

SOCIAL CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS RELATED
WITH VIOLENT RADICALIZATION OF
YOUTHS IN KENYA

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General Studies

by

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ABSTRACT

**SOCIAL CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS RELATED WITH VIOLENT
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pages.

This study examined the social-cultural and economic factors that permit the radicalization of youths in Kenya. The specific objectives of this study were to: explore the social factors that drive Kenyan youth to radicalization, establish the effects of cultural factors on their radicalization, and identify those economic factors that drive them into violent radicalization and subsequently to extremism.

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ACRONYMS

AS	Al-Shabaab
ICU	Islamic Court Union
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
UN	United Nations

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

In the twenty-first-century, the world has experienced a fresh upsurge of violent radicalism that has caused the death of an innumerable number of people hailing from diverse heritages, religions, and nationalities. The beginning of this era presented an increase of more than nine-times the incidences of death due to violent radicalism and terrorism, from 3,329 in 2000 to 32,685 in 2014.¹ The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) nations saw an increase from seventy-seven to 577 radical associated deaths for the period between 2014 and 2015. 2015 was similarly the most dangerous twelve-month period for a group called the Taliban from Afghanistan, where carnage involved both war crimes and combat.² Besides, countries like Pakistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Syria, and Afghanistan tallied 72 percent of the deaths associated with violent radicalization in 2015. The total number of countries that witnessed more than five hundred deaths has risen by 6 percent in 2014, an additional 120 percent from 2013. In Africa, due to the violent radicalization of youths, six

¹ Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), *Global Terrorism Index 2015: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism* (Sydney, Australia: Institute for Economics and Peace, 2015), 2, accessed 14 November 2019, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2015%20Global%20Terrorism%20Index%20Report_0_0.pdf.

² Ibid., 10.

countries, including, Nigeria, Central Africa Republic, Cameroon, Somalia, South Sudan, had experienced more than five hundred deaths during the same period.³

Scholars assert that Al Qaeda aims to motivate the nationals of Western countries to carry out personal Jihad initiatives in their respective countries. For example, Jenkins notes that documents found at Osama bin Laden's residence in Pakistan in 2011 revealed the Al Qaeda leader spent much time influencing his followers to conduct direct attacks on the United States and provided various techniques they may use.⁴ This provides an insight into the level of threat posed by homegrown violent jihadists. An investigation of homegrown, Muslim radicalization by Schanzer concluded that "domestic violence is serious, but with some degree of difficulty" for most African countries with minority Muslim populations.⁵

Concerning Kenya, homegrown radicalization is not prevalent among the majority of Kenyan Muslims, but it is localized to a small number of Muslims in northern and coastal areas of Kenya. Marc Sageman, a terrorist expert, asserts there is an international shift in extremism from consolidated units to decentralized ones, by self-radicalized, and independent, violent jihadists. Nonetheless, there seems to be a well thought out consensus that the threat of violent radicalization requires a deeper examination.

³ IEP, *Global Terrorism Index 2015*, 22.

⁴ Brian Michael Jenkins, *Stray Dogs, and Virtual Armies: Radicalization and Recruitment to Jihadist Terrorism in the United States since 9/11* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2011).

⁵ David Schanzer, Charles Kurzman, and Ebrahim Moosa, "Anti-Terror Lessons of Muslim-Americans," *New York Times*, 15 April 2010, 28.

After recent terror attacks, it is evident that the threat posed by radicalized Kenyan youths participating in homegrown violent terrorism exists and needs to be addressed.⁶ The magnitude of the threat cannot easily be quantified, but it is of grave concern. Security agencies must be ready to recognize and act on this rising and compounding threat. Efforts aimed at rolling back the gains made by radical groups are a critical sub-element of counter-extremism in Kenya that requires broad approaches. As a result, the shift of radicalization into violence is one that demands deeper research to create a widely accepted framework for understanding within the security structures.

The objective of this study is to present an overarching discourse on the determinants of violent extremism, how it develops, and how it is sustained in Kenya. The discussion will focus on how violent extremism is often characterized by assumptions and knowledge that veil the existence of factors that drive youths into violent radicalization, whose outcomes may inform the government on intervention measures and policies.

Social, Cultural, and Economic Context in Kenya

Kenya is an eastern Africa country with a population of 47.5 million people.⁷ Its neighbors are Tanzania to the south, Ethiopia to the north, South Sudan to the northwest,

⁶ Government of Kenya, Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, *National Tourism Strategy (2013-2018)* (Nairobi: Department of Tourism, Ministry of East Africa, Commerce and Tourism 2013), pp 13-38, accessed 14 November 2019, <https://www.coursehero.com/file/13287750/National-Tourism-Strategy-2013-2018/>.

⁷ Hellen Githaiga, "Kenya census 2019 data reveal population stands at 47.6m," *The East African*, 4 November 2019, accessed 13 January 2020, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/Kenya-population-soars-to-47-million-2019-census/4552908-5336048-7bv3toz/index.html>.

Uganda to the west, Somalia to the east, and the Indian Ocean to the southeast. It has a coastline totaling 1,420 kilometers. Kenya is divided into forty-seven administrative units called counties with over forty-five ethnic groups and cultures spread across the country. The most common religion in Kenya is Christianity, practiced by 80 percent of the population, Islam which is predominant at the Coastal and North Eastern regions at 12 percent, with the rest being Hinduism and traditional religious practices.



Figure 1. Kenya Counties

Source: Julie Kwach, “Kenya Counties: Know all the 47 Counties and their Governors,” Tuko, 2018, accessed 3 May 2020, <https://www.tuko.co.ke/261970-kenya-counties-know-47-counties-governors.html>.

Since Kenya attained its independence in 1963 from Britain, like many other developing countries in Africa, it has experienced numerous social and economic

challenges, such as youth unemployment, grand corruption, abject poverty, disease, ethnic animosities, marginalization of some areas, political and economic maladministration, among others. To address these challenges, Kenya embarked on a ten-year journey of reviewing its constitution which culminated in 2010 with a new constitution. The new constitution established two levels of governance: The National Government and the County Government. The purpose of this was to decentralize resources to the lowest level of the society to fight poverty and ignorance. The new constitution also introduced an expanded Bill of Rights that includes social, economic, cultural, and religious rights with a strong focus on the needs and entitlements of children, women, and youth.⁸

Compared to other East Africa countries, the Kenyan economy is more diverse and the largest with a gross domestic product of \$99,246 billion as of 2019 with a per capita gross domestic product of \$2,010, making it the sixty-second largest economy in the world and the strongest economy in East Africa.⁹ By 2018, Kenya had an average annual growth rate of 6 percent over the past ten years, classifying it as a middle-income country. However, despite its impressive annual economic growth, the gap between rich and poor continues to widen due to an unequal distribution of wealth. The country still

⁸ Pilar Domingo and Leni Wild, *Will Kenya's 2010 Constitution work for women and children?* Project Briefing 74 (London, UK: Overseas Development Institute, May 2012), 74.

⁹ Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), "Labour Force Basic Report: 2015/16 Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey," March 2018, 6, accessed 1 January 2020, <https://www.slideshare.net/simbagoma/kenya-integrated-household-budget-survey-201516-labour-force-basic-report>.

has a highly unequal society by income, gender, and geographical location. Poverty is at the highest rate in the arid and semi-arid areas that cover about 60 percent of the landmass, inhabited by about 20 percent of the population.¹⁰ Poverty is also prevalent in northeastern and coastal regions, which receives limited resources with an increasingly semi-illiterate population. Rapid population growth is another major challenge, further exacerbated by high unemployment rates, especially among women and the youth. It is estimated that more than 70 percent of Kenya's population is below the age of thirty, and those under the age of fourteen alone stands at 43 percent of the population. Besides, women and youth are the categories hardest hit by abject poverty, which makes them vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment of young Kenyan people and children into violent extremist groups like the Al-Shabaab.

