

The Impact Of Global Terrorism On Ethnicity And Community Relations In Kenya:Towards A Reconstruction Of A Vibrant Civil Society

Murithi Joseph Jese

Department of KiswahiliKenyatta UniversityP O Box 43844Nairobi-Kenya

ABSTRACT:*Groups with little or no direct political power have demonstrated that by employing certain tactics like use of direct terror can achieve effects on a target community, which are out of all proportion to their numerical or political power. These tactics attract worldwide publicity, create widespread panic, and cause central governments to concede to demands of small subgroups within the society. Such tactics have been employed by various groups within the world to achieve certain goals, social, political and economic. This paper attempts to assess the impact of global terrorism towards community relations in Kenya with an aim of checking how these acts have hampered the construction of a vibrant society.*

KEY WORDS: *Terrorism, society, militia groups,government, global .*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Global terrorism manifests itself when groups of terror receive aid in terms of finances or army from other nations either legally or illegally. This is from the understanding that terrorism is legal or illegal depending on the perspective one looks at it. For example Palestinian Liberation Army(PLA) which claims to fight for the rights of Palestinians may be termed as illegal by the Israeli Army while the Palestinians see it as a liberation force which is legal.

Readers Digest (1981) shows evidence of Soviet Union employing tactics of terror by supporting Irish Republic Army, Italy's Red Brigade, and the Turkish Liberation Army only to destabilize the West. This implies that government can sponsor terrorist activities as an arm of foreign policy. According to Wilkinson (1986), the ideology behind the support of militia groups and armies is to dominate others through threats and actual attacks. The other ideology is publicity whereby the groups would like either to draw international sympathy, or would like to be known that they exist (Sterlin, 1981). Such group as al-Qaeda have perfected this ideology so much that almost the whole world knows the group and its slain leader Osama Bin Laden.

Another ideology about terrorism is that of religion. Religion has been used by militia groups such as the Palestinian Liberation Army, and al-Qaeda and the Alshabaab to advance their ideologies. According to Daily Nation (1998), the al-Qaeda claimed that they had been sent by God to bomb the American Embassy in Kenya. The same reasoning was advanced after the September 11th attacks on the United States of America. Political ideology has also been applied by terrorists to advance their goals. For example, the support of terrorist groups in Libya, North Korea and Cuba by the Soviet in 1980's was due to political reasons. Political reasons have actually motivated the tensions between the Eastern and Western blocks with each bloc hoping to dominate the other politically.

The above ideologies of terrorism have penetrated into African continent. By the virtue of being former colonies of some foreign countries, most African countries have become victims of circumstances. They have found the same foreign ideologies of terrorism governing them. For example, many of the African countries which are fighting amongst themselves are funded and supported by foreign masters, so that as they continue fighting the foreign governments continue advancing their political and economic agenda. Groups such as Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), Angolan rebels, Congo rebels, Uganda rebels, Burundi rebels, Somalia fighters, Sierra Leone rebels, have been funded by foreign countries (William 1985; Wardlaw, 1997). These rebel groups, however small make the governments and citizens of the affected countries live in fear and anxiety.

By corollary, global terrorism has found its way in Kenya. The ideologies of dominance, politics, economy and religion have penetrated the country so much that they have incapacitated the creation of a vibrant civil society. Moreover, there has been many incidences of terror activities in Kenya. According to the Daily Nation (1998), there was an act of terror organized by an international organization, the al-Qaeda group, which killed over 250 people. Prior to that, on 27th February, 1975, passengers were killed by a bomb inside a bus. On December 31st 1980, a bomb exploded and killed over 100 people at Norfolk Hotel in Nairobi. The bomb was

said to have been planted by a Moroccan, who was a member of the popular front for the liberation of Palestine Guerilla Movement. In 1992, a bomb also exploded in Jogoo House in Nairobi, causing massive destruction. An anonymous caller who claimed the responsibility called his terrorist group God's Oppressed Army, and demanded six conditions fulfilled including the resignation of the president. Other bomb explosions in Nairobi occurred in December 22nd, 1991; March 23rd, 25th, April 1st and June 12th 1992. Kenya is now associated as a place of terrorist activity (Daily Nation, 2000; Kenya Times, 2002; PeaceNet, 2002).

At the individual level, it has been reported we have had individuals who want to advance their own political and economic goals by funding groups of young men and women, and forming amorphous groups. Terrorism has infiltrated such groups so much such that even their identity names are similar to those of foreign terror organizations. These groups are many a time mobilized to create fear among the electorate so as to support and vote a certain individual. Some of these militia groups bear names aseMungiki, Jeshi la Mzee, Jeshi la King'ole, Jeshi la Embakasi, Taliban group, Osama group, Baghdad Boys, al-Qaeda, Chinkololo, Angola and Mozambique Boys.

