2014)notes that 'Kenyan journalists use positive words in describing people linked to terrorism and such descriptions are bound to idolize them and hence motivate their followers.

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ Daily Nation, 7-4-2014 (include here the title of the article that you are referring to and the link, if it is an internet source; Daily Nation, 5-4-2015, Muslim leaders fault police over crackdown, (source?); Daily Nation (6th April, 2014) Police Hunt for Suspect after recovery of bombs; www.capitalfm.co.ke, School heads over radicalization of youths (accessed 11-8-2015); The Star (7th April,2015) Islamic School refutes bomb materials report (source?).

Kenyan media may, therefore, have been used by Al Shabaab to promote the feeling that Somalis are being victimized for their ethnicity and religion. This has the unintended effect of increasing dissatisfaction among the Somali community and their families, the Muslim community and those who were affected by “*Operation Usalama Watch*’. This may have been used by al-Shabaab recruiters to recruit from among members of this community who felt victimized, especially the young. It also magnified the al-Shabaab threat, creating a feeling of impotence among the public. It is hardly surprising that there have been numerous calls by members of the public, egged on by opposition politicians, for the Kenyan Defense Forces to withdraw from Somalia, a call routinely made by the al-Shabaab and replicated in the Kenyan media. These media reports have also have been used to create fear among potential tourists. Consequently, the government’s capacity to hit back against the terrorists, rally public support or even convince citizens who are rendered jobless by low tourist visits has been seriously compromised.

2.4 Electronic Media

Terrorists’ intention is to have their activities amplified and electronic media, especially television, has been a reliable ally in this endeavor (Combs & Slann, 2007). Kenyan TV stations may have been (inadvertently – *hopefully*) used to advance the al-Shabaab agenda. For example, most respondents in a case study research of an investigative journalism piece ‘*JichoPevu*’ aired by KTN in 2013 felt that it was an apology for the al-Shabaab and its activities in Kenya and the region. Many felt that the journalist worked hard to show the ‘better’ side of al-Shabaab:

“The latest JichoPevu story that was aired on KTN was seemingly presenting the sides of the suspected terrorist. You could even see that most of the people interviewed were from suspected cleric radicals and their families. This tells you that this thing is real and we cannot escape from it.”(Media Council of Kenya, 2014, 24)

These are perceptions that can easily deepen interreligious divisions that the al-Shabaab has been keen to foment between Muslims and Christians in the country. Subsequent reporting and al-Shabaab messages from the April 2015 Garissa University terrorist attack indicated as much.

Television has also aided the cause of al-Shabaab by airing violent scenes of security operations. This creates sympathizers since those that are manhandled during security operations, even when some may be innocent, have kin who become bitter when they watch graphic images of these security operations. The Masjid Musa mosque operation in February 2014 where NTV showed graphic images of the operation in the mosque is a case in point. Again, even when such scenes are broadcast, angling of stories and interviews for the same are often biased against the state.

An NTV investigative story '*Foul Winds*' is another of those stories where journalists have inadvertently supported al-Shabaab's cause and narrative.⁷¹ In the piece, radicals are able to freely place terrorist activities in the interreligious conflict realm. Most of those interviewed for the story were heard referring to the victims of terrorist attacks as 'kafiri'- infidels or non believers. A later victim of the Kenyan authorities' crackdown on terror and a radical Muslim cleric - the late Abubakar Sharrif Makaburi – was quoted saying that he welcomes death in the fight against non Muslims (Media Council of Kenya, 2014, 41). The clip encourages the notion that a religious war between Muslims and non-Muslims is already on, creating fear and despondency among Muslims and energizing impressionable Muslim youth into a non-existent jihad.

'Inside Story: Wolves at Westgate', another documentary by a Kenyan journalist, that was aired on the KTN after the Westgate terror attack is another of those works of journalism that aid the al-Shabaab cause. By suggesting that the terrorists may have escaped as the operation proceeded – without offering any evidence other than the suggestion - that coordination between the security forces was poor leading to the death of a senior army officer from police fire, and that the military looted from the mall, the documentary painted a grim picture of counter-terrorism operations, especially Westgate and questioned ability of the Kenyan state to protect her citizens and residents; it equally 'elevates' the *operational success* of al-Shabaab beyond that of a state actor, Kenya, and her allies in the war against international terrorism. It is the kind of narrative

⁷¹ Foul Winds, "NTV investigates the radicalization of youths at the Kenyan coast", NTV, aired on 20-3-2014, source www.ntv.co.ke)

al-Shabaab would like told; it reinforces the idea that they are invincible and are winning. This not only perpetuates fear, but also aids in their recruitments, and denting the trust of Kenyans on the capacity of state to offer them adequate protection against terrorist organizations.

2.5 Radio

The Muslim community in Kenya also operates media outlets that propagate Islam or *Da'wah*—missionary activities. Radio has been a favorite and often used to disseminate political ideas. An International Crisis Group (2012) policy reports that *Radio Rehema* and *Radio Iqra* are two such radio stations that have been used to radicalize youths and in the process make them soft targets for al-Shabaab recruiters.⁷² The report adds that *Radio Iqra* gave too much airtime to radical preachers from Tanzania- *the Tabligh*, who ended up inciting and indoctrinating the listeners through anti-state rhetoric. Some Muslims do not respect these radical preachers who they feel do not deeply understand the teachings of the Holy Koran. Muslim radios that have used imported radical preachers have served to help radicalization of youth as a January 2010 incident where radical youths protested violently in Nairobi over the deportation of a radical Jamaican Muslim preachers shows.⁷³

While it would seem that the Kenyan media supports anti al-Shabaab initiatives, there is a flipside to the issue. The media has angled its reporting in a manner that has often portrayed a state under siege from the al-Shabaab. Further, even when terrorism-related reporting is foregrounded, it often is driven using the purview of al-Shabaab's actions not counter-terrorism interventions. Kenyan media's habit of reporting only 'good' news of success against al-Shabaab has inadvertently drawn youth who get '*alternative*' information from al-Shabaab media – like '*Gaidi Mtaani*'- that indoctrinates them with skewed information which radicalizes them in the process (Anderson, & McKnight, 2014, p.23).

⁷²<http://www.crisisgroup.org/media/Files/africa/horn-of-africa/kenya> (accessed 25/8/2015).

⁷³ Ibid.

Chapter 3: AL SHABAAB'S STRATEGIC DEPLOYMENT OF MASS MEDIA AND ANCHORAGE IN KENYA AS A CRITICAL NON-STATE ACTOR.

Overview

The political organization of contemporary societies experienced a major paradigm shift when the bipolar power axis that had been referred to as the *Cold War*, and which influenced global political alignments since the end of the Second World War, ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall. This resulted in fragmentation of societies since it created more room for them to express their political, economic and ideological differences more freely and the emergence of opposition politics, which in some cases has turned violent. Political fragmentation has brought with it fluidity, where patterns of global political dynamics appear changed. Globalization complicated the situation further since it has deformed the notion of geography and distance through the use of fast information and transport systems. This has weakened the Realists' notion that states should be primary actors in international relations- the Westphalia system. This is attributed to the fact that the bar of international law has been raised; values that have become common among peoples of different regions are spreading fast; norms of international behavior are changing equally fast. This environment has proved ideal for the rapid proliferation of radical ideologies helped by open-source technologies that allow easy access to finance, mobilization and are excellent communication tools that have been used for radicalization. Violent non-state actors, like terror groups and rebellions, are emerging and thriving in this environment as states lose their monopoly over violence. As interstate conflicts diminish, intra states conflicts have increased as a result of these changing dynamics.⁷⁴

3.1 Media and Non State Actors

When it comes to the issue of reporting terrorism, the media is always in a tight spot. Professional obligations urge reporting as it were, while reporting lends the media as mouthpieces for terrorist groups; their appetite for visibility grows with every new and more horrible atrocity – the deviance is even more amplified.