Kenya has been a victim of terrorist attacks for over two decades. Some of the major attacks were 7 August 1998, when al-Qaida attacked the United States of America Embassy in Nairobi, killing 213 people, and on 28 November 2002, Al-Qaeda militants killed about 15 people in Mombasa following a targeted attack on Paradise Hotel owned and operated by an Israeli national. At the same time, the militants launched missiles attack on an Israeli chartered aircraft departing from the Mombasa Moi International Airport barely missing it. The investigations of the terrorists perpetrating those acts were traced into Somalia which has had no Government since 1991 following a coup. This state of lawlessness has created a haven for terrorists to hide, operate, and thrive among

¹⁰ African Institute for Development Policy, "East African Regional Analysis of Youth Demographics," May 2018, 4, accessed 1 February 2020, https://www.afidep.org/download/research-reports/18.06.2018-ReAYD_Web.pdf.

them being the Al-Shabaab which mutated from other terror groups like the ICU (Islamic Courts Union). Due to external support and lack of intervention for an extended period, the Al-Shabaab evolved into a formidable group that can conduct direct attacks on Kenyan soils, in northeastern and coastal regions. These attacks especially in the coastal region negatively affected the tourism industry and Kenya had to act. In October 2011, the then Kenyan President ordered the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) to cross over into Somalia with the sole purpose of degrading the Al-Shabaab terror group. Following the incursion, Al-Shabaab warned that it would retaliate by attacking Kenya and since then Kenya has witnessed numerous attacks some of the major ones being; Westgate Mall in Nairobi in September 2013 in which sixty-seven people were killed; Mpeketoni and Poromoko villages of Lamu County on 16 and 17 June 2014, where more than sixty people were killed; Mandera County on 22 November 2014, in which twenty-eight bus passengers were shot dead for not being able to recite the Koran; in Mandera County again on 2 December 2014, where thirty-six quarry workers were killed, Garissa University College where 148 students were killed on 2 April 2015; and the Nairobi Dusit 2 Luxury Hotel in which twenty-one people were killed on 15 January 2019.¹¹

Arrests and investigations carried out by the Kenyan security agencies have revealed that though most of the attacks that have happened in Kenya were planned, resourced, and coordinated in Somalia by the Al-Shabaab, the executing commanders and foot soldiers are Kenyan youths who have been recruited into the group. This is one of

¹¹ O. S. Odhiambo, Onkware Kennedy, and T. Leshan Maito, “Domestic Radicalisation in Kenya,” *Global Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences*, 4, no. 3 (2015): 48-56, accessed 27 November 2019, <https://www.longdom.org/articles/domestic-radicalisation-in-kenya.pdf>.

the features of the Al-Shabaab attacks inside Kenya, where they use Kenyans recruited from north-eastern and the coastal counties. The group has been adept at specifically recruiting Kenyan youths, by exploiting their perceived social, economic, political, and cultural grievances experienced by many Kenyan youth.

Problem Statement

Kenya, once known as a haven of peace before the 1998 US Embassy bomb attack, has become a target of terrorists, especially from the Somalia-based Al-Shabaab militant group.¹² This attack and more recent ones in Nairobi have been a matter of concern for the government, security forces, academicians, and other stakeholders that Kenya now faces a qualitatively different type of terrorism known as “new terrorism.”¹³ Scholars, such as Steven Buigut, Djesika Amendah, and Solomon Kinyanjui argue that for “new terrorism” to occur, terrorists first undergo a radicalization process before participating in terror activities.¹⁴ Most of them share similar ideologies, backgrounds, economic status, and social-cultural values.

¹² Victor Ongoma and Augustine Omondi Onyango, “A Review of the Future of Tourism in Coastal Kenya: The Challenges and Opportunities Posed by Climate Change,” *Journal of Earth Science and Climatic Change* 05, no. 07 (2014): 210.

¹³ “New terrorism” seems as terrorist cluster working worldwide, is more unpredicted, unsolidified, and separate, and then preceding terror assaults. New terrorism is managed by large self-running groups that function effectively by recruiting and training radicalized youth. The success of these groups is based on ideologies founded on ethnically and racially affinity with the original from the Al Qaida network.

¹⁴ Steven Buigut, “Effect of Terrorism on Demand for Tourism in Kenya: A Comparative Analysis, Tourism, and Hospitality Research,” *Tourism and Hospitality Research* 18, no. 1 (2014): 28-37, accessed 21 October 2019, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1467358415619670>; Steven Buigut and Djesika D. Amendah, “Effect of Terrorism on Demand for Tourism in Kenya, *Tourism Economics* 22, no. 5

Therefore, state safety agencies and all shareholders must be alert to the variety of communal cultural issues related to violent radicalization procedures that result in terrorism. On this foundation, this research will examine social cultural and economic issues connected to violent radicalization, specifically among young persons, and the possible preventive and deradicalization mechanisms.

Purpose of the Study

Kenya has since 2011 experienced numerous terrorist attacks especially in counties bordering Somalia, Nairobi, and Mombasa counties. The attacks are normally organized and executed by the Al-Shabaab terror group operating in the war-torn Somalia. The unique thing about the attacks is that the commanders and foot soldiers assigned the attack missions inside Kenya are Kenyan youths. These youth are mostly recruited from the coastal Kenya and counties bordering Somalia through some radical Muslim imams and preachers. To address the problem of terror attacks, it is imperative to understand the social, cultural, and economic factors that drive Kenyan youths to radicalization and subsequently recruitment into Al-Shabaab. Studies that have been done on the problem of terrorism in Kenya have majored in giving possible counter-terrorism measures/techniques and none have keenly looked at the root cause of the problem which starts with the radicalization of the Kenyan youth. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the social-cultural and economic factors that drive the Kenyan youths into violent radicalization.

(2015): 928-938, accessed 21 October 2019, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5367/te.2015.0467>; Solomon Kinyanjui, "The Impact of Terrorism on Foreign Direct Investment in Kenya," *International Journal of Business Administration* 5, no. 3 (2014): 148-157.

Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following research questions. The primary proposed research question for this study is, what are the social-cultural and economic factors related to violent radicalization among youth in Kenya? Secondary questions includes:

1. What social and cultural issues are related to violent radicalization among youth in Kenya?
2. What cultural issues are related to violent radicalization among youth in Kenya?
3. What is the association between economic status and violent radicalization among youth in Kenya?

Assumptions

The key assumption of this study is that there are adequate online testimonies or confessions of convicted, defectors, and suspected Jihadists, either from bloggers, government websites, non-governmental organizations (NGO), United Nations (UN) organizations, and scholars. The study also assumes that those testimonies will provide insights into the Jihadists' social, cultural, and economic status before radicalization and subsequent recruitment into the terrorist group. It is also assumed that organizations will continue to publish background information of Jihadists convicted of terrorism in Kenya and defectors who have reformed.

Definition of Terms

Cultural status refers to people's social placement within a culture. In this study, cultural issues will include religious beliefs.

Economic status is defined as individual economic measures such as education, income, and occupation

Jihadist refers to persons from Islamic militants convicted of terrorism activities

Social status refers to convicted terrorist social positions that entail his/her relationship with the community.

Terrorism is the use of force or violence against persons or property in violation of the criminal laws of a country for purposes of intimidation, coercion, or ransom.

Terrorist is a person who uses unlawful violence and intimidation, especially against civilians in the pursuit of political aims.

Violent radicalization is the process through which people adopt a philosophy that endorses violent resolution to real or perceived injustices. This acts as a way through which people advance radical convictions, such as aggression as a means of enabling a set belief relating to their environment.

Radicalization is a personal process in which individuals adopt extreme political, social, or religious ideals and aspirations, where the attainment of particular goals justifies the use of indiscriminate violence. It is both a mental and emotional process that prepares and motivates an individual to pursue violent behavior.¹⁵

Scope

This study will focus on radicalization through terror activities that have occurred from a Kenyan perspective. The study will focus on the social, cultural, and economic

¹⁵ Alex S. Wilner and Claire-Jehanne Dubouloz, “Homegrown Terrorism and Transformative Learning: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Understanding Radicalization,” *Global Change, Peace and Security* 22, no. 1 (2010): 38.

status of terrorists who have participated in terrorist activities in Kenya. Emphasis will be given to terrorists of Kenyan-Somali origin, and Kenyans from the coastal region where radicalization is more prevalent than in other regions in Kenya. The timeframe of this research is from 2000 through to the present day.

Delimitations

Some of the limitations the study is likely to experience is lack of information on radicalization, simply because radicalization is illegal and is conducted in secrecy and thus undocumented. There are also limited studies on radicalization in Kenya, specifically on social-cultural and economic factors that push youths to radicalization. The study faces challenges obtaining profile data of convicted terrorists' background status, which are classified and will not be available for use in this study. Finally, the study will heavily depend on published information from convicted terrorists and defectors, which might not be authenticated.

Significance of the Study

Most governments, especially the Kenyan government, recognize the threat caused by violent radicalization, which has caused deaths, destruction, and burden to many families. Though most of the governments have initiated many counter-terrorism efforts, the respective countries continue to experience threats from terrorists, which emanate from violent radicalization. As such, it is incredibly important to understand the fundamental causes of violent radicalization. In the past ten years, local and global approaches aimed at curbing terrorism have centered their attention on taking up an

integrated and advanced strategy to tackling violent radicalization and anarchy rather than employing hard power approaches.

