

Fighting Terrorism in Universities in Kenya

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Abstract

This paper examines the meaning of terrorism and its causes. The paper also illuminates the recommendations on how terrorism can be tackled in Kenyan universities. Terrorist activities are premeditated, politically or religiously motivated violence perpetrated against civilians by a clandestine agents. Universities should strive to combat all acts of terrorism in the wake of the merciless killing of students at the Garissa University College in 2015 that left 148 students dead. The Government of Kenya has a duty to protect all its citizens including students in both public and private universities. Terrorism in Kenya has been caused by many reasons and among them is corruption. There are many illegal immigrants who enter Kenya from Ethiopia, Somalia, and Southern Sudan. These illegal immigrants buy their way into Kenya by bribing immigration officials at the border points. Once they arrive in Kenya they get Kenyan identity cards through corruption. These illegal immigrants smuggle arms and are used to recruit terrorists in Kenya. Other causes of terrorism in Kenya include unemployment, allure of quick wealth, religious motivation, and use of drugs. There are stereo-types of terrorism based on religion, race, ethnicity, gender; socio-economic status. This paper firmly rejects the notion of identification of terrorism with any country, religion or ethnicity. Countering terrorism requires a comprehensive response by University managers and the Government of Kenya. This should include integration of national cohesion into the University curriculum, training peer counsellors, research into causes of terrorism, and funding of terrorists. Universities and the Government of Kenya also need to improve on good governance to avoid marginalization of some communities. Some other methods of preventing terrorism include teaching of University common courses on anti-terrorism and radicalization. The paper recommends that Universities should have security personnel within their environs but they should be more of preventive agents, because they can be an impediment.

Keywords

Radicalization, Terrorism, Human Rights, University, Kenya

1. Introduction

This paper illuminates on the meaning and causes of terrorism in Universities in Kenya. It focuses on the recommendations on how terrorism can be eradicated and minimized in Kenyan Universities. The role of University managers is highlighted in terms of how they can use management within their Universities to counter terrorism. Curriculum in the various Universities explored as a major instrument in sensitizing students on how to detect and deal with terrorism in the campuses. Modern technology is also examined in the article and its impact on sharing information on recruitment, funding and monitoring terrorism activities in the Universities in Kenya (Taaliu, 2010) [1].

2. Fighting Terrorism in Universities in Kenya

2.1. Introduction

Radicalization and terrorism is a world phenomenon affecting almost all countries in one way or another. Radicalization and terrorism are related in that radicalization leads to terrorism. Terrorism can be defined as violence against civilians. Terrorist activities are premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against a noncombatant targets by a clandestine agents, usually intended to influence the audience. The word “terrorism” was coined during the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror that took place in France. During the bloody French Revolution, 1792-1794, saw those who resisted face arrest, imprisonment, and death by guillotine. From these bloody beginning, terrorists acts became defined as systematic application of violence to establish and maintain a new political system. In the world, terrorism has been witnessed in the U.S e.g. the Twin Towers attack in New York in 9/11. Closer in Africa we have witnessed acts of terrorism in Nigeria where the Chibok girls were kidnapped for almost two years now. In Kenya, terrorism has been witnessed in Westgate in 2014 and Garissa University College attack in 2015 where 148 students were killed. The Garissa University College attack led to the closure of the University College (Clifford & Jeremy, 2010) [2].

2.2. Causes of Terrorism

2.2.1. Religious Motivation and Indoctrination

Terrorism took a particularly violent overtone from the 1990s with the heightening of religious tensions. The connection between religious radicalization and indoctrination and violence is not new. In recent decades, some of the most violent attacks occurred in Northern Ireland where religion and cultural groupings were the prime characteristics. It should therefore be noted that terrorism should not be associated with Islam alone as a religion as indicated by the conflicts between Catholics and Protestants in North Ireland. There has been increased level of religious justifications of Jihad based on Islamists rhetoric. In Kenya, the Madrassa teachings have been seen as a source of radicalization of Muslim youth. Some youth are radicalized through some religious organization that they will be heroes if they join terrorist groups. The many cases of young