⁷⁴Arasli, J. (2011) *States vs. Non-State Actors: Asymmetric Conflict of the 21st Century and Challenges to Military Transformation*. INEGMA Special Report No. 13

On November 22, 2014 the Kenyan and international media reported an al-Shabaab terrorist attack on a Nairobi-bound bus whose passengers were mostly teachers from outside Mandera County travelling home for the holidays. After highlighting that majority of victims were teachers, the Kenya National Union of Teachers asked teachers not to report back to the region until the government provided enough security to outsiders working in the region.⁷⁵ The state, through the teachers' employer, Teachers Service Commission, instructed all teachers to report back to work. However, based on the nature of the attack and subsequent threats from al-Shabaab, again aided by the media, the state failed in its bid to lure, or even coerce teachers back into the Mandera area. For continuing to attack non-residents, the al-Shabaab had been elevated into a critical actor on not only the economy of the North Eastern Kenya, but had penetrated into the education sector, a new front for the terror group. And after several months, amid threats to sack teachers, the TSC transferred them to different schools outside the region; al-Shabaab's induced fear and segregation aims had prevailed.⁷⁶

A week after the bus killings, on December 2, 2014, local radio station Capital FM, again, broke the news of killing of non-Muslim quarry workers at a remote site in Mandera County by al-Shabaab. Like the bus victims who were predominantly teachers from other regions, and all non-Muslims, the quarry victims were again all non-Muslim and non-residents; information which the media broadcast to all and sundry, again fragmenting the inter-religious and cultural links between the Muslim and non-Muslims in Kenya. The angling of the stories did not only elevate the al-Shabaab and its actions as superior, but again cast doubt on the competence of the state to offer protection and security to her citizens. This was further compounded by the government's order on quarry workers to leave the mines, their subsequent arrest and prosecution, and the

⁷⁵ www.capitalfm.co.ke, (23rd November, 2015) KNUT seeks transfer of teachers from insecure North (accessed 14/8/2015); www.businessdailyafrica.com (4th Feb, 2015) Transfer teachers from Mandera, Parliament says (accessed 14/8/2015).

⁷⁶ Daily Nation (10th Aug, 2015) Senator protests transfer of teachers from northeastern Kenya (accessed 14/8/2015); www.educationnews.co.ke (8th May, 2015) Sacked 828 NEP teachers reinstated (accessed 14/8/2015); www.wajirtimes.com (19th Aug, 2015) TSC transfer 800 teachers to other regions as North Eastern students suffer (accessed 25/8/2015).

eventual transfer of all non-Muslim and non-resident government teachers from North Eastern Kenya.⁷⁷ And with these actions, the role and influence of al-Shabaab on state matters and decisions was not in doubt. This has not been helped by a pessimistic media, which has tended to, not only question but, cast aspersions on any state intervention in the war against al-Shabaab. Marina observes;

‘It’s been a hard sell [Kenya’s Military expedition into southern Somalia] to Kenya’s independent media, whose pages carry opinion editorials weighing up the costs and risks of intervention with each breaking news headline’ (Marima, 2011, Para 19)

The extent to which mass media has helped al-Shabaab anchor itself as a critical non-state actor in Kenya can be assessed by looking at how the media has helped the organization perform activities that define non state actors. This will be looked at in the context of the gaps they fill in the social fabric they operate in. Violent non state actors survive where state-actors lack legitimacy, where they use force rather than consent to rule. States become illegitimate when they: 1) lack capacity to provide social goods to their people; 2) where there are no well defined limits for the for the expression of individual and group interests and; 3) where certain groups are excluded from the political process ((Williams, 2008, pp5-6). How Kenyan media has helped al-Shabaab advance these perceptions will be the subject of the remainder of this chapter.

3.2 State Versus al-Shabaab in the Battle of Legitimacy

Media’s skewed reporting has managed to erode the legitimacy of states, to the extent that citizens are beginning to have serious doubts over the role of such states in their lives. Nation-states are supposed to have a monopoly of power within their sovereign territories; using it to protect citizens against those that would hurt them. However this, as media has shown, is more of a myth than reality in our contemporary world; groups are challenging state actors in their assumption that they are the only ones who have monopoly over violence. These groups come in many guises- terrorists, militias, warlords, ethnic and tribal groups, drug-trafficking

⁷⁷www.the-star.co.ke (5th Feb, 2015) Twenty Mandera miners get 5 months in jail, Sh 60,000 fines (accessed 22/8/2015); www.standardmedia.co.ke (4th Feb, 2015) 20 quarry workers in Mandera jailed for 5 months for refusing to leave their workplaces (accessed 23/08/2015).

organizations, youth gangs, transnational criminal organizations and insurgents.⁷⁸ This ‘oligopoly of violence’ within a state has led to a reorganization of security architecture since all manner of groups are seeking legitimacy, which has included use of violence in pursuit of their goals. This is complicated by the fact that not only do they claim, but are also recognized by those that the violence is perpetrated against. For example, the success of the Islamic Courts in Somalia, before they were deposed by Ethiopian troops created a lot of acceptance and credibility in the eyes of many Somalis. The courts were able to bring order in a state of lawlessness. The communities of Northeastern Kenya, which often share kinship, religion and culture with their counterparts across the border, equally are attracted to what happens in Somalia. Media reporting which has portrayed the government as anti-Somali has played into the hands of al-Shabaab in delegitimizing the Kenyan state in the minds of Kenyan Somalis and the Muslim community.

Lack of legitimacy is always complicated by lack of a political will by state actors. The al-Shabaab has followed a predictable path that was set early when Somalia started breaking down. In 1993, the media, especially American and western, greatly helped in the withdrawal of UN and American forces from Somalia in what came to be referred as ‘Blackhawk down’. Media images of the bodies of American soldiers being pulled on the streets of Mogadishu made American forces withdraw from Somalia due to overwhelming public pressure and unfavorable opinion towards the operation. The insurgents in Mogadishu, aided by a global media, were manipulating the political will and wit of the American people and political class, created fear and a sense of hopelessness to mitigate and negate the tactical strength, technological superiority, and skills of American forces; it was a war of public hearts and minds.

Similarly, this tactic has been applied to the KDF operation in southern Somalia. The Kenyan media- just like the American media in 1993- has been used to advance ‘shallow analyses’ and

⁷⁸Williams(2008) Violent Non-State Actors and National and International Security *International Relations and Security Network*, p4

promote the perception that the cost of the operation has been too high.⁷⁹ Since the al-Shabaab do not have the capacity to engage the KDF directly they have resorted to terrorist activities targeting soft targets like schools, entertainment areas and even remote work stations like stone quarries, multiplying the negative effects of the KDF occupation and further denting the legitimate capacity of Kenya, a state actor to fully govern and control (Arasli, 2011, p5)⁸⁰. The attacks are meant to foster the idea that the Kenya government is weak if its forces cannot be able to protect these targets. Kenya media has generally advanced this agenda for the al-Shabaab, making it a critical actor in the Kenyan socio-political and economic discourse.