Earlier, the development approach believed that ignorance and destitution were the contributing factors to cases of indoctrination. Several developed states pushed for increased funding and enlightening assistance as a way of curbing terrorism. Yet some researchers found the link tenuous. Therefore, the findings of this study will assist the government or counterterrorism agencies to identify the social, cultural, and economic factors that lead to violent radicalization. Mombasa County, which has been highly affected by violent radicalization, has many youths from different backgrounds. This study will provide information to the county government on which category of youth should be targeted when designing public awareness programs and mechanisms to mitigate radicalization

The study will also provide a significant counter-radicalization measure by documenting the social, economic, and cultural causes of violent radicalization. The findings from the study are beneficial to the community by creating awareness on what to be on the lookout for possible radicalized youth. In Kenya, few researches have been conducted on social-cultural and economic factors that lead people to violent radicalization and therefore significant gap concerning the process of violent radicalization exists. This study will, therefore, attempt to fill that gap using scholarly literature in determining social, economic, and cultural causes leading to violent radicalization.

Summary

The chapter highlighted the global burden and negative impacts of violent radicalization. It also provided a hypothetical link between social-cultural and economic factors and radicalization based on evidence from previous scholars and authors. Local trend of radicalization and terrorist activities and how they impact on the lives of Kenyans have also been brought forth in the background and statement of the problem. Finally, the chapter lays a foundation for chapter two which reviews literature based on objectives and purpose highlighted in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Violent Radicalization

Terrorism is a global challenge facing both developed and developing economies. The history of terrorism traces its roots and practice to the first-century, depending on how one defines it.¹⁶ Terrorism is as old as humans' readiness to use aggression to influence politics. From the Sicarii in the first-century to the modern-day, the effects of terrorist activities have been frightful and widespread.¹⁷ The increased style of mass killing has led to the spread of many write-ups, literature as well as periodicals to paint a clear picture of the severity related to extremism as well as the threat it presents.¹⁸

Violent radicalization is a process that in most cases leads up to violence by influencing people's philosophical inclination.¹⁹ This acts as the method through which

¹⁶ United Nations Development Programme, "Journey of young Africans into violent extremism marked by poverty and deprivation: UNDP," 7 September 2017, accessed 1 November 2019, <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/news/2017/09/07/vers-l-extremisme-violent-en-afrique/>.

¹⁷ John G. Horgan, Paul Gill, Noemie Bouhana, James Silver, and Emily Corner, *Across the universe? A comparative analysis of violent behavior and radicalization across three offender types with implications for criminal justice training and education* (Rockville, MD: National Criminal Justice Reference Service, June 2016), 24, accessed 3 November 2019, <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/249937.pdf>.

¹⁸ Guillaume Brie and Cécile Rambourg, *Radicalisation analyses scientifiques versus usage politique synthèse analytique* [Radicalization of scientific analyzes versus political use of analytical synthesis] (Agen, France: Interdisciplinary Center for Research Applied to the Prison Field, 2015), 43.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

people advance radical views, such as aggression, as a way of enabling a set belief relating to their environments. Fundamentally, radicalization influences how individuals imagine, adapt, and execute violent means in response to biases that they feel remain meted on them.²⁰ Neumann claims that it is important to recognize and understand the difference between radicals and the process of extremism that result in violence.²¹

Violent radicalization is the process through which people adopt a philosophy that endorses violent resolution to real or perceived injustices. It is a process that in most cases leads up to violence by influencing people's philosophical inclination.²² This acts as the method through which people advance radical convictions, such as aggression, as a way of enabling a set belief relating to their environments. Fundamentally, radicalization influences how individuals imagine, adapt, and execute violent means in response to biases that they feel remain meted on them.²³

Considered separately, radicalization might suggest the refusal to fit into some generally recognized and credited principles. Miller and Bartlett opine that due to this refusal, youths, to some extent, change their perceptions and views which may not be

²⁰ Michael Jensen, *Final Report: Empirical Assessment of Domestic Radicalization* (Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, December 2016), 27-32, accessed 12 November 2020, <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/250481.pdf>.

²¹ Peter R. Neumann, "The Trouble with Radicalization," *International Affairs* 89, no. 4 (2013): 873-893.

²² Brie and Rambourg, 35.

²³ Michael Jensen, *Final Report*, 27-32.

easily accepted by the society, thus resorting to aggression.²⁴ Contrary, the main character on the road to violent radicalization is the logic of disaffiliating from the social norms and essential philosophical elements/customs that result in an individual considering using violence on others that do not buy into their presumed rational philosophy. Crettiez shows that violent radicalization refers to the mixture of two distinctive personalities, taking on a philosophy that in the end formulates the foundation of how they imagine life and eventually form the basis of their reasoning and actions.

Crettiez proposes that radicalization is the persuasion in the use of violence to spread a specified worldwide dream.²⁵ Atran, therefore, concludes that violent radicalization is the moral adaption of using violence in support of a specified philosophy, political activity, or endeavor as a means of causing the communistic change of a specified setting.²⁶

Violent radicalization denotes the mix of a radical responsibility to a theorized explanation of the environment and the moral understanding that violence is a justified means of shielding beliefs. Individuals passively involved in practices of violent

²⁴ Jamie Bartlett and Carl Miller, "The Edge of Violence: Towards Telling the Difference Between Violent and Non-Violent Radicalization," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no. 1 (2012): 1-21, accessed 20 January 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2011.594923>.

²⁵ Xavier Crettiez, "Comprendre le processus et les 'routes' de la radicalization [Understanding the process and the 'routes' of radicalization]," in *The Mail of Mayors and Local Elected Officers, Prevention of Radicalization: Tools for Mayors* (Paris: Groupe Moniteur, 12 October 2015), 12, accessed 6 September 2019, <http://bit.ly/2e2F5vy>.

²⁶ Scott Atran, "The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism," *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (2006): 127-147.

radicalization are fundamentally convinced that the way of life, activity, or system of persuasion that they are attributed to is complete. Consequently, they might stimulate, empower, or enact practices, and stage acts of violence. Therefore, radicalization that results in aggression can never be reduced to a subject that is linked to the mental health of people who have been brainwashed.

Premises of Violent Indoctrination

The driving forces of violent radicalization are many and connected to religious, political, economic, and ideological facets. They involve and impact societies, circles, and persons at county, regional, state, and international levels. While violent indoctrination is a global concern, it excels and appeal to members through a combination of fanatic reasoning, and grievances that emanate from marginalization, lack of inclusion, bias, lack of employment opportunities, and clamor for self-determination by several communities.

Violent radicalization is the result of intricate social, political, and economic conditions, that transcends through the colonial period, the evolution of nation-states, and international systems that have resulted in undermining legacies or increased county and sub-county strains. The campaign for global civil liberties and gender impartiality that affected conventional norms has stirred up aggressive responses.

The choice to do away with the Sunni-dominated Iraqi Armed Forces, without alternative occupations or ethical re-incorporation in the state's new structure, left many skilled Iraqi troops and militia jobless and resentful. Several of these parties shifted to working for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) by providing them with military training. The gaps created by political powers within Libya have caused a rise of

varied lethal rebel groupings that are disrupting the security and stability of Libya as well as that of neighboring states. Disparity as a catalyst for violent radicalization has international as well as domestic facets. According to a report by Oxfam International, the world's 2,153 billionaires have more wealth than the 4.6 billion people who make up 60 percent of the planet's population.²⁷

In an internationally affiliated world, where information is widely accessible on the internet or through mainstream media, the issue of imbalance in the world stirs up aggressive controversy. At state and county levels, transverses imbalances (cultural, social, political, and economic) related to loss of individuality and ideas of prejudice that can carry on through generations are potential catalysts for indoctrination. The threat of aggressive controversy is aggravated when communities experience injustices across several frameworks in the form of political exclusion: unequal access to national and regional resources, social amenities, employment opportunities, land as well as cultural, religious, or ethnic prejudices.

Inequalities in social, cultural, and economic spheres have a tendency of grouping people together based on their status; political imbalances tend to bring elites together. Systems and structures adjust the above imbalances as well as imbalanced cultural standing and therefore need to be prioritized within communities with a variety of ethnic groups.

²⁷ OXFAM International, "World's Billionaires have more wealth than 4.6 billion people," 20 January 2020, accessed 18 March 2020, <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/worlds-billionaires-have-more-wealth-46-billion-people>.

When it comes to certain group cultures, joblessness and the continued lack of growth opportunities can lead to exclusion, frustration, and progressive indoctrination and violent radicalization. The number of young, skilled, and unemployed workforce population in the developing countries is on the rise and becoming a grave concern to governments grappling with security problems within and beyond their borders. Empirical information demonstrates that there is a linkage between aggression and wage disparity. Joblessness, therefore, offers possible premises for the rise and establishment of radical groups. According to a report on ISIS, the group offers US \$500 monthly salaries to its soldiers while Al-Shabaab offers \$200 per month. This is a lucrative offer to ignorant, rural individuals who lack skills and any form of employment. Nonetheless, the remuneration is not the only offer on the table. Jihadists from the West may obtain extra money from social programs within their states of origin.