people being recruited even from universities into terrorism have been reported. Some of the youth are promised that they would go to heaven if they die as suicide bombers. Their families are promised wealth even if they die in acts of terrorisms. The young recruits are promised to be saints if they die in defense of these religious teachings. In Mandera in Northern Kenya there was a heroic case where a bus was attacked and one of the Muslims in the bus gave the Christian passengers the Muslim scarfs and dresses to avoid them being killed by the terrorists. In many cases the terrorist would attack the buses, quarries and other businesses in Northern Kenya they would ask the people to recite the Holy Quran and if someone failed they would be killed. This was perceived as anti-Christian attack by the Muslim extremists. In one incidence, Farah and about 60 other passengers were traveling in a bus from the capital, Nairobi, to the town of Mandera, on Dec. 21 2016 when Somalia-based Al-Shabaab militants began firing shots at the bus. The gunmen forced the bus to stop and told the Muslims and Christian passengers to separate. Farah, and other Muslim passengers refused to cooperate—instead telling the insurgents to kill all the passengers or leave them alone. The Al-Shabaab fighters left them to continue with their journey because they did not want to antagonize themselves with local Muslim populations. Al-Shabaab militants have been known to execute Christians and spare Muslims in previous attacks in the region. Farah, who was shot in the hip and suffered gunshot wounds to his arm, died a hero during surgery one month later (Gould, Eric D & Esteban F Klor, 2010) [3].

2.2.2. Allure of Quick Wealth

Youth are easily lured to be involved in terrorism through promises of quick riches promised by the recruiting agents. In Somalia, there are many young Kenyans who are recruited to fight alongside the Al Shabaab. These young Kenyans are very valuable to the terrorists because they understand Kenyan languages including Kiswahili and know the sensitive places to attack. We have seen many adverts in the Kenyan dailies placing millions of shillings as rewards to information leading to the capture of these wanted Kenyans. There are incidences of even university graduates or students in very prestigious courses like Law and Medicine being recruited into the terrorists' networks through the allure of quick money.

2.2.3. Unemployment

The level of unemployment in Kenya has led some young people to being disillusioned to the extent of any promise of a means of earning can easily lead them to being recruited in terrorism. Many youth in Kenya would argue that they would rather live a short life of riches instead of waiting for jobs which are not forthcoming. These young Kenyans will jump into any opportunity that promises them a source of income and makes them busy and have fun. The unemployment in Kenya is a very fertile ground for recruiting young people without jobs. The jobless youth with promises of handsome payments are easily lured to foreign terrorist armies. Some of the youth will argue that being in the terrorist

groups is tantamount to being in Kenya Defence Forces (KDF), because the chances of being killed are the same, and both KDF soldiers and recruits in Al Shabaab are both being paid to do the same job though on opposing sides.

2.2.4. Drugs

The use of drugs is rampant in schools and both private and public Universities. Under the influence of drugs, students can easily be recruited into radicalization and terrorism. Besides funds gotten through sale of drugs may be used in funding of terrorist activities. Drug cartels exist in many Universities in Kenya and some of the students' government activities are said to be funded by the use of sale of drugs in the campuses.

2.2.5. Bad Governance

Some of the government institutions have not been well coordinated in fighting radicalization and terrorism. Marginalization of Muslims usually leads to retaliation. Some of the Muslims feel like they are not part of Kenya. This can be exemplified by the Mombasa Republican Movement which argues that the coastal region is not part of Kenya. Those who have visited the northern part of Kenya are surprised by the level of marginalization in these regions. When traveling from Moyale, Marsabit, Turkana, Wajir, Mandera, Garissa, or Lamu as you arrive in Nairobi, you hear people say "that we have reached Kenya" This marginalization has made people from those regions who predominantly are Muslims feel that this sidelining has been made on purpose. Until the onset of devolution most of these counties did not have a single kilometer of tarmac (Jonathan R.W., 2016) [4].

2.2.6. Refugees

Kenya has one of the biggest refugee camps in Daadab. This refugee camp has been seen as a recruiting group for terrorists. The Government of Kenya is in the process of closing the camp and resettling the refugees back to Somalia. Illegal arms are also said to be smuggled through the refugee camps.

2.2.7. Porous Boundaries

Kenya is surrounded by countries such as Somalia, which for a long time has not had a functional government. This lack of government in Somalia makes it a fertile breeding ground for terrorists groups like Al Qaeda and Al Shabaab. These terrorist groups have found their way to Kenya through the porous boundaries. The terrorist groups have been able to attack Kenya in places like Nairobi, Lamu, Mandera, Wajir and Garissa.

2.2.8. Corruption

Corruption is a vice in Kenya, which has contributed highly in the rise of radicalization, and terrorism in the country and the universities. Corruption has led to government officials granting non-Kenyans passports and national identity cards. These non-Kenyans pose as Kenyans and present great danger in fighting radicalization and terrorism.