Due to the high cost of the conflict, as projected in the media, in terms of lives lost through al-Shabaab terrorist attacks, Kenyan politicians and some sections of the citizenry have begun to not only call for the withdrawal, but equally question the rationality of the war in Somalia; a call ever made by the terrorist group al-Shabaab as a condition for stoppage of attacks in Kenya. On 6th Jun2015, for example, Kenya opposition leader RailaOndiga specifically asked the president to withdraw the Kenyan Defense Forces from Somalia (Ndurya, 2015).This is exactly the kind of response the terrorist organization would like Kenyans to have; it elevates their ‘grievances’ to the national platform to compete for space and legitimacy with those of the Kenyan political system.

Where states fail to govern certain areas, then their legitimacy becomes questionable. The northern part of Kenya is one such area where the effects of government are hardly ever felt.⁸¹Ombakaasserts that ‘one-half of the country [Kenya] is now only nominally under the control of the central government’, adding that the northern Kenyan counties of West Pokot, Elgeyo-Marakwet, Baringo, Turkana, Samburu, Isiolo, Marsabit, Mandera, Wajir, Garissa, Lamu and Tana River fall in what a Kenya security expert Prof. Peter Kagwanja has referred to as

⁷⁹Wanderi, C (2015) Terrorism In Kenya: Media Practitioners Must Not Fall Prey

⁸⁰ Ibid Arasli, 2011, p5

⁸¹Ombaka, D. M. (2015). Explaining Kenya’s insecurity: The weak state, corruption, banditry and terrorism. *International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Science* Vol. 3 No. 3

Kenya's 'arc of insecurity'.⁸² This is a geographical area where al-Shabaab routinely flexes its muscle; killing students in their dormitories, travelers in buses and laborers in remote quarry sites. The Kenya national government's influence in these areas is hardly ever felt in these areas. As Prof.Kagwanja further notes in his writing, the media plays a crucial role in painting nations as weak – ideas that terrorism thrives on, and which aid in further eroding public confidence in the state and hence its legitimacy in the eyes of the citizens.

David Rothkopf, writing in the Foreign Policy magazine, argues that the legitimacy and stability of a state, and one characteristic of whether it is failing or not, is its ability to have 'genuine control' of regions under its territory after darkness.⁸³ In a situation where the al-Shabaab continues to meet terror on sections of the population, especially at night in the northern parts of Kenya, erodes the legitimacy of the government, and the Kenyan state in the eyes of the residents and the general wider population.

3.3 Exclusion

On April 13 2014, Billow Kerrow, a Senator representingMandera County, wrote an opinion article in the Standard Newspaper where he posed: '*Is Operation Usalama Watch a Somali Gulag?*' The term 'Gulag' which originated from the Russian system of forced laborcamps, is an infamous reference to slavery, oppression and suffering. As Kerrow was writing this article, over 3000 people of Somali descent, majority of them illegal immigrants and unregistered refugees, and residents of Eastleigh estate in Nairobi, were being screenedat Kasarani stadium. Kerrow in his article also opines:

⁸²Kagwanja, P. (2014). Cutting bullet supply key to draining the swamps in the North Rift of lawlessness. Retrieved on 20th August 2015 from:
<http://www.nation.co.ke/news/Bullets-and-guns-are-the-unholy-trinity-of-terror/-/1056/2515908/-/87779z/-/index.html>

⁸³Insert the missing footnote

‘A couple of weeks ago, the Managing Editor of a major Kenyan newspaper opined in his column that “every two-bit Somali has a big dream- to blow us up, knock down our buildings and slaughter our children”⁸⁴

Kerrow’s is a two barrel assault: he uses mass media to first inflame passions that the Somali are targeted by the government, increasing the feeling of disenfranchisement among people of Somali descent and criticizes the same media for being tools of exclusion. When politicians start seriously discussing al-Shabaab, blaming each other over the country’s response to terrorist attacks, then they give the organization the credibility it craves for.

Terrorism discourse carried out by media outlets in Kenya paints outsiders, especially those of Somali descent as threats, internally, and in regard to violence spillovers from Somalia. This inadvertently creates a class of people that are excluded from mainstream political activity through ‘*othering*’. Kenyans of Somali origin and refugees living in the Dadaab refugee camp, for example, one of the largest refugee camps in the world, are part of this excluded population. The exclusion narrative is not helped by the feeling that the KDF is in Somali to create a buffer in form of a politically friendly Somali state (Azania, or Jubaland) that will keep Somali extremists and refugees out of Kenya.⁸⁵

The relationship between the central Kenyan government in Nairobi and the people of North Eastern Kenya is one characterized by exclusion. It has deep historical roots. Kenya has a sizeable Somali population that has close cultural links with Somalis living in Somaliland. In 1962, the Somali delegation that was part of the independence negotiations between the British colonial government and Kenyan independence negotiators at Lancaster House, expressed a wish that their territory be allowed to become part of greater Somaliland. In 1962, an independent inquiry revealed that 87% of residents in these areas wanted to be part of Somaliland. It is important to note that the people who wanted to secede were mostly people of Somali stock and

⁸⁴Billow Kerrow: Is Usalama Watch a Somali Gulag? In *The Sunday Standard*, (13/4/2014)

⁸⁵ Lind, Mutahi&Oosterom, 2015, p4. Tangled Ties: Al-Shabaab and Political Volatility in Kenya

Muslims. These are people who felt that their interests would be served better by a government that they would culturally identify with in terms of a common language and religion.⁸⁶

Since the colonial and the independence African government refused to concede to secession requests, tension has been part of life for people living there. Sometimes this has flared into violence, with the national government violently crushing dissent whenever it occurred, like was the case during the infamous *Shifita* wars. *Othoring* has been part of the system of the exclusion as happened during the Wagalla massacre in 1984 and the declarations of the state of emergency in 1990; massive screening of Somalis to establish nationality was done in both instances. Further, the Kenya government has always associated the region with terrorism. Al-Shabaab originates from Somalia and is distinctly Somalia. This means that when Somali bleeds, the effects of this are likely to be held in Kenya.⁸⁷

Exclusion has not been limited to the north eastern part of the country where the Somali live but is evident even in the capital city of Nairobi. Hannah Whittaker, in a conference paper presented at the Rift Valley Institute reveals that many non-Somali residents of the city from the early colonial days to the present still perceive Somalis as temporary residents of Nairobi. Eastleigh residents' woes at the hands of the security forces during *Operation Usalama Watch* heightened that feeling of exclusion that Somalis feel when living among other Kenyans; while history when repeated paints them as people who would rather be in Somalia than in Kenya. The media by highlighting the 'mishandling' of *Operation Usalama Watch* by the security forces have inadvertently an ethno-religious divide whose cleavage has been exposed in the social mistrust exhibited among the *Kenyans* and the *others* – Somalis, associated with al-Shabaab.

⁸⁶Murunga, G.R. (2009) 'Refugees at Home? Coping with Somalia Conflict in Nairobi, Kenya', in M. Ben Arrous and L. Ki-Zeqrbo (eds), *African Studies in Geography from Below*, Dakar: Codesria

⁸⁷Ibid pp 204-205

CHAPTER FOUR: AL-SHABAAB'S MEDIA STRATEGY AND ITS IMPACT ON THE KENYAN GOVERNMENT DOMESTIC SUPPORT ON THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM

OVERVIEW

Afrobarometer, a Pan-African research network's dispatch no 37 of July 2015 noted that Kenyan's approval of the way their government was handling terrorism was low with 51% of the population not being satisfied with the way it was being done.⁸⁸ Even as two thirds of Kenyans believed that *Operation Linda Nchi* was necessary, nearly half (48%) believed that it was time the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) left Somalia. However, it is important to note that Kenyans who disapproved most of the operation were Kenyan Somali respondents as opposed to other respondents. Further, the study found that most Somalis, 51%, believed they were always treated unfairly by the Kenya government as opposed to other ethnic communities, 22%. When it came to religious tolerance, Kenyan Somalis were perceived as more intolerant than most other Kenyan communities. The remainder of this chapter examines the impact of media reporting and agenda setting on the ability of the Kenyan government to effectively roll-out counter-terrorism initiatives, and even garner support, domestic or otherwise, on the current initiatives.