Several elements attract persons into radical groups and the critical importance of economic needs cannot be understated. Restrictions of liberties and diminished communal space are thought to be the key driving forces of extremization and violence. Such has occurred in Caucasia and Central Asia as well as in the Middle East. The Arab Spring movements provided an avenue for many civilians to vent their issues and frustrations in most of the states, the issues were left unsolved as the movement fizzled out. In Egypt, avenues for social participation were closed following the 2013 combative revolt. Developing countries usually experience green civil societies that lack the skills of channeling issues of the masses into effective communication. More often in democratic societies where social space is guaranteed, ideologies of separation can be a driving factor for the public to abandon more free forums for engagement and either act in revolt

or be assimilated into other channels of similar mindsets. Persistent feeling of demoralization and frustration over a protracted period can lead to the majority, if not all, participants to violent indoctrination.

The relationship between joblessness, destitution, and the youth's mentality to participate in criminal activities is not direct. On the other hand, there is a strong linkage between violent criminal activities and realities or feelings of prejudice, extortion, and biasness from the system. People do not resort to violence because of their destitution, but because they are infuriated and bitter. Debates of prejudice arising from the increased number of corruption instances, which counts for local and international illegal cash transfers, and the protracted tolerance for corrupt cultures is the major driving forces of violence. This encourages the idea that aggressive action is acceptable when it is done to correct the imbalance and prejudice that arise from it. The singling out or profiling of specific groups or the entire community can also gradually encourage aggressive responses from the public.

Lack of sensitivity or singling out groups publicly, as well as at security check stations and ignorance in terms of socio-cultural fundamentals of marginalized communities, can be a contributing factor to such groups feeling oppressed. An example is in Kenya where radical aggression had become rampant because of security agencies profiling Muslims of Somali descent, an issue that was well known by the Kenyan government. On 2 April 2014, the security agencies launched a counter-terrorism operation in Nairobi Eastleigh Estate arresting over four thousand Muslims of Somali descent as they targeted undocumented foreigners. The detainees were caged at the Kasarani Stadium for over seven days. This was deemed as ethnic profiling, which

caused resentment and violence against the police by the entire Muslim community in Kenya, especially in Nairobi, Mombasa, and Northeastern Regions. Another major driving force for persons and communities to join violent radical sects is the meticulous security reaction to extremist groups.

Most violent radical groups present a different option from the collective idea of autonomy, free markets, and cultural diversity. The same idea was employed in the past, for instance, the German Baader-Meinhof Group or the Italian Red Brigades, undermining the current international order and most of the structures of the current situation of the country. The world's increasing economic gaps, where it is estimated that half of the world's resources are controlled by 1 percent of its population and the perception of prejudice that comes about due to this is seen in the acts of terrorists as a product of a system, both political and socio-economic that is infiltrated and bought into work in favor of a group of affluent and influential people

Comparatively, the idea supported by radical groups provides enlightenment and a sense of order with aggression and brutality as a tool for forcing the rest of the society to take up this idea. Therefore, they usually tend to suggest the need for a violent overthrow of an immoral and corrupt institution. This flawed thinking is seen to be acceptable to sects and persons of various ages, across all levels of income and individuality.

Discordance can lead to sentiments of bitterness and anxiety especially when certain privileges are withdrawal from a particular community or a people to be shared over a larger population, which may be diverse, in terms of language, race, faith, or tribe. The tendency to prolong the dominance of a particular group in comparison to the rest

can result in an aggressive radical behavior (for instance, in the United States, the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is one example of aggressive terrorism motivated by indoctrination). Radical violent reactions by the right-wing, super-patriots towards the settlement of displaced persons and vagabonds in the United States and European regions. This is encouraged by the unacceptance of diversity. Besides, radicals within different religions deny the diversity of religion. As such, while diversity is not a core issue, it can be when certain communities sense their wellbeing is threatened.

Shortcomings by a country in the provision of fundamental social services, needs, and safety encourages heightened injustices and also creates conditions that allow foreign ideas to influence national policies including the sole control of violence. There is evidence that lack of changes in the government, ineffective systems, poor law enforcement, and lack of accountability, when sustained for long, presents a conducive environment for violent radicalization to manifest. This also depends on the country's ability or inability to control the proliferation of arms and ammunition, and people and drug trafficking which are key sources of revenue for radical groups to finance their activities. For example, states characterized by political instability and weak defense creates a power vacuum that non-state actors exploit by providing security and social amenities. Weak countries offer safe havens and fortitude to terrorists and transnational organized criminal gangs thus offering easy means for their growth and establishment.

Effects of Violent Extremism

Violence obsession poses serious setbacks at the national and international scene, and these challenges autonomous leaderships and their conventional mechanisms of curbing violence and maintain peace. It calls on legislators and enforcers to be cognizant

of the complexities of such obsessions, most of which occur following major disruptions of the common order. Disagreements generated by violent fanaticism lead to displacement of a huge number of people. Activities by Boko Haram in Nigeria, for example, has resulted in the internal displacement of an estimated 1.2 million Nigerians, forcing more than two hundred thousand to seek refugee status in Niger, Cameroon, and Chad. Massive migration to European countries finds its roots at the dissension and related violent radical gangs taking control of weak countries like Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and Afghanistan. In the year 2015, among the 970,000 immigrants sailing through the Mediterranean into European countries, Syrians comprised 49 percent, Afghanistan national accounted for up to 21 percent while 8 percent were Iraqis. Besides, women and children accounted for 17 and 25 percent of the population respectively, while men comprised of 58 percent. Men constitute the majority of the violent radical fighters. Violent radicalism and the resultant displacements bear a robust gender element.

Violence, dehumanizing of individuals, and constant consumption of violent media products can heighten an individual's violent thinking and tendencies. Some studies illuminate negative outcomes on predisposed persons such as tyrannical young groups. The consistent interaction with violence is indeed a supportive element to a custom of violence that is capitalized upon by radical groups.

Influence of Social and Cultural Factors on Violent Radicalization

People find themselves drawn into extremism and violent groups through interacting processes that are stimulated by emotional, cognitive, and personal attributes. This personal attributes include attributes such as separation, seeking individuality and

decorum, seeking vengeance due to death of a relative, past oppression and containment, and the disintegration of communication between those in positions of authority and the young people through online communities, and mainstream and social media. These are critical catalysts of violent radicalism in both developed and developing countries cutting from the Somali Muslims in Kenya to Muslim minorities in Paris, Brussels, and Moscow, and discontented white radicals in the American heartland.²⁸

For example, according to Kruger and Malečková on whether there is any causal connection between education, poverty, and terrorism, they stated that “any linkage between poverty, education, and terrorist activity is implicit, complex, and will most likely fail.”²⁹ They however concluded that there is a correlation between extremism and poverty and without solid support or evidence of support could have dire consequences. Not only would the global community be pushed to withdraw their support for developing countries when the threat of terrorist activity reduces, but the promise of external support in the risk of terror attacks could create perverse incentives, inducing groups to engage in terrorism to receive more aid.

The foundational idea that relates terror attacks to poverty arose from the idea that poverty and the scarcity of prospects gave people little choice but to be initiated into

²⁸ Marc Sommers, *The Outcast Majority: War, Development, and Youth in Africa* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia, 2014), pp.227-239. Conventional explanations for why youth join armed groups often focus on employment or availability of opportunities. There is little systematic evidence for this. A very complex mix of factors tending towards a violent assertion of identity and search for self-respect and empowerment in a rapidly changing environment may provide a better explanation.

²⁹ Alan Krueger and Jitka Malečková, “Education, Poverty, Political Violence and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 17 no. 4 (2003): 119-144.

radical groups, or very close to becoming a criminal. Scholars however established that development and poverty were empirically unrelated determinants of whether people sacrificed themselves or joined radical groups. In a research program investigating involvement in Hezbollah in Lebanon, experts found that people with living standards above the poverty line or were educated to high school level and higher were linked to participation in Hezbollah.

According to Krueger and Malečková, a similar inference was arrived at with Palestinian suicide bombers.³⁰ The experts suggested that in many instances, terror attacks are not akin to property crime but a brutal form of political involvement. The focus is on a conceptual scope of violent radicalism. This difference singles out radical groups from several other forms of brutality and aggression. Scholars are convinced that the driving factor may be deeply connected to feelings of prejudice and discrimination. Research by Mercy Corps involving three states; Somalia, Colombia, and Afghanistan discovered that post-trauma and violent experiences at an early age were a significant contributor to participating in radical groups on an even higher scale than financial motivations.³¹ Some radical groups stem out of politics that evolves around identity and they generate their motivation on perceived injustices. The GTI report has identified two elements closely related to extremism: the presence of massive armed fighters, and

³⁰ Krueger and Malečková, “Education, Poverty, Political Violence and Terrorism,” 119-144.

³¹ Mercy Corps, “Does youth employment build stability? Evidence from an Impact Evaluation of Vocational Training in Afghanistan,” 17 February 2015, accessed 16 January 2020, <https://www.mercycorps.org/research-resources/youth-employment-stability>.

political brutality dispensed by a country.³² The relationship between the two elements is so strong that only less than 0.6 percent of all terror attacks that have happened in states have not experienced violence or any political strife.