These groups are reported to possess all kinds of weapons that they use to kill and maim people. At some point they became so strong that the government had to ban them. In spite of this ban, some are believed to be still operating secretly. It is in line with this argument that this paper would like to investigate why global terrorism has so much impacted on Kenya, and what measures could be taken to curb this problem before it moves out of hand. It is the aim of this paper to investigate the nature and causes of terrorism in Kenya society, assess the impact of terrorism on ethnicity and community relations in Kenya and propose clear and feasible measures that could be adopted by the government to protect its people against acts of terror

1.1 Historical Perspective Of Terrorism In Kenya

Terrorism instills fear and anxiety among people, however small the actual physical harm it may be. It leaves behind devastating social and psychological effects. While previous studies on ethnicity and civil society have concentrated on how multiparty democracy tends to be built along ethnic lines this study is unique given that it delves into discussion of earlier terrorist incidents as well as some cases of individuals who are thought to sponsor private militia groups in Kenya.

Several scholars have also showed a great concern over the escalating cases of terrorism in the world. Netanyahu (1981), Isikoff and Klaidman (2002), Thomas (2001), and Ratnesar (2001), observe that terrorism is a product of historical and socio-political realities. This is exemplified by the existing ideology between the East and Western blocs. They further observe that modern terrorism is a form of warfare by remote control. Because of the vast technology advances, we are now aware of political events as they happen around the globe. Every hour the mass media brings intense and immediate news coverage of the actual events of terror, and the measures taken to combat them. Thus, the current acts of terror in Kenya is analogous to terrorist activities that are found among the Western nations. A need arises to find out whether global terrorism has infiltrated Kenya through mass media.

Terrorism is the antithesis of a democratic society's concept social order. In Kenya, there are some people who systematically rely on major acts of violence as political instruments. The laissez faire politics in Kenya have been used by politicians to deliberately exploit the ethnic differences, and to fan terror violence against their political rivals. Most political militia group have been developed along ethnic lines. These groups serve the broad interest encompassing the plight of Kenyans, but in fact they at best serve the interest of certain politicians. Terrorism is a tool used by many politicians to advance their selfish political ends. (Human Rights Watch, Africa, 1993; Murungi, 1995, Murunga, 2000). It is therefore imperative to find out whether the existing terrorist groups in Kenya are created by some politicians to advance their egoistic political and economic ends (Netanyahu, 1981;39).

Fight for survival has taken place throughout the centuries, from anxiety times to our own days. Some historians have observed that the most justified fight in the annals of human kind was the one the Jews conducted in the land of Israel (Netanyahu, 1981: 39). The fight aimed at saving Jews from utter destruction.

1.2 Manifestation Of Aspects Of Terror

Events of terror-violence conjure up images associated with certain symbols or labels. When these symbols or labels are used later to describe another event, this triggers the recall of the prior event, even though the new one may not be of the same magnitude, seriousness or impact. Thus the repeated usage of a given key word or name regarding an event or group in the print or electronic media may bring to mind not only the event, but also a projected image and purpose of the referred group or event. As a result, the ready recall of a projected image or purpose, which this process creates, tends to increase the psychological effects of terror-violence. For example, because the media have highlighted acts of terror-violence by the Talibanans and Al-Shabaab the recall effect is such that the name is associated with the terrorism. This perhaps explains why the militia groups in Kenya have adopted the names of global terrorist groups such as Taliban, Al-Qaeda and Baghdad Boys.

The contagion concept thus advocates that media attention given to terror-violence encourages further incidents of terror-violence. Although this concept would not appear entirely susceptible to empirical verification, at least with respect to ideologically motivated individuals, concern over this contagion effect has been repeatedly expressed, and so the concept retains a certain intuitive reasonableness (Walter 1990:45). The public success of a particular terrorist group for instance may encourage that group to repeat its attack in order to keep the public on the goal ideology. In addition, publicity generated by one terrorist group, such as that accorded the existing militia group in Kenya may make such groups to persist in their acts. This has been exemplified by persistence of terror files by the existing militia groups in Kenya.