4.1 International Terrorism

Much of contemporary terrorism is not localized, it is a global phenomenon. Terrorist organizations from one area can act in a completely different area and still achieve their publicity goals. Technological advancement and globalization, which have enabled rapid transport and communication are largely responsible for this. Terrorist organizations have formed synergies that enable them to operate at the global level- a characteristic exhibited by al-Shabaab when they declared their affiliation to al-Qaeda, and lately to the Islamic State (IS). Terrorist

⁸⁸Stephen Buchanan Clarke and Rorisang Lekalake, (2015), "Is Kenya's anti-terrorist crackdown exacerbating drivers of violent extremism?" *Afrobarometer, Dispatch* no 37 of July. Available at http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Dispatches/ab_r6_dispatchno37.pdf Accessed 20 September 2015.

motivations are almost universal where different variances can be found in almost every community in the world: religious differences, social economic and political exclusion and feed on social ills like ethnic conflicts, political insurrections, environmental degradation and illicit drugs.⁸⁹ Terrorism, however, shows itself at specific geographical spaces. Therefore for the global and universal to become local, transport and communication must come into play.

Media is an intrinsic part of communication.⁹⁰ In Kenya, al-Shabaab exploits local politics to advance their goals, and the media has been integral in this. The Mpeketoni attack, where media revealed that victims were targeted on the bases of religion and “original home area”, serves as a good example. Media houses did not shy away from transmitting the funeral sounds of victims’ funerals that said where the victim had come from. Funeral dirges that are common in central Kenya were liberally aired as funerals were being conducted in Lamu. This served to inflame ethnic tensions- that victims were Kikuyus and that they were killed because they were Kikuyus, and Christians. The fact that they were burying in an area that is not traditionally theirs was also being used to inflame residents; that they had taken over the land and now treated it like their ancestral land. With so many issues at the perpetual levels of different Kenya communities, it becomes difficult to marshal support for a common enemy - the al-Shabaab- since residents are never sure whose interests they serve when they take a particular stand.⁹¹

4.2 The Christian-Muslim Chasm

Creating divisions between Christians and Muslims in Kenya – the way Boko Haram has managed to do in Nigeria- is one of al-Shabaab’s key strategies. Tensions that derive from adherents of the two religions’ capacity to define “Kenyaness” from their individual religious lenses are longstanding. Christians have tried to show themselves as the true architects of the Kenyan state since most of the people that fought to free and create the Kenyan state were

⁸⁹Silberfein, M. (2003). Insurrections. In Susan L. Cutter, Douglas B. Richardson, and Thomas J. Wilbanks (ed), *The Geographical Dimensions of Terrorism*, Routledge: New York and London.

⁹⁰Bergesen, A. J. and Lizardo, O. (2004) International Terrorism and the World-System. *Sociological Theory*. 22: 1 (March 2004): pp. 38-52.

⁹¹ API, (2014) Kenya’s Srebrenica: the Killing Fields of Lamu (unpublished).

mostly Christians or confessed nominal Christianity.⁹² This perception is often strengthened by media reports of Kenyans who migrate to Muslim Middle East countries and come back with horrendous stories of exploitation and suffering at the hands of Muslim employers. An August 2015 video shared on the social media

The Muslim communities, both from the north eastern Kenya (Somalis) and coastal Swahilis, have throughout their existence in East Africa portrayed the non Muslim and mostly Bantu peoples as inferior. The Somali are reputed to have lobbied for higher taxes during the British colonial occupation of Kenya rather than be classified as indigenous, who paid lower taxes. Popular Swahili lingua uses the term *ustaarabu* (Arabness) to mean superior culture, while *nyika* are the people that are uncultured and live in the bushes. People of Muslim stock felt they are the ones who prepared the indigenous peoples for interactions with outside peoples and have the legitimate claim to defining Kenyaness. The non Muslims and mostly Christians have, on the other hand, used Muslim pride as evidence that they (Christians) are the true inheritors of Kenya rather than the Muslim peoples who identify with faraway lands.⁹³

The Christian/Muslim conflict narrative has some credibility. The People Daily, 19/08/2012 in a column 'Anti Terror Bill Targets Muslims: Groups Claim' reported Hassan Omar Hassan a human rights defender from Mombasa opposing the anti-terrorism bill proposed by the Kenyan parliament, asserting that it went against the spirit of the constitution which gives equal rights to all Kenyan citizens.⁹⁴

These sentiments were expressed during the Al Quds celebrations that had been proposed by Imam Khomeini of Iran in 1979 to remember the Palestinians struggle against Israel; the Palestinian Liberation Organization was the first contemporary organization to legitimize international terrorism as a liberation tool when a terrorist attack at the 1972 Munich Olympic

⁹²Brislen, M. (2013). *Christian Perceptions of Islam in Kenya*. University of Birmingham, Chap.3 and 4)

⁹³ This article can be accessed at: <http://life-peace.org/hab/images-in-a-cracked-mirror-muslim-and-christian-perceptions-of-each-other-in-kenya/>

⁹⁴ These sentiments appear on pg 11 of the People Daily', column 1 and was written by Ann Wairimu

Games in Germany led to the death of twelve Israeli athletes and five members of the German police force.⁹⁵ It seems Hassan had a finger on the pulse of coast people who elected him senator for Mombasa County five months after, February 2013. Again, like before, the Kenyan media played hand-in-glove and disseminated the information, unanalyzed and uncritiqued.

4.3 Marginalization/ Despondency

Most people of Somali descent and the Kenyan coastal areas feel marginalized by the rest of the country. This has created deep feelings of resentment. Investigations by groups such as Amnesty International reveal that counter terrorist activities like Operation Usalama Watch unfairly target Kenyans of Somali origin.⁹⁶ To them, these counter terrorist activities are a pretext for the government to perpetrate mass human rights violations, forced relocations, unlawful expulsions, arbitrary arrests, extortion, and ill-treatment.⁹⁷

The Standard in an article ‘Officers accused of harassment in operation’ on the 24th of April 2013 reports KhalifAbdi Farah, the Coordinator of the ‘Northern Forum for Democracy’ saying that an anti-terror crackdown in Garissa instituted after a terrorists attack that killed nine people would further alienate the Somali community. The reference to ‘further’ is an indication that the community already feels marginalized.⁹⁸ The community has always felt marginalized and the operation is only conforming to what they already know- that they will be victimized at the slightest pretext. This is a clear testimony that the community is unlikely to support government counter-terrorist measures.

Poverty levels in north eastern Kenya, where the al Shabaab mostly carries out attacks against Kenyans, are high. Muriithi Mutiga a Kenyan journalist writing for the *Guardian* newspaper of

⁹⁵Vowinckel, A. (2007) Sports, terrorism and the media: The Munich hostage crisis of 1972. *Esporte e Sociedade*.ano 2, n.6, Jul.2007/Out.2007 <http://www.lazer.eefd.ufrj.br/espsoc/pdf/es602.pdf>

⁹⁶ Amnesty International. (2014). Kenya: Somalis scapegoated in counter-terror crackdown. 27May 2014. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/articles/news/2014/05/kenya-somalis-scapegoated-counter-terror-crackdown/>.