According to Khalil and Zeuthen, there are different categories of driving factors of violent extremists: online extreme platforms; extremist mentors; structural motivators (state tyranny, unemployment); and individual incentives (social status, material acquisitions). They also suggest several CVE responses customized to tackle every incentive, for instance, capacity building and training, career mentorship, intercommunity forums, online communication initiatives, interfaith conversations, mentorship.³³ Krueger and Malečková, and Botha's study suggested that while education has no explicit connection to terror attacks across states, at a personal perspective quite many extremists are empowered and educated.³⁴

Based on Bhatia and Ghanem, research of the Northern and Middle Eastern African youths showed that persons with high school education who are jobless or in

³² IEP, *Global Terrorism Index 2015*, 31.

³³ James Khalil and Martine Zeuthen, *Countering Violent Extremism and Risk Reduction: A Guide to Programme Design and Evaluation*, Whitehall Report 2-16 (London, UK: Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, 2016), 1, accessed 12 October 2019, https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/20160608_cve_and_rr.combined.online4.pdf.

³⁴ Krueger and Malečková, "Education, Poverty, Political Violence and Terrorism," pg 27; Anneli Botha, *Assessing the vulnerability of Kenyan youths to radicalization and extremism*, no. 245 (Pretoria, South Africa: Institute for Security Studies, 2013), 28, accessed 22 February 2020, http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/bitstream/handle/11295/106706/Kakhuta-banda_Countering%20Terrorism%20Through%20Youth%20Deradicalisation%20in%20Africa.

unsatisfying professions are more vulnerable to being fanaticized.³⁵ Going by Stig Jarle Hansen's point of view, the categories of Al-Shabaab members comprised of jobless youth of Somali origin, Kenya Somali descent, and Kenyan Muslims mainly from the coastal region.³⁶

The *2016 Middle East North Africa Economic Monitor*, released by the World Bank investigated a text file from Daesh foreign soldier employees and concluded that a normal foreign soldier from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is more empowered as compared to other soldiers within their countries and states, and the dilemma could be as a result of the inability to get employment opportunities commensurate with their level of education, possibly played a great deal in brainwashing the soldiers.³⁷ Scholars contend that this is alarming because in some Arab states training and capacity building are growing and a huge number of fresh graduates are only limited to taking up underpaying jobs within the blue-collar job market. This issue goes beyond the borders of MENA states: generally, the standards and pertinence of training institutions in many upcoming states continues to be a challenge. Many children fail to

³⁵ Kartika Bhatia and Hafez Ghanem, *How do education and unemployment affect support for violent extremism? Evidence from Eight Arab Countries* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2017), 10, accessed 12 October 2019, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/global_20170322_violent-extremism.pdf.

³⁶ Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012* (New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 2013), 208.

³⁷ World Bank, *A New Economy for the Middle East and North Africa Region* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2018), 45, accessed 12 October 2019, <http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/file/Middle%20East%20and%20North%20Africa%20Economic%20Monitor.pdf>.

learn and those that do, fail to gain the necessary skills needed in a twenty-first-century international economy.

Unemployment among young people coupled with the high cost of living and inefficient social welfare programs has negatively influenced the ability to rise through ranks. It is however not poverty; it is the scarcity in prospects or socio-economics that has contributed to forming a front between the citizen and the government. High levels of bias and disproportions at the national level have been witnessed in terms of service delivery, development, and employment prospects thus contributing to the account of intentional alienation and the idea that the welfare of the top tier groups was being attended to while the rest were left unattended. Of importance as well is the role corruption and ethnicity play in driving the wheels of injustices and prejudice and the consequent emotions of frustration, oppression, and first-class supremacy this suggests.

These considerations find backing from a study on relative deprivation – the belief that when the dreams and disappointments of the youth meet, they push them in a difficult situation, thus resorting to other options to validate their capabilities and gain social recognition. Radical groups capitalize on such emotions in two ways: either by providing a job for them and hope for a better future or by selling ideologies on a political premise that is driven by fairness and integrity. In Nigeria studies on Boko Haram demonstrates the extent to which intolerance to discontentment with prejudice and corruption caused individuals who joined the group to feel “not Nigerian” and they chose

to identify with the group's doctrines instead of the state.³⁸ In Kenya, a secessionist group known as the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) which is also alleged to have been radicalizing young people at the coast on the premise that the region has been marginalized and the way out is secession. The group coined a slogan, "Pwani si Kenya," meaning the coastal region is not part of Kenya. Experts from Central Asia, including the Northern Caucasuses, have established a correlation between the attraction to Jihadism and the anger over extortion, defective governance, and infringement of freedoms.

Sen observed that character is a lively and non-static individuality which is resultant from numerous elements of an individual's reality. Matters associated with faith, gender, marital, economic status, means of support, political affiliations, and heritage are recognized. Murshed pointed out that there is an increased likelihood for an individual to be Muslim of Arab origin and a European national, accredit to autonomy and be a strong supporter of cohabitation with dissimilar cultures, economies, politics, social and spiritual privileges of others. As a result, this empowers one to integrate dissimilar values and opinions into one's character.

Siddique and Abbas assert that Western nations are in the lead of an effort to ensure children of Islamic origin are related better to their Islamic ways that guarantee

³⁸ Neven Bondokji, Leen Agrabi, and Kim Wilkinson, *Understanding Radicalisation: A Literature Review of Models and Drivers* (Amman, Jordan: West Asia-North Africa Institute, 2016), 15, accessed 2 November 2019, http://wanainstitute.org/sites/default/files/publications/Publication_UnderstandingRadicalisation_SecondEditionJuly2017.pdf.

their fundamental Muslim personality and fosters it.³⁹ This agrees with research conducted by McGregor and coworkers. The research offered that individuals respond to unrealistic situations by adapting their views which can be completely unappealing.⁴⁰ Spears, Christ, and Tausch points out that individuals normally investigate or conduct searches for information of the ideal religion to join and through these searches, they are likely to fall for an appealing violent and radical views of radical Islam available on the online platforms.⁴¹ Hogg, Meehan, and Farquharson point out that if an individual is not certain about some given issues within their lifetime, they are prone to becoming victims of extreme thoughts as well as sects.⁴² The purpose herein, therefore, is the need for a complete understanding of such brainwashing philosophies consequential to the absence of knowledge or certainty. Hogg asserts that having knowledge and certainty of Islam offer decent and flawless laws with unmistakable perception, to those joining aggressive

³⁹ Tahir Abbas and Assma Siddique, "Perceptions of the Processes of Radicalisation and De-Radicalisation among British South Asian Muslims in a Post-Industrial City," *Social Identities* 18, no. 1 (September 2011): 119-134.

⁴⁰ Ian McGregor, Mark P. Zanna, John G. Holmes, and Steven J. Spencer, "Compensatory Conviction in the Face of Personal Uncertainty: Going to Extremes and Being Oneself," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 80, no. 3 (2001): 472.

⁴¹ Nicole Tausch, Russell Spears, and Oliver Christ, "Religious and national identity as predictors of attitudes towards the 7/7 bombings among British Muslims: An analysis of UK opinion poll data," *Revue Internationale de Psychologie Sociale* 22, no. 3 (January 2010): 103-126.

⁴² Michael A. Hogg, Christie Meehan, and Jayne Farquharson, "The Solace of Radicalism: Self-Uncertainty and Group Identification in the Face of Threat," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 46, no. 6 (2010): 1061-1066.

radical groups.⁴³ This knowledge and certainty is an easy way of breaking free of implausibility in Muslims living in Western countries that fight with disaster in their reality.

Daesh infers that indeed some perpetrators of violence are driven by their religious obligations. A survey done on ex-combatants by the West Asia Institute established that some individuals fulfill their religious responsibility by participating in jihad. Similarly, studies done on jihadists in Europe, Saudi Arabia, and Salafi by Hegghammer, al-Harby, and Abu Rumman revealed that spiritual dogmas were a key contributor to influencing practices and devotion.⁴⁴ For many, spiritual dogmas act as a motivating factor. Whether they are responding to an injustice when looking for social recognition or going after the end prize, people require space or a forum for voicing their problems.

The religious dogma described by Daesh leads to jihad which is a system for avenging offenses meted against Muslims, or for defying the alienation caused by one's welfare. In the same way, it provides an attractive and clear interpretation for those in

⁴³ Michael A. Hogg, "Subjective Uncertainty Reduction through Self-Categorization: A Motivational Theory of Social Identity Processes," *European Review of Social Psychology* 11, no. 1 (2000): 223-255.