The contagion concept may also operate with respect to perpetrators motivated by non-ideological reasons. Since the mass media have the ability to “confer status upon an individual or an event merely by presenting them,” the spotlight of media attention may be an irresistible lure to violence for certain individuals for certain individuals. Certain individuals who are motivated by personal gains may imitate successful techniques, which they have learnt from media connotations. As such, Christian ideologies are incorporated to justify a certain militia group’s existence (Johnson and David, 1986; Kamara, 1997). For instance, attempt by the Mungiki militia group to avenge the killing of some of their members by the Talibans was justified by the former as divine command. The Mungiki militia group saw the killing of their members by the Talibans as “persecution of God’s chosen people”. The Talibans on the other hand saw the killing as a “Holy War,” or “Jihad,” a means to safeguard the power that be, since “there is no authority except from Allah” could it be that what happened between the Mungiki and the Taliban militia groups is only a microcosm of what is happening in various parts that are hit by terror activities. This study also envisages investigating the driving force behind these terror groups of the locale of study.

The Government has a role of protecting its citizen from acts of terror (Parliamentary Select Committee, 1992; Fortsythe, 2000; Daily Nation, 2001). Most of terror activities in Kenya take the form of ethnic clashes (PeaceNet, 2002). The terror groups are mostly private, political, militia groups that are created on ethnic basis. For instance, the Mungiki are basically Agikuyu, Talibans are Baghdad Boys are Luos, Jeshi la Embakasi are the Agikuyu,, YJeshi la King’ori are Akamba while Chinkololo are Gusii. These terror groups are thought to be still operating clandestinely despite the order by the government TO DISBAND (Daily Nation 2001; Kenya Television Network News Documentary, 2002). The persistence of such groups is a clear indication that the existing policies governing terrorism in Kenya are to a large extent ineffective, hence there is need to come up with feasible and effective strategies for combating terrorism in Kenya. This will not only alleviate the cases of ethnic blood battles, but it will also enhance a reconstruction of a vibrant civil society in Kenya.

1.5 Causes Of Terrorism

Several scholars have come up with explanations on the causes of terrorism in the world. Bells (1978, O’Sullivan (1986) and Wardlaw (1997), concur that terrorism is a great threat to humanity in general as its effects are far beyond the physical harm or injury inflicted to the people involved. It is related with many social and psychological impacts. They cite the causes of terrorism as presence of self conscious, segregated, ethnic, religio-cultural minority groups that may decide to employ tactics of terror to fight for their rights. This group feels economically or politically oppressed with poor job opportunities, lack of voting rights but the group is encouraged to believe that change is coming and then they are disappointed. This gives rise to a situation of unemployment, coupled with a historical ‘them’ and to blame, and the situation is motivated by frustrated elite who lead the masses to overcome the situation by giving it an ideological justification. This causes the groups to riot and if they don’t have warring power, they may employ terror tactics to force the government to bow to their demands.

Belle (1978) and Merleau (1979), underscore the various types of the terrorist activities. Among them is anarchist, where violence is used to destroy an evil system, which is based on a view of man as naturally social, and there is authority, which is enslaving him. Terror is also seen as a tactic where revolutionary conditions social and political environment is commonly employed. There are also nationalist terror groups who employ militia tactics to discredit the government to influence public opinion. This encourages a climate of collapse leading to strikes and guerilla movement to pose as the only alternative source of power either by elections or armed actions. Another type of terror is racist where terror is seen as a catharsis for the individual, and is reinforcing and creating racial identity and self-respect.

Bulton, (1975) and Sterlin (1981) underline that increase in terrorist activities is due to urbanization where by the jobless young men in towns are prone to manipulations by leaders who are out to get power either through just ways or by proxy. There are also the ecstasy factors whereby act of terror becomes a religious experience for the terrorist with the production of emotional concomitants becoming primary motivating force. What is the situation in Nairobi City where acts of terrorism are rife?

Wardlaw (1997), argues that state terrorism is the use of terror as a 'symbolic act' designed to influence political behavior by extra normal means entailing the use of violence. It may achieve political ends by either mobilizing forces sympathetic to the cause of the terrorists or by immobilizing the forces of the incumbent authorities. Enforcement terror is used by those in power who wish to suppress challenges to their authorities. Agitation terror describes terrorist activities of those who wish to disrupt the existing order and ascend to political power themselves. There is also state terrorism, which is used by the state to control citizens by creating fear and anxiety so as to control them.

Wilkinson (1986) notes that there are four types of terrorism. Among them is criminal terrorism, where there is systematic use of terror for material gains. There is also psychic terrorism, which has mystical religious or magical ends. There is also war terrorism, which aims at paralyzing the enemy, diminishes his resistance and reduces his ability to fight with the ultimate purpose of destroying him. There is also political terrorism, which is the use of violence or threats to secure political goals.