⁹⁷Buchanan-Clarke, S &Lekalake, R (2015). Is Kenya’s anti-terrorist crackdown exacerbating drivers of violent extremism? Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 37

⁹⁸ The Standard 24/4/2013 pg 12 col 5

the UK, in an article ‘Are the terrorists of al-Shabaab about to tear Kenya in two?’, asserts that while poverty levels in central Kenya can be as low as 30%, those of the area are as high as 74%.⁹⁹ Poverty levels create bitterness, which is best exemplified by the reference by a young beneficiary of Equity Banks ‘wings to fly’ educational program in an article by Edward Marks on 16th September 2014.¹⁰⁰ What does the article say in reference to the “bitterness”?

4.4 Support for Operation Linda Nchi

Support for the Kenya government’s initiatives against al Shabaab has been on a downward trend as attacks intensified in Kenya and the reality of the situation started sinking in among ordinary Kenyans. When al Shabaab released a video of a Kenyan whom they had kidnapped pleading with the government to withdraw the KDF from Somalia, a reader responded in ‘*The Standard*’ titled ‘It’s illogical for al Shabaab to punish innocent civilians’ that this was unlikely to move the government.¹⁰¹ Later media reported an al- Shabaab attack at St. Polycarp ACK church that killed a Sunday school kid.¹⁰² Kenyans were united in their condemnation of the al-Shabaab. These media responses by Kenyans seem to have worked; al-Shabaab has changed tack and kidnappings of individuals are rare nowadays.

Citizens’ support for police operations against al-Shabaab was high around 2012. A week after the St Polycarp church incident, 6/10/2012, ‘*The People Daily*’ in an article ‘11 officers fired as arms found in cemetery’ reported residents of Wajir in north eastern Kenya telling on terrorists who hid explosives at Ahmed Libancemetery in the town.¹⁰³ The *Daily Nation* in an opinion article ‘Terrorists don’t deserve protection of the constitution’ asked the government not to

⁹⁹MuriithiMutiga, the Guardian 4 April 2015 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/04/kenya-university-massacre-shabaab-divisions>

¹⁰⁰ This appeared in an article, ‘Addressing development inequalities best means in ending domestic terrorism’ by Edward Marks on the standard 16/9/2014 pg 29 col1-5

¹⁰¹ The Standard 25/5/2012 p17 col 2-5

¹⁰² Daily Nation 1/10/2012 p3 col 1-4

¹⁰³ The People Daily 6/10/2012 p 5 col 2-3

negotiate with terrorists saying: ‘When one chooses to assert their rights by extra legal means, the state must respond extra judicially’.¹⁰⁴

Kenyan support for the KDF operation in south Somalia has been waning as realization of the consequences of this start sinking in with more attacks against the country. Agrey Mutambo and Peter Leftie, writing for the *Daily Nation*, ‘Kenyan troops kill six shabaab chiefs’ report that a 2011 survey by the University of Nairobi’s Institute of Development Studies showed that 82% of Kenyans supported the operation.¹⁰⁵ However, media reports of increasing attacks, coupled with al-Shabaab media strategy have since reduced this support to 44% by 2014, according to Afrobarometer.¹⁰⁶

Kenyan media has helped al-Shabaab’s media strategy by amplifying what they have said on the social media so that those that do not have access to the new media can also know what al-Shabaab wants. Kelly and Leftie in a 2012 article-‘Al-Shabaab warns of more attacks in Kenya’ report the contents of an al-Shabaab tweet that requested the withdrawal of Kenyan troops’ verbatim.¹⁰⁷ This strategy has worked for the al-Shabaab since media reports again indicate that Kenyans are responding exactly as they wanted them to respond. Muriithi Mutiga, again writing for the *Guardian* after the Garissa University al-Shabaab attack reports a university student leader demanding that all non Muslims withdraw from the north eastern region of Kenya.¹⁰⁸ This would create the safe haven terrorist crave on Kenya territory. The same student further requested the withdrawal of the KDF from Somalia. These two demands would effectively expand al-Shabaab’s sphere of influence from Somalia to Kenya, satisfying the ultimate al-Shabaab’s jihadist goal of establishing an Islamic caliphate in East Africa.

¹⁰⁴ Daily Nation 14/10/2012 p 5 col. 4

¹⁰⁵ Mutambo, A & Leftie, P. Daily Nation 18/01/2012

¹⁰⁶ Afrobarometer p4

¹⁰⁷ Kelly K.J. & Leftie, P. Daily Nation 2/4/2012

CHAPTER FIVE: THE ROLE OF MASS MEDIA IN AIDING INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM: AN ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

This research project sought to interrogate the role of Kenyan mass media in enabling terrorism. Specifically, the data collection tool was designed to examine the three main objectives of the research study: role of mass media in promotion of al-Shabaab agenda in Kenya; how this deployment of mass media has enabled al-Shabaab to anchor itself as a critical non-state actor in Kenya; and, how this has impacted on the Kenyan government's ability to marshal domestic support on the war against terrorism in Kenya.

The research interviewed three categories of respondents all familiar with media and international terrorism: 1) four scholars - two university lecturers who teach International Conflict Resolution and communication at a local public university, a political scientist who also works as a researcher for an international research institution and a professor of political science with special interests in foreign policy and regional security; 2) five media editors working with local mainstream media - three from the print media and the other two from television; and 22 postgraduate students undertaking a Master of Arts in Communication from the University of Nairobi. A total of 31 respondents, of the targeted 50, responded to the questionnaires.

All the respondents acknowledged that they knew al-Shabaab from media reports and their constant attacks in Kenya and in Somalia. The level of knowledge, however, differed depending on their different professions and levels of exposure, or interest. While there were a variety of sources of information, many of those interviewed especially from the media, became aware of al-Shabaab's existence through the mainstream media, especially radio and television. Only 8 of the respondents had first known of the group from the print media. However, a majority, 24, kept abreast of the news through the social/ new media.

All the interviewees agreed that the al Shabaab is active in Kenya. Asked why they felt that the al-Shabaab is still active in Kenya, the media personalities cited information gathered in the course of their work that youths are being radicalized and disappearing from their homes. They

cited information from informants who have told them of their friends who had apparently disappeared without trace. News of actual attacks on media outlets like radio, TV and the Social Media give media respondents the certainty that the group is still active in Kenya. One of them cited evidence of radicalization especially when children are sent to Muslim religious classes- Madrassas, which they had raised in their reporting. One security/ foreign policy consultant was sure that al Shabaab is still active in Kenya as they (al Shabaab) continued issuing threats, and actualizing them, to hit targets in Kenya. He quoted terrorist atrocities in north eastern Kenya where people have been raided in the middle of the night and killed- raids al-Shabaab later claimed responsibility for. The expert further explained that the intelligence community was aware of escalated conscription of youths by al-Shabaab within the coastal and northern parts of Kenya. A majority of respondents, from across the strata, felt that the numerous terrorist attacks on Kenyan citizens is clear evidence that al-Shabaab is active in the country. One of the scholars used circumstantial evidence of a current security mop up operation in forests at the coast as evidence that al Shabaab is still active in Kenya.