⁴⁴ Alaa' al-Rawashdeh and Ali al-Harby, "Ideological Extremism from the Perspective of Jordanian Youth," *Arab Journal for Security Studies and Training* 31 (2015): 111; Alial-Harby, "Perceptions of Saudi Youth Towards Ideological Extremism: A Sociological Study on a Sample of Students at Al-Qaseem University" (Master's thesis, University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan, 2011), pp 5-30. Another is a study by Hegghammer that found ideological and political drivers were more significant than socio-economic factors in the al-Qaeda recruits is Thomas Hegghammer, "Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalization in Saudi Arabia," *Middle East Policy Winter* 13, no. 4 (2006): 39-60.

search of savings, experience, or income. Therefore, despite an individual's drive being specific to a situation, the collective ideal of notions like "jihad" and "martyrdom" offers a way out.⁴⁵ It also brings reason to the findings that violent extremists in most cases possess little knowledge of Islam, and have low morals. Recent research and studies on former fighters who return after being offered better opportunities indicate that majority renounce violent extremism (something that is unlikely to happen in the religiously indoctrinated).⁴⁶

While faith and spiritual figures have a significant influence in certain situations of indoctrination, it is not determined whether their impact is contributory. However, they tend to cause change by recruiting persons to extremist concepts and advocating for violence aimed at ending lives.

Economic Factors Influencing Violent Radicalization

Another factor attributed to violent extremism is poverty. Financial deficiency formulates a section of Ted Gurr's relative deficiency theory.⁴⁷ Feddes, Mann, and Doosje indicate that Gurr depicts relative deficiency as an individual's belief of failure to

⁴⁵ Jonathan Russell and Haras Rafiq, *Countering Islamist Extremist Narratives: A Strategic Briefing* (London, UK: Quilliam, 2016), accessed 21 November 2019, <https://www.quilliaminternational.com/countering-islamist-extremist-narratives-a-strategic-briefing/>.

⁴⁶ Bondokji, Agrabi, and Wilkinson, *Understanding Radicalisation*, 20.

⁴⁷ Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), 416-420.

receive what is deserved.⁴⁸ The term transcends beyond the individual's belief to one's society or community as being marginalized compared to others. According to Gurr, such a kind of collective changeability results in discontentment, and the use of violence is perceived as the best option of resolving the problem of relative deficiency both at individual and community levels.

Freytag and others propose that financial basics certainly contribute to radicalism. A study by Search for Common Ground in Nigeria discovered that material incentives were a much stronger motivation compared to faith to those who were joining Boko Haram. Similarly, young people from poorly resourced boarding learning institutions were much more likely to be influenced to join the group. A similar situation was witnessed in central Asia where the incentives of secure employment and financial repatriation is the most crucial factor in trapping youths into the Syrian war.⁴⁹ The same fact was established in Jordan, the state that initially rejected the hypothesis that suggested radicalization is driven by a lack of basic rights. It was established that monetary remuneration was a key driver to joining radical groups.

⁴⁸ Allard R. Feddes, Liesbeth Mann, and Bertjan Doosje, "Increasing Self-Esteem and Empathy to Prevent Violent Radicalization: A Longitudinal Quantitative Evaluation of a Resilience Training Focused on Adolescents with a Dual Identity," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 45, no. 7 (October 2015): 4.

⁴⁹ Noah Tucker, *Central Asian Involvement in the Conflicts in Syria and Iraq: Drivers and Responses* (Arlington, VA: Management Systems International and USAID, 2015), iii, in *Understanding Radicalization: A Literature Review of Models and Drivers*, ed. Neven Bondokji, Leen Agrabi, and Kim Wilkinson (Amman, Jordan: West Asia-North Africa Institute, 2016, 15, accessed 7 November 2019, http://wanainstitute.org/sites/default/files/publications/Publication_UnderstandingRadicalisation_SecondEditionJuly2017.pdf. See also Mercy Corps, "Gifts and Graft," 2016, and "Thought Leadership on Youth and Conflict," 2017.

While working with ex-militia, the West Asia-North Africa (WANA) Institute inferred that each participant sheds light on how tough living standards, financial difficulties, joblessness or low wages, and job insecurity are a steering force to their problems.

Most people seek incentives that may come in the form of social class, affluence, or marriage. This is particularly important in Arab customs, where being able to provide is a prerequisite for being a grown-up, more especially a strong point to being manly and strong, where wealth and assets give one a name and reverence. Compensation as a driving force has been linked to individuals without upward social mobility as well as those who are frequently alienated by their families. Disinformation is also a contributor to such situations. Extremist groups advance that the marginalized so seek to own (marriage, jobs, and wealth) in addition to creating a story of gallantry by centering attention to their successes and wins while at war. In so doing, they lure young people to be part of the “succeeding group,” consequently shedding light on the inadequacy of their governance in addition to comparing the lives of members before and after joining them.

Theoretical Framework

The model that will be used in comprehending the issues that push people into radicalism will be the comparative deprivation model. Gurr declares that the concept of relative deprivation refers to a disparity or a gap of well-being that exists between what one has and what one expects, and this disparity results in a shared discontent.⁵⁰ This model likewise offers a clarification on individuals who find out their welfare to be below

⁵⁰ Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, 416-420.

normal levels as compared to that of others. Gurr asserts that relative deficiency suggests this discontent or frustration crops up from a prevailing disparity between what is anticipated as well as that which is achieved within the shared worth fulfillment.⁵¹

The model holds that how people assess their circumstances dependent upon whom they compare themselves to.⁵² According to the model, comparisons are the key elements by which people arrive at assessments of their situation. As such relative deprivation was an extension of reference group theory, which presumes that people relate their economic, intellectual, social, and cultural attainments to those attained by their colleagues in the reference group, except that by introducing the idea of deprivation, it focused explicitly on group disadvantages rather than more neutral reference group comparisons.

Relative deprivation studies assess the dissatisfaction people experience when they compare their socio-economic position, measured by income, expenditure, or other factors of perceived economic welfare, with that of their privileged colleagues and discern that their colleagues own something that they do not have.⁵³ For example, studies assess relative deprivation as the variance between the earning of a lower status person

⁵¹ Ibid., 416-420.

⁵² Anthony Giddens and Simon Griffiths, *Sociology* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2008), 762, 727.

⁵³ Paolo Verme, *Happiness, Deprivation, and the Alter Ego*, ECINEQ Working Paper No. 155 (Palma de Mallorca, Spain: Society for the Study of Economic Inequality, 2010), 1-4.

and the earning of a well to do colleague. Relative deprivation increases with the income of any higher income earner or with the number of higher-income earners.⁵⁴

Pettigrew further highlights how the core thrust of relative deprivation is that individual responses are often varied from those that are expected of the macro category. For example, while macro-level high unemployment may instigate protest participation, unemployed individuals may be less likely to engage in protest activism.⁵⁵

According to the theory of relative deprivation, an individual's objective status in a social setting instigates an interpersonal comparison between the individual and similar other persons. If the individual deduces that the other persons are better off and that the disadvantage is undeserved, he is likely to respond with anger and resentment, which in turn instigates aggressive action.⁵⁶ Perhaps as a result, there is a negative relationship between objective measures of social status (education and income) and hostile inclinations.⁵⁷ The impact of relative deprivation on attitudes and behavior might be from

⁵⁴ Shlomo Yitzhaki, "Relative deprivation and the Gini coefficient," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 93, no. 2 (1979): 321-324.

⁵⁵ Thomas F. Pettigrew, "In Pursuit of Three Theories: Authoritarianism, Relative Deprivation, and Intergroup Contact," *Annual Review of Psychology* 67, no. 1 (April 2016): 1-21.

⁵⁶ Heather J. Smith and Thomas F. Pettigrew, "The Subjective Interpretation of Inequality: A Model of the Relative Deprivation Experience," *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 8, no. 12 (2014): 8.

⁵⁷ Linda C. Gallo and Karen A. Matthews, "Understanding the Association between Socioeconomic Status and Physical Health: Do Negative Emotions Play a Role?," *Psychological Bulletin* 129, no. 1 (2003): 10-51.

some cultures and values where inequitable distributions of power and status are not accepted and expected.⁵⁸

Gurr claims the actual dissimilarity that exists between anticipation and capabilities is as the result of discontent, and not the power of the rich. Additionally, Gurr shows that the main factor of the capabilities for violence is the frustration-aggression tool. Gurr was not the first one to come up with the idea of relative deficiency and the link that appears to exist between frustration and violence. Other researchers have similar proposals of the theory connecting frustration to violence in people. Therefore, bitterness is consequential to relative deficiency, and terrorism is an indicator of the developing hostility.⁵⁹

Chapter Summary

The chapter reviewed previous studies and articles related to violent racialization and documented relationship between social, cultural, economic factors, and violent radicalization. Various definitions of violent racialization and its premises were presented in this chapter. Further, the chapter intensively reviewed the effect of violent extremist on the society. Finally, the chapter introduced the relative-deprivation model as the study's theoretical framework which forms the basis of the next chapter on methodologies.