2.2.9. Judicial System

The judicial system in Kenya has been a victim of corruption where terrorist suspects are freed due to corruption. Some of the terrorist suspects use money from the illegal activities to bribe their way out of the courts. The judiciary in Kenya has been singled out the Transparency International as one the institutions with highest corruption levels. This corruption trickles down to police and immigration officers.

2.3. Recommendations

2.3.1. Peer Counselling

Students at the University should be trained in peer counselling these peer counsellors can help their colleagues in dealing, detecting and combating radicalization. Students are closer to each other than to the lecturers and parents. Students can easily detect when fellow students are involved in illegal movements e.g. when students suddenly start having money or living a lavish life.

2.3.2. Integration of National Cohesion into the Curriculum

There is need to integrate students in national cohesion in universities curriculum. The office of the president in October 2016 wrote to all Vice Chancellors to make sure that national cohesion is integrated in the curricula. If this is introduced as a core or common unit, it can inculcate the sense of belonging to the university students.

2.3.3. Security

In some of the public universities, there is presence of security personnel. The security officers can detect radicalization and may be able to prevent a possible terrorist attack in the universities. Security personnel within University environs should be more of preventive agents, because they can be an impediment.

2.3.4. Students' Governments

All universities have students' governments or students' councils. These students' governments can be very instrument in gathering information from fellow students to university management and be able to curb potential radicalization and terrorism.

2.3.5. Sharing of Information and Communications Technology

Information and communications technology (I.C.T) has been used in communication. The university management should monitor the use of I.C.T systems within and outside the universities. These I.C.T systems or media include the use of social media like Twitter, Facebook, Internet, and Cell phones.

2.3.6. Funding

The universities in partnership with the government of Kenya need to carry out research on the main sources of funding to the terrorist groups. Understanding the methods of funding for terrorists organizations is helpful in the preventative efforts. "Follow the money" is a long standing maxim of tracing the criminal activities. In Kenya, the terrorists' activities are funded by businesses which are

carried out in various places like Eastleigh part of Nairobi and the illegal charcoal business from Somalia. Further, due to the fact that there is anarchy in Somalia, makes it easy for goods to be imported without payment of custom duty. This nonpayment of import duty makes these goods cheap. These goods especially electronics and clothes are sold in Kenyan markets and urban centers and the money is shipped back to Somalia to finance the Al Shahab activities. The fight against drugs along the coast of Kenya has been seen as a major war on terrorism. The argument has been the money gotten from the sale of illegal drugs is used to fund terrorist groups in Somalia. Another source of funds for the terrorists is the hijacking of vessels and kidnapping hostages in the Indian Ocean and asking for ransom. This vice went on for a while but for the last 5 years it has been on the decrease because of the intervention by Western countries in the Indian Ocean. Navy Patrol by countries like USA, UK, and other major industrial powers has helped in preventing pirates in the ocean. (Ross, J.I., 2009) [5].

2.3.7. Armed Intervention

Security is one key role played by the government to its citizens. The Kenya Defence Force (KDF) was deployed in Somalia as part of the AMISON forces fighting the terrorist. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is a regional peacekeeping mission operated by the African Union with the approval of the United Nations in Somalia. Its main duty is to support transitional government and train the Somali security forces. AMISOM supports the Federal Government of Somalia in their battle against Al-Shabaab. Kenya, Ethiopia, Burundi and Uganda have contributed forces to AMISON since its inception 2007.

2.3.8. Organization

Universities can undertake research in understanding the internal organization structure of the terrorist groups. This can be helpful in choosing methods of combating their activities and advising the Government through the ministry of Education. The term “cell” is used to describe the bottom group of the Al Shabaab. They follow the traditional model of administration where each cell has a leader who reports to the next level and hence hierarchical pyramid kind of leadership. The complexity and diversity of the terrorist networking make it very difficult to generalize about the nature of terrorist groups today.

3. Conclusion

Universities are affected by terrorism and radicalization just like any other institution in Kenya. Universities have a role to play in combating terrorism and radicalization. The universities should work with national and county governments to monitor activities of youth groups in universities and the counties. Universities should also vet and scrutinize invited sensational speakers to the university. Some of these speakers and entertainment groups can radicalize stu-

dents. Research on radicalization and terrorisms should be carried out by universities to find out the best ways to counter this threat which is real to all learning institutions.

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