According to one of the media respondents, contemporary terrorism is a phenomenon driven by the ideology of Jihadism. Terrorists want to impose their particular brand of Islam not only on the majority in the region whom to them are kafirs, but also on others who claim to be Muslims but do not practice the dictates of the Holy Koran. ‘They dream of an Islamic state that spurns North Africa with Boko Haram in the west and al Shabaab in the East – the establishment of a Caliphate,’ one scholar opined. Another one felt that al Shabaab is driven by nationalism: ‘It was formed out of a desire to deconstruct the narrative of the nation-state as the only legitimate source of power, and this was began in the Islamic Courts scenario. Respondents in the scholars’ category had views of al Shabaab ideological inclinations that echoed those of the media respondents. However, one noted that their goal was hegemonic - they wanted the whole of north east Africa to West Africa – the whole coastal regions of Africa - to be a Muslim theocracy. The security consultant felt that their ideology was puritan - people that wanted to force everyone to their way of thought - people who did not care about other peoples feelings, but were only concerned territories they reigned in adhered strictly to *Sharia*- the Islamic religious code. This

view was widely shared among graduate students of communication. 14 of the 22 used the word 'caliphate' and 'Islamic ideology' in describing the al-Shabaab's ideology and objectives. The security consultant claims that they he had read and researched extensively on the issue within the region - news reports, books, magazines - which gave him a clue as to what their ideology is. He quoted one such communication as when al Shabaab announced that they will be working closely with Al Qaeda.

On their general view of al-Shabaab's media coverage in Kenya, one of the media personalities felt that they have been very objective, claiming that the media thoroughly questions witnesses and sources and tries to find alternative collaborating evidence of claims. As evidence he says: 'Take *'Usalama Watch'* for example, we reported on the historical injustices and the twist and turns on policy that allowed despicable operations like the 1984 Wagalla massacre'. However, one media editor working for a local television station felt that the media has not been very objective - 'too much coverage, gory images, tilted coverage'. She also noted that reporting on al Shabaab has had its own dilemma: what is too much and what is too little, a view that there is too much coverage that does not inform about successes but only concentrates on failures. This respondent felt that coverage of counter-terrorism initiatives was inadequate even as there was lots of media space dedicated to al-Shabaab issues. She made reference to what she referred to as the Kenyan media operational mantra 'the story at all costs' as leading to 'sloppy' journalism. 'I work in a station where some leeway, unacceptable, is granted to some practitioners who are well known to project the state as a failure – but granted that autonomy in the guise of investigative journalism' she said.

One of the scholar respondents thought that the media has been very effective in its coverage of al-Shabaab terrorist related stories. However, this was not a common feeling among the scholar group where another averred that media has framed the al-Shabaab as a group fighting a jihad which it was not - 'why would fresh converts be the people who are caught doing al-Shabaab's bidding? Are they converts or mercenaries?' he asked. Another of the scholars thought the media was doing shoddy coverage - 'Why does the media treat mosque cleaners like Makaburi as

authorities in matters jihad and not the imam?’ He asked. The media scholar opined that while practitioners have a right to withhold identity of sources in such sensitive stories touching on terrorism, it was ‘unfortunate that the industry has allowed creative journalists with a bone to pick with authorities to manufacture what are blatantly al-Shabaab propaganda documentaries.’ ‘Such practices cannot pass in international media outlets, even in developed states,’ he added.

Most of the respondents were cautious when it came to knowledge of media outlets that may be openly propagating the al-Shabaab agenda. None of the scholars and media editors mentioned any mass media outlet as being used by the terrorist group. However, 9 of the student respondents mentioned two leading television stations in Kenya, and one leading print media. Media respondents opined that they were sure no mass media outlet would want to be associated with al Shabaab unless they were owned by the terrorist group. One of the scholars pointed out that while they cannot point out any media house that supports al Shabaab, he is sure some journalists are sympathetic to the al Shabaab. ‘While journalists are supposed to be objective, some journalists adopt a non-judgmental tone that makes al-Shabaab appear like any other group that has a cause,’ he asserts. Most of those who mentioned the print publication, *Nation*, cited the Westgate attack splash photo, the splash on Mandera killings in the bus and quarry. There was no corresponding coverage of counterterrorism interventions, and when they occurred, they would be within the inside pages, they observed. Television documentaries by two of the leading television stations, KTN and NTV were cited as largely leaning towards al-Shabaab.

None of the respondents from the media could quote any specific incident they felt the media aided the al Shabaab agenda. However all the four scholars had different incidences to show how that the media aided the al Shabaab agenda in their reporting. The conflict lecturer gave the examples of pictures published by the Nation, and the ‘acres of space’ on the Lamu attacks taking an ‘ethno-religious angle’ as evidence of how media is an ‘ally’ of al-Shabaab. The scholar, though, noted that this could be inadvertent and due to ‘low training or limited knowledge on how to balance responsibility and sensationalism’ - it’s about what will sell. The ‘Operation Usalama Watch’ was one case cited as an instance where the media went to ‘war’

with state, according to the security expert. 'They framed it as a state agenda against the Somali community- I am sure this helped al-Shabaab in their recruitment efforts among the Somali community,' he asserted. This was shared by most of the respondents from the scholars group who felt that this reporting created the 'dissent' and isolation among the Muslim and especially the Somali community. One of them said:

'Media reporting of Operation Usalama Watch generated so much vitriol from Somali nationals that I felt there was a hidden hand - what surprised me was that most of the media houses seemed to be telling one story- that of a people who have been persecuted by state security apparatus for far too long and now detained in their thousands in a concentration camp – very sensitive and well calculated words intended to provoke raw emotions and hatred.'

Respondents from the media felt that coverage of the government's anti-terrorist and counter-terrorist initiatives was extensive, deep and well balanced. They felt that the media interrogated all the different angles that explain the phenomena. However, while the media scholar agreed that the coverage was extensive, he also felt it was not well balanced:

'Kenyan Media reports extensively on state reactions, but spare little space for proactive activities against the al-Shabaab threat. Even when they do, it is normally to ridicule - take the idea of building a wall along the Kenya-Somali border for example - countries like Israel who have always lived with the PLO have used it. Why do the media ridicule those interventions? There is generally little depth in this reporting. No experts to interrogate the ideas, no counter-balancing of facts – just reporting'.

One of the scholar respondent from the political science department felt that Media in Kenya thrives on sensationalism where sensational anti-terrorist news like *Operation Usalam Watch* thrive, while counter-terrorism measures like the issuance of new identity cards, extensive screening that can help identify all Kenyans are always buried under cloud of corruption claims. This undermines the state and those who govern are left to defend every single decision, strategy and with no control of who consumes this information, the ability of states, and fragile ones like Kenya, to fight terrorists effectively is undermined.'

The general response from the graduate students was that the media had reported the counter-terrorism interventions, though not as much as the attacks. More than half, 16, cited the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit as a key actor in the counter-terrorism war in Kenya.

On whether they consider Kenyan media a good partner in combating terrorism, one media respondent was positive that the media has helped by strengthening resistance by showing that there is no way out of the al Shabaab menace apart from fighting them. She also felt the media has awakened the resolve of potential recruits by showing the terrorist agenda as a game that will not be won any time soon. The other media respondent felt that media may inadvertently be advancing the al-Shabaab agenda, but not deliberate. The security consultant felt that media has helped al Shabaab case by reporting on the utterances of selfish politicians who advocate for the withdrawal from KDF from Somalia. 'They should give these politicians media blackouts since they only utter these claims to people who do not understand that the terrorist does not operate as gentlemen who would keep their side of the deal'. The scholars felt that the media was not very helpful to the fight against terrorism

Respondents from the media felt that the al-Shabaab has not projected itself better than the government on Kenyan media. The scholars, on the other hand, felt that al Shabaab has had better fortunes with the media than the government; a view that is shared by graduate students respondents. Reasons for these views vary; one of the media respondents thought the feeling that the media has projected al-Shabaab in a more favorable light is because many people do not understand the media's responsibility to 'report facts as they are'. The other one was on the opinion that leaders, especially from government, had the erroneous view that media should be pliant and advance the official government view. The security consultant was positive that through media, al-Shabaab is winning the psychological battle: 'Kenyans are coming out in support of politicians who claim the KDF should pull out- north-eastern Kenya is now a no-go-zone for communities other than Somalis'. He wondered what better evidence there can be that al-Shabaab has won the psychological battle. Most scholar respondents were also of the same view: 'To young Muslims who are passionate about religion, al-Shabaab has become an

inspiration thanks to the media, the media has fanned the flames of resentment among the Kenyan Somali community, the media has also made Kenyans fearful judging by how they allow their privacy to be invaded through personal body checks’, the international conflict lecturer asserts.