⁵⁸ Geert Hofstede, *Culture's consequence: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2001.

⁵⁹ Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, 416-420.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Philosophy

According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, research philosophy can be summed up as a rationale on how data can be collected, processed, and presented to respond to the study questions.⁶⁰ Research philosophy can widely be classified into positivist and anti-positivist.⁶¹ Based on the theoretical perspective of this study, the Interpretivism approach was adopted. Researchers believe that the interpretive/constructivist paradigm predominantly uses qualitative methods.⁶² Willis contends that “interpretivism favors qualitative methods, such as case studies and ethnography reports which help interpretivism to fully understand contexts.”⁶³ Consistent with Willis’s ideas, Thomas asserts that qualitative methods are usually supported by interpretivism because the interpretive paradigm “portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever-changing.”⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, and Adrian Thornhill, *Research Methods for Business Students* (Paris, France: Pearson Education, 2009).

⁶¹ Donald R. Cooper and Pamela S. Schindler, *Business Research Methods*, 10th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill Education, 2008), 28-47.

⁶² Melanie Nind and Liz Todd, “Prospects for Educational Research,” *International Journal of Research and Method in Education* 1, no. 34 (2011): 1-2.

⁶³ J. W. Willis, *Foundations of Qualitative Research: Interpretive and Critical Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007), 90.

⁶⁴ R. Murray Thomas, *Blending Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods in Theses and Dissertations* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2003), 3-44.

The above assessment by scholars has broadened the understanding of the link between interpretivism and qualitative methods. Following the nature of the interpretive paradigm, the study researched to elaborate and explore social-cultural and economic factors related to the violent radicalization of youths. This was examined based on the understanding and experiences of one group through a series of documented interviews and testimonies.

Research Design

Research design is described as the foundation for examining a study in which high levels of control are exercised to minimize errors from elements that interfere or ensure the validity of the research results.⁶⁵ The research design is an outline of collecting, estimation, and investigation of information.⁶⁶ This research adopted the descriptive research design because it allows the collection of large amounts of data to provide detailed information on the study problem. The design allows researchers to collect original data intended to describe a large population.

Mugenda and Mugenda argues that the focus of the descriptive case study is to ensure that results obtained from field research are a true reflection of the actual setting where the research was conducted.⁶⁷ Yin defines descriptive research design as “a type of

⁶⁵ Denise Polit-OHara and Bernadette P. Hungler, *Nursing Research: Principles and Methods* (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, 1999), 416-417.

⁶⁶ Cooper and Schindler, *Business Research Methods*, 170.

⁶⁷ Olive M. Mugenda and Abel G. Mugenda, *Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Nairobi, Kenya: Acts Press, 1999), 4-6.

case study used to describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred.”⁶⁸

The use of this descriptive research design was appropriate for the study because the purpose of the study was to explore the social-cultural and economic factors related to the violent radicalization of youth in Kenya. The design’s focus was on radicalized youth real-life experiences in their voices and those of others.

Documented in-depth interviews from radicalized youth done by government agencies, NGOs, bloggers, and preceding research work and studies were used to gather data between 2010 and 2019. The study employed a multiple-case report, carrying multiple narratives in the form of individual testimonies to ensure that individual cases were presented as distinct chapters. This design was also adopted because the study was based on a systematic review as per the handbook by Cochran.

The study used data from the population comprised of jailed, defectors, or suspected jihadists. The study consisted of a literature search from published sources and reviews of police sources of terrorists’ confessions. The research also conducted a background analysis of jailed jihadists and defectors, especially on their social-cultural and economic status.

Data Collection Extractions

The study used both purposive and random sampling techniques. Data were independently extracted from published and unpublished sources, using content analysis

⁶⁸ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003), 282.

and structured documentary guides. All the information gathered was characterized in agreement with the basis on which they were given. For each precise purpose of the research, data was collected from the review of the work; each aim of the research was handled using different bases of data or mixtures of sources of information.

Data Management and Analysis

Biases, reliability, and validity of the data was managed by re-examining the report and using government, and internationally recognized bodies such as UNDP, police reports, among others. Further, trial research was carried out before the main research. The study also used a combination of professional views, collected words searches were used to advance the content, and face legitimacy. Analysis of the information collected in this study was done thematically. Thematic analysis is a product of intensive examination from where the researcher constructs themes and sub-themes emerging from the questions. Because qualitative data gathers a huge amount of data, the study ensured that each piece of data collected on either daily or weekly basis was sorted and thereafter categorized as per the themes, which had been generated from the research questions. Besides, published interviews of terrorists from bloggers and counter-terror websites sources such as the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, Kenya Anti-terrorism Police Unit (ATPU), and Kenya National Center for Counter-Terrorism were also transcribed weekly to avoid the accumulation of notes. This made it easier to connect data with the literature while presenting the findings. On the other hand, the study also employed the use of simple quantitative research, in determining the numbers and percentages of the participants. The thematic framework is provided in figure 2.

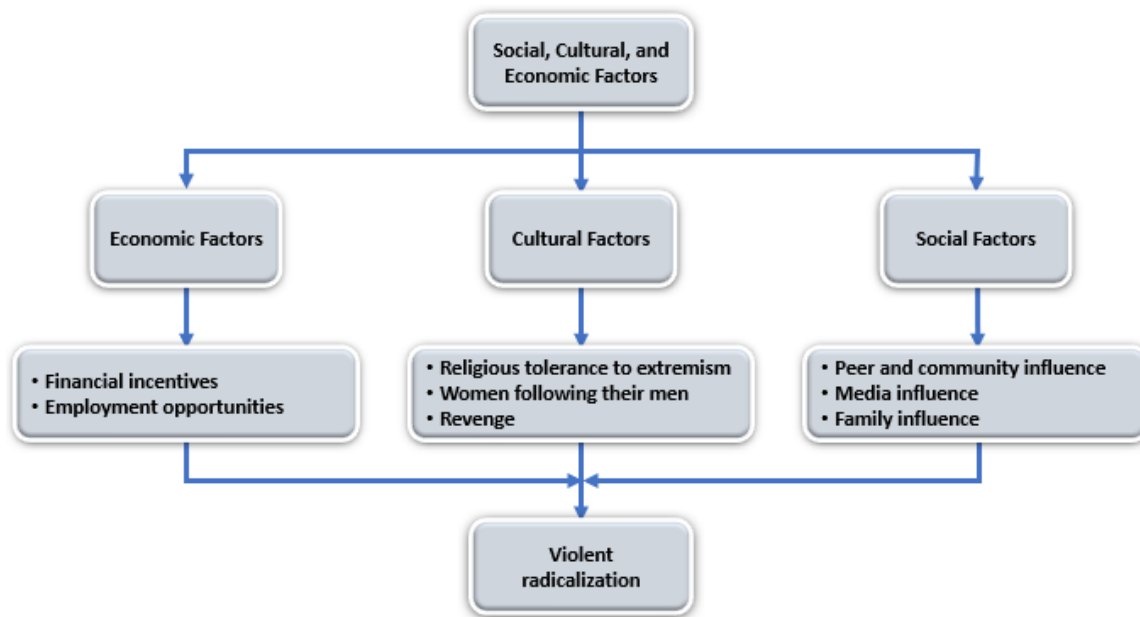


Figure 2. Thematic Framework

Source: Created by author.

The study is in line with Gurr's relative deprivation model as criteria for data collections and analysis. Based on the theory, the criteria used for data collections were based on published social-cultural and economic backgrounds, values, and information relating to Jihadist and reformed Al-Shabaab members. Economic factors were categorized into two factors: financial incentives and employment opportunities. Cultural factors were categorized into three factors which include religious tolerance to extremism, women following their men and revenge while social factors were categorized into peer and community influence, media influence, and family influences. These factors were chosen because they best fit in the current situation in Kenya and enough data is available for analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The information gathered from the study was treated as reliable and trustworthy and all references to other author's works duly acknowledged to avoid plagiarism.

Chapter Summary

The Chapter laid out a clear approach regarding the research design, target population, sample selection and size, research instruments, the validity and reliability of the research instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques. It provided a means through which the how question of this study is answered. The criteria used for data collections were based on published social-cultural and economic backgrounds, values, and information relating to Jihadist and reformed Al-Shabaab members. Economic factors were categorized into two factors: financial incentives and employment opportunities. Cultural factors were categorized into three factors which include religious tolerance to extremism, women following their men and revenge while social factors were categorized into peer and community influence, media influence, and family influences.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Introduction

Chapter 4 presents and analyzes the data collected during the study to answer the primary and secondary questions. The data used to answer the primary research question and the secondary questions were analyzed using the chosen methodology.