Finally, here is repressive terrorism which is the systematic use of terroristic activities of violence for the purpose of suppressing, putting down or quelling certain groups, individuals or forms of behavior deemed to be undesirable by the oppressed. This study will unearth the forms of terrorism that exist in Kenya. It will also examine how they are related to global terrorism. Walter (1990), observes that terrorism may be caused by religious and ideological conflicts, ethnic differences, discrimination and oppression, socio-economic deprivation, stress and strains of rapid modernization and perceived political inequalities.

In addition terrorism may be caused by lack of adequate channels of communication, protests, grievances and demand, existence of a culture of violence, disaffection and popular turbulence, availability of revolutionary leadership equipped with a potentially attractive ideology, weakness of government, police and judicial organs, erosion of confidence in the regime, its value and institutions afflicting all levels of the population, and finally deep division within governing elite or leadership groups. In addition, Wilkinson (1986) argues that the purpose of terrorism is to divide mass of society from the incumbent authorities, instilling fear, publicity, and causing general breakdown of social order to wring concession from controlling power to enforce obedience. These have been the motives of such groups as Angolan rebels, Palestinian commanders, Colonial independent struggles, Al-Qaeda groups and Taliban militia groups. From the foregoing it is apparent that the causes of terrorism are varied. Thus it is necessary for this study to investigate the nature of terrorism in Kenya.

1.6 Recommendations On Combating Terrorism

Netanyahu (1981), Evans (1982), and Wardlaw (1997), suggest that there should be an attempt by the government to find long term solutions to the underlying causes of terrorisms, increase the size and powers of security forces, introduce punishment for terrorist activities, enact legislation limiting rights of assembly and increasing controls over the members of the society by way identity cards, registrations of residence and extensive use of computerized files, establish a 'third force', that is, a special military unit to cope with terrorist attacks. In addition, the government should announce a policy of no negotiations with terrorist, increase physical and procedural security, place legal limits on the ability of the media to report terrorist activities, introduce special and anti-terrorist legislation research, develop alternatives to hostage negotiation and develop and deploy highly intrusive technologies or pre-emptive moves. These suggestions are good but what if it is the government propagating terror activities? This study will address this concern, and also find out whether the above mentioned strategies and policies are feasible in Kenya. The foregoing discussion points that there is a gap as far curbing terrorism in Kenya is concerned.

Sponsors of Militia Groups

These are reported to be mostly the politicians who fund these groups. They have significant power and influence and as such are known to have their private militia groups to advance their political machinations. The members of these militia groups are mostly jobless youths who are vulnerable to political manipulation. Thus if these people are found and dealt with decisively the effects of terror would reduce.

Civil Administrators

This category includes law enforcers, who comprise the Regional Coordinators, County administrators, Officer in-charge of Police Division (OCPD), Chiefs and Sub-chiefs. They should be well trained and equipped on the intervention measures that the government is using to combat terrorism in the area.

Residents of the Estate

These are the masses, the base of the society. They are the people who have great understanding of the fear and suffering with which they must live, who intimately understand the politics of the given locale, and who know face to face the people who sponsor and fan terrorism. They also know the local leaders of the

government and the reasons behind the attacks. They should be sensitised and encouraged to leave together, know their neighbours and report any suspicious person living among them.

Private Security Personnel

These are basically the local vigilante groups that are sometimes formed to oversee security of the residents in a particular estate. Many times they are the ones who have first hand experience of terror atrocities when they are protecting the residents. They should be well trained and equipped but also monitored to make sure they do their job well to avoid some of them becoming perpetrators of terror instead of carrying the duty to protect the residents.

Leaders of Private Militia/ Terror Groups

These are the base commanders of the groups who co-ordinate their activities. As such, they have devised some ways of terrorizing people. They work in collaboration with the sponsors of these groups to lay targets of their attacks. These should be arrested and charged and rehabilitated back in the society if they reform.

II. CONCLUSION

In this paper we have discussed the impact of global terrorism on ethnic relations in Kenya. It has been found that, the nature and causes terrorist activities that are found in Kenya are similar to those found in global terrorism, the policies governing terrorism, ethnic and community relations are clear although terrorism has heavily impacted on creation of a vibrant civil society in Kenya. We have also come out with proposals on how the government can continue dealing with this issue of terrorism in addition to the great efforts that have seen this menace reduce in high levels. Thus for the government to effectively combat terrorism, continued clear and feasible measures are imperative that involve everybody in society.

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