All respondents apart from one media personality and three students felt that the government is not targeting Muslims in its counter terrorism initiatives. The media personality who thought otherwise noted that registration of persons has been keen on the nationality of Somalis who are suspected to be actively working towards the establishment of an Islamic state in northern Kenya. ‘Muslim Non Governmental Organizations were also the target when the Public Benefits Organizations Act was passed,’ he claims. The media personality who thought counter terrorist measures do not target Muslims noted that ‘al Shabaab exploits the Kenyan Somali desire to be part of greater Somaliland – which is not a Muslim but a nationalist desire’. The security consultant noted that there is no way the government can do this when Islam is professed by nearly 20% of Kenyan population: ‘Muslims who are not of the fundamentalist mould are in as much danger as non Muslims and they are the majority...’ he said. One of the scholars supported his claim that the governments counter terrorism initiatives cannot be directed at Muslims thus: ‘There has not been any terrorist threat issuing from non Muslim religious organizations - if al-Shabaab only recruited Muslims to carry out acts, it is only logical that counter terrorist activities will be directed at these groups.’

Most respondents felt that al-Shabaab terrorist attacks were actually directed at Christians and if any Muslim had died of a terrorist attack then they were collateral damage. The media respondents quoted evidence from terrorist attacks survivors, most of who report escaping death through their ability to rehearse verses from the Koran. While the attacks have targeted churches, there has not been any in a mosque. The security researcher and consultant had a yes and no response to this question:

‘Yes because al-Shabaab, like all other terrorist groups, knows the best way to rally support for their cause is to tag their activity as religious. The intention is to create a

divide, and tensions, mistrust so that later, even those tagged along get isolated and find reason to support their cause. Again, even when they tag the Muslim community, the intention is to ensure that those amongst the Muslim who are not fundamentalists are equally exposed and punished; and it is happening in Somalia, Pakistan and Iraq.’

The scholar’s response was mostly in the affirmative. This is exemplified by the professor of political science who noted:

‘Al-Shabaab is intent on acquiring legitimacy among larger and more established terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda and among the largely Muslim Somali community. This can only happen if they portray themselves as jihadists waging a holy war against unbelievers – Christians - who are the majority in Kenya and drive the ideology of occupiers and enemies’.

Students’ respondents were equally divided in their responses. Citing the cases in Lamu, Garissa and Mandera, 13 felt that the attacks are well planned to target Christians. Four observed that there was no clear plan or strategy to attack Christians and those attacked were merely victims like any other. For example, one student observed that during the Westgate attacks, the terrorists attacked indiscriminately without regard to religion. Another, using the same Westgate example, cited media reports of hostages released after reciting the Koran verses asked. This was according to reports in some sections of the media. One student observed that the narrative of Christian attacks was a strategy by al-Shabaab, which had been bought by the media ‘unquestioningly’. The respondent observed that the role of the media was to contextualize the information without ‘exciting the masses with what they want to consume’ as had been the case. ‘How would the media report about al-Shabaab attacks within Somalia? He posed.

On whether al Shabaab attacks have made them feel under siege, all the respondents reported in the affirmative. A media personality respondent who is a Christian felt that it is good to be careful when in public places where there are only Christians especially when the surrounding population is Muslim: ‘al-Shabaab has attacked churches before and can always do so again’ she said. The security consultant and researcher also felt it would be good to be careful for they have ‘attacked us before’, a view that is shared by other respondents.

That news editors control the terrorist agenda in the Kenyan media was almost unanimous among all the interviewees, including the editors. All respondents felt that editors have the final say on where to place reporters' stories, the tone and even story sizes. The media scholar observed: 'I think editors are responsible. They make the final call. What you report, what prominence do you give, what pictures, what angle? It is the editors in Kenya who give al-Shabaab the space and voice'. However one of the media personalities brought in the business aspect where editors act depending on what they thought would sell. 'Ultimately, we are not just running the news, but we have to pay the bills; what will grab attention and sales, sadly, is what will carry the day.'

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The conclusions of this study are examined against the set objectives and the perceptions as obtained from the study findings. From the findings, the study shows that there is a general consensus that the al-Shabaab has received quite a significant boost from a heightened media reporting on their activities. All the respondents reported knowing about the al-Shabaab activities; this was through the media. Further, in examining the influence of al-Shabaab in Kenya, a majority of respondents affirmed the critical place al-Shabaab in formulating security policies or in planning. Again, a majority of the respondents were aware, though different interpretations, of the group's ideology and strategy in Kenya. Therefore, with this knowledge from a cross-section of respondents, drawn from different disciplines, point to a high level of awareness about al-Shabaab, its activities, its ability to communicate its policies and successes to wider masses, using the existing conventional mass media networks in Kenya.

While it cannot be argued that the 'promotion' of al-Shabaab's agenda and activities is deliberate, it cannot escape the view that most of these reports tend to emphasize the attacks, or propaganda of the group, rather than any counter-terrorism initiatives. This is evident in the respondents' weak responses on knowledge of counter-terrorism interventions vis-à-vis the group's activities against Kenyans. However, it is equally important to note, like in previous

studies conducted on the same subject, that there is a general feeling among some sections of the population that there is a remote probability that some sections of the Kenyan media, but specifically some journalists, have pushed the al-Shabaab agenda through their media outlets; the admission by one media editor of the same, albeit remotely, is case in point.

It can therefore be concluded that al-Shabaab has greatly benefited from the media coverage, which has given it the much desired publicity; the oxygen upon which any terrorist group operates. The second aspect sought to examine to what extent this media coverage had anchored al-Shabaab as a critical actor in Kenyan domestic affairs. All the respondents knew of the group, and its activities. They also knew, albeit different versions, of the group's ideology and goals. This is evident in the security operations, the heightened security measures and the general fear among the citizenry over al-Shabaab. For example, after the terrorist attack at Garissa University, the institution was indefinitely closed, the students transferred to other areas, and the faculty and staff in the institution left. This was against the government's call for calm and reassurances on the improved security. Evidently, through the attack, and subsequent media coverage and footage of students and non-Muslim residents fleeing, the al-Shabaab had scored a big one against the government. This is not helped by constant media reports reproducing al-Shabaab's threats of further attacks which are carried in mainstream media and add to the fear among the 'targeted' victims.

While global terrorism is a threat to many states, including the developed, as was witnessed during the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in France, the role of media in shaping the debates and subsequent citizen actions is critical. For example, in the French attacks, the French and global media portrayed a united front against the terrorists and never played into the hands of the terrorists. The media rallied the country and the world in showing defiance, and while not trivializing the attack, or denying its significance and magnitude, and ensured that the agenda after the attacks was driven by the state and the citizens, but not that of the Islamists who had attacked the magazine. Contrasted with the Westgate attacks in Kenya, the Kenyan media equally rallied the country and the state in defiance and solidarity. However, the use of graphic

pictures, skewed commentary and unverified reports – like the one alleging the terrorist had already escaped – only showed the difference in depth and understanding of terrorist reporting between the Kenyan media and their global counterparts. This is also evident in the Mandera attacks – the bus and quarry attacks – where the media published pictures of victims, all lying dead, and continued to replay messages from the terror group claiming victory and warning of even more deadly attacks; this never happened in the French attacks. From the above, and response from respondents, it is clear that the al-Shabaab has anchored itself as a critical actor in the Kenyan system. Its agenda and messages cannot be ignored; largely due to a sustained media coverage within the mainstream Kenyan media.