The idea of Islamic radicalization arises from a population that is pronounced by significant variations in terms of education, family background, social-cultural status as well as income status. Recent scholarly reviews evidence that these factors cut across all radical groups. Various sets of behaviors and causes of radicalization are not clear indicators as to whether one is susceptible to radicalization or becoming an extremist, the likelihood of an individual actively participating in acts of violent extremism in the future, or their ability to separate themselves before they commit any form of terror violence. Consequently, one of the main objectives of this study was to identify the relationship between social-cultural and economic factors and the violent radicalization of youth in Kenya.

Violent radicalization is a threat to communities, especially in Kenya and East Africa, and gaining a deeper understanding of what entails radicalization is critical in addressing this serious problem. Although radicalization mostly happens within different religious and ethnic settings, the purpose of this section will focus on the root causes of radicalization, especially among youths in the coastal counties of Lamu, Kilifi, Mombasa, and Kwale. The analysis focuses on establishing determinants and drivers of radicalization based on the existing scholarly literature. Although this chapter presents a

summary of the latest scholarly publications on radicalization, it is worthy to note that studies concerning radicalization are still new and evolving. In addition, the grouping of factors that result in violent radicalization may be different at the individual and group levels. Gaps in the available scholarly studies will be highlighted as an indicator of the need to conduct further studies on this topic in the future.

Sample Characteristics

The study reviewed seventeen documented confessions and interviews from Al-Shabaab members who were jailed and reformed or defected from the group. The study accessed published data of two jailed, suspected Al Shabaab members (Abu Paul and Abu Abdulsamad), who are still in the Kenyan Kamiti Maximum Security Prison awaiting sentencing. Besides, data on fourteen reformed Al-Shabab members were also accessed (Musa, Aisha, Joseph, Salman Al Muhajir, Abdirahim Abdullahi, Saleh, Abu Layth, Jermaine Grant, Jeffrey, Asmina, William, Sussane, Thomas, and Naysi). The study also managed to obtain data on Samantha Louise Lewthwaite, a British woman also known as the White Widow, who is one of the most-wanted terror suspects by Western countries and Kenya. In total, the study used published data for seventeen jailed or reformed Al-Shabaab-affiliated suspects. Most of the targeted individuals were Al-Shabab members, male, of ages ranging between 16-25 years. Their educational backgrounds varied from primary school dropouts to university levels.

Relationship Between Social Factors and Violent Radicalization Among Youth in Kenya

Religious orientation, family structure and history, ethnicity, education, customs, and governance are social elements that can cause significant changes in the sociological

status of individuals or society. Social related factors are important attitudes-influencers for the readiness of the vulnerable individuals to engage in radicalization and violent extremism. Scholarly writings on this topic found that individuals actively taking part in terror activities present varied social demographics perspectives. This is key, not only in the current acts of Islamic extremism but also in acts of violence taking place throughout the East Africa countries.

The extremists responsible for the Westgate shopping mall attack in 2013 and the Garissa University attack in 2015 were different in their origins, cultural demographics, education level, assimilation into the Somali and Muslim culture, family status, and history of criminal acts. The same was true for those indicted in Kenya for crimes associated with Islamic extremism in the past years. Convicted terrorists started at some point with violent radicalization that eventually led them to actively participate in terror acts.

This evidence highlights existing differences in violent radicalization. This proof resulted in many scholars on radicalization arriving at two deductions. Establishing profiles of potential extremists based on populations affected by violent radicalization activities is not an effective strategy. It is pointless to develop an approach to mitigate radicalization activities into violent extremism because no one measure can address all concerns.

Peer and Community Influence

According to studies, some youths in Kenya radicalize due to peer pressure and community influence. A study by Botha of ninety-five al-Shabaab-associated individuals in the Coastal region of Kenya identified friends as the most active players in introducing

their peers to al-Shabaab recruitment.⁶⁹ Social networks are important, where individuals trust one another in a highly surveilled environment. New-comers to the radical groups are recruited through social networks of which they must first go through a gatekeeper.⁷⁰ A gatekeeper is the person in contact with terror organizations like Al-Shabaab with the capacity to provide skills, training, and resources to carry out terrorist acts. Gatekeepers in this system are often friends, family members, imams, preachers, or madrasa teachers.

In this sample, peer and community influence played a major role. Half of the sample cited that the key influencers in their decision to join Al-Shabaab were friends who had already joined the group and in Somalia. Two women had spouses who were members of the group. A stranger on the Internet recruited one with whom she had fallen in love with. Two cited influence from community members. Six were indoctrinated into the militant jihadi ideology in their local mosques before seeking a way to join the group. In most cases, the radical imams were careful not to directly be the facilitators but did facilitate contacts with those who arranged travel and brought recruits into al-Shabaab.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Botha, *Assessing the Vulnerability of Kenyan youths*, 14-17.

⁷⁰ Michael Taarnby, "Recruitment of Islamist Terrorists in Europe: Trends and Perspectives" (Aarhus, Denmark: University of Aarhus, 2005), accessed 23 November 2019, <https://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/testimony/58.pdf>.

⁷¹ Nyamori Moses, "Al-Shabaab Now Recruiting in Rift Valley, Nyanza and Western Kenya," Standard Digital, 15 April 2016, accessed 15 February 2020, <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000198278/al-Shabaab-nowrecruiting-in-rift-valley-Nyanza-and-Western-Kenya>.

Abu Paul

Twenty-three-year-old Abu Paul, who joined al-Shabaab in 2008 at age 14, stated, that “The first time I heard of jihad I was in the mosque, through the sheiks. They used to say Somalia is going through a jihad. The sheiks would organize the travel to Somalia in groups of two to three.”⁷² Due to his failures and self-isolation from his parents and family, Abu Shaheed joined Al-Shabaab through the undue influence of a jihadi preacher. But it was also peering influence that drove him to go to Somalia: “So, a lot of my friends crossed over, until we were just two of us left in our group.”⁷³ He added, “They were just disappearing like birds. I no longer had friends left. There was no information about their whereabouts. We just knew that they had gone. Then a few weeks later we would hear “our friend made it.” [The next would say,] I also will be leaving next week. That’s how we knew. [Eventually,] we also sought a way to go.” Abu Shaheed explained that each small group found their way to cross over to Somalia: “The method or mode of moving one recruit wouldn’t be the same as that the others previously used. Sometimes we would hear that the route that worked last time is now closed.”⁷⁴

⁷² Anne Speckhard and Ardian Shajkovci, “The Jihad in Kenya: Understanding Al-Shabaab Recruitment and Terrorist Activity inside Kenya—in Their Own Words,” *African Security* 12, no. 1 (February 2019): 15.

⁷³ Ibid., 16.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 18.

Musa

Musa primarily joined the Al Shabaab to gain employment and take care of his widowed mother. He had also been ideologically and religiously indoctrinated to believe that he should move to a country governed by shariah law. He blames peer pressure.

“There was also intense pressure from friends of, ‘let’s go, let’s go.’”⁷⁵

Being young and naïve, Musa and the two friends with whom he traveled, did not expect that they would be forced to become Al Shabaab fighters. Yet he was not completely naïve. “For me, of course, I knew you can’t go to Somalia to just sit and drink water, what I did not know was that I was being taken there to be a fighter. I had convinced others to convert to Islam. I was going to be a *Dawah* preacher”⁷⁶

Media Influence

The internet provides important opportunities for the realization of the developmental goals within the global development agenda. It also helps in the attainment of the global human rights objectives that comprise access to information, freedom of expression, and privacy on the internet. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) identifies and acknowledges that lack of oversight on the use of the internet and internet-related resources creates an avenue which, in most cases, is risky to young people all over the world. In this regard, UNESCO endeavors to enhance the level of awareness through stakeholders by

⁷⁵ Speckhard and Shajkovci, “The Jihad in Kenya,” 18.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 19.

promoting discussions, reflection, and finding solutions to address the negative consequences of the unregulated use of the internet as well as promote the uptake of positive benefits of this vital resource.⁷⁷

A section of these efforts comprises examining internet-related phenomena, establishing their change in various regions, their application, and influence across various users and communities. With such an understanding that is based on empirical evidence, effective policy development can be created to promote efforts aimed at the achievement of global goals. It is often believed that the internet and social media play a huge role in radicalizing young people rather than being a source of positive evolution.

Aisha

From the study data collected, for instance, Aisha, who had gotten pregnant and dropped out of high school to marry, was devastated when she caught her husband in bed with her best friend. Leaving her baby with her mother, Aisha fled to the Gulf region, where she got a job as a domestic worker. While there, due to loneliness and nostalgia, she turned to the Internet to look for friends. Having converted to Islam while in high school she was naive about the religion and became impressed by the conservative Islamic practices of the Gulf region.

On Facebook, Aisha expressed admiration for a covered ISIS woman and was immediately invited into a closed WhatsApp group for ISIS and al-Shabaab and joined the same on Twitter. Through the platforms, she was heavily indoctrinated and ultimately

⁷⁷ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, “Youth and the Internet: Fighting Radicalization and Extremism,