The final aspect of the study sought to examine the effect of this promotion of the al-Shabaab agenda and its anchoring as a critical actor on the government's ability to marshal domestic support in the war against international terrorism. The success of terrorist attacks is not confined to carrying out successful attacks; the promotion of fear and spread of ideology are the critical objectives of most terror groups – attacks are only manifestations of deeper interests. Using the example of Garissa and Mandera attacks, the objective of al-Shabaab was met not just by the actual attacks, but by the subsequent withdrawal of students and quarry workers from the areas. That the state would proceed to prosecute those Kenyans who defied the threats and continued working in the quarries equally undermined its own agenda of defiance against terrorists and their objectives. But it is the media reporting, and the campaign by Muslim-led agencies, like Muhuri, which have sustained a media campaign depicting the state as targeting the Muslim and Somali community which has dented the state's ability to marshal support across the divide.

For example, while the state discovered bomb manufacturing equipment and manuals from the *Operation Usalama Watch*, the media coverage and use of such emotive descriptions like 'Gulag', 'Concentration camp', 'Somali Victims', that eroded the gains made in the operation. The politicization of the operation by the Kenyan opposition, proceeding to hold public meetings in Eastleigh – the epicenter of the operation, created a rift, which denied the government the support to mount a serious and successful counter-terrorism initiative. Experts' interviewed

decried the lack of a balanced panel of experts and analysts to contribute to the counter-terrorism debate in the Kenyan media. And this is the responsibility of editors to determine who contributes; this selection – gate-keeping – influences messaging and the outcome of the messages. It can thus be concluded that the manner of terrorism reporting in Kenya has had a profound impact on the counter-terrorism interventions, and support for the same is divided and gradually sinks as opinion polls have continued to show. This is largely due to media framing of issues around the war against terror and perceptions created in the minds of the citizens.

Media plays a critical role in shaping public opinion, setting the agenda and shaping public policy. The role of a free media in liberal democracies cannot be devalued due to omissions of some actors within the industry; its power, nevertheless, to destabilize states' ability to govern and advance policy is also critical in the emerging world of transnational terrorism, like al-Shabaab. Realists' argue that the state is the 'only' critical actor in international relations. And thus, in an anarchic world, power (of states) is the determining factor in global relations. While this is true, this study equally shows that the role of emerging non-state actors, like al-Shabaab, not willing to engage in conventional (international) relations cannot be ignored. That the global pattern of relations between states and non-state actors continue to be redrawn and new paradigms of thinking and influence of new actors continues to grow by the day. As Huntington argues, these new 'civilizations', and especially Islamism, will continue to shape the global policies on security for a long time. This is evident in the Horn of Africa with al-Shabaab, in the North Africa with Islamic Maghreb, in West Africa with Boko Haram, Middle East with Islamic State and Al Qaeda now in the Arabian Peninsula and Asia.

While the role of states' as critical actors, as Realists' would argue is not in great danger, it is perhaps its ability to redefine the interplay between these actors which is critical. Undoubtedly, states will remain as the most significant actors in international relations, but not as classical realists would have posited, but with a new ceding of ground and influence to new and merging actors – terrorist groups being some of them. And no better actor will shape this 'clash of

civilizations' than the media. The ability of the media to set agenda is paramount. But what agenda?

This can only be possible through proper gate-keeping of information within the media system. This is the role of media editors and reporters. As responses have shown, the media plays a critical role in shaping opinions and public perceptions. Editors sit at the hallowed place where society entrusts them with the responsibility to sieve through information which not only informs, but also doesn't propagate hate and promote terrorists' agenda. Freedom of the media, an integral pillar of Liberalism must be weighed against the responsibility to protect the people against harm and unnecessary fear.

Recommendations

Having identified editors as the main party that controls the media's terrorist agenda, recommendations from all the respondents concentrated on what editors should do: this was said eloquently by one of the media respondents:

'Editors should consciously work at terrorist stories, placing, length, content and tone. Stories on terrorism should be revised by the most responsible editors in media houses. In-depth analysis by people outside media houses who are deemed capable of rational thought should be encouraged so that the media would know when they are going astray.'

Most of the respondents observed that it was critical that media practitioners are taught on reporting terror.

This study further recommends that the media must invest in trained personnel able to interrogate issues of global terrorism and create a fair balance between reporting and harming. Well trained staff, conversant with the strategies deployed by terrorists to attract media attention, will see through the fog of deceit and only report analytically and objectively.

Further, the study recommends that the state must equally invest in proper communication experts and strategists to counter the terrorists' narratives, perceptions of isolation and cover the (credible) information gap exploited by the terrorists. Well seasoned and experienced communicators should act as the only sources of information and communication on matters of terrorism. Centrality of information will eliminate the conflicting messages from different state departments, which creates a credibility deficit and believability.

The relevant media regulatory bodies, like the Media Council of Kenya, must come on hard on media outlets and practitioners who flout the Code of Ethics like happened in the Westgate and Mandera attacks. Media houses must also screen and investigate their programmes, staff and establish any connections, real or perceived, by their journalists to terror organizations.

Finally, institutions of higher learning, like the University of Nairobi, should create inter-departmental units which teach media and government practitioners on emerging issues like global terrorism, reporting and managing information; most of the staff in the media houses, and even within the security sector, charged with these responsibilities lack the knowledge and competence to interrogate such information and end up becoming mouthpieces of terrorist groups.

Appendix1

Questionnaire

This questionnaire forms part of MA in International Studies, University of Nairobi, research project. It seeks your contribution on the following topic:

The Role of Mass Media in Aiding International Terrorism: the Case for Kenyan media and Al-Shabaab

Kindly share as much information as possible. All information provided shall be used for academic research purposes only, and confidentiality of the respondent shall be treated with utmost respect.

Name

(optional).....

Religion (optional).....

Profession(optional).....

Preferred media/channels

Radio:.....TV.....Newspaper.....

- 1) Do you know al-Shabaab group?
- 2) How did you get to know about it?
- 3) Do you think the al-Shabaab is active in Kenya
- 4) Why?
- 5) What do you know as the al-Shabaab's ideology?
- 6) How did you get to know about it?
- 7) What is your general view on al-shabaab's media coverage in Kenya?
- 8) Do you think there is any mass media outlet used by al-Shabaab in Kenya?
- 9) Why do you so?
- 10) Do you have any specific case(S) where you think that al-Shabaab was aided in their agenda by the mass media?
- 11) What are your views on Kenyan media's coverage of anti-terrorism and counter-terrorism interventions by the government?

- 12) Would you consider Kenyan media as a good partner in combating terrorism?
- 13) Do you think the al-Shabaab has projected itself better in the media than the Kenyan government?
- 14) Why?
- 15) Do you know of any counter-terrorism measure by the government?
- 16) How did you get to know about them?
- 17) Do you think the counter-terrorism measures by government are productive?
- 18) Do you think the government's counter-terrorism measures are targeting the Muslims?
- 19) Why?
- 20) Do you think the terrorist attacks are targeted at Christians?
- 21) If yes, why?
- 22) Does the reporting on these attacks make you feel under siege as a Christian? (if applicable)
- 23) In your own evaluation, who controls the terrorism agenda in the Kenyan media?
- 24) And why?
- 25) What recommendations do you have for media coverage of terrorism in Kenya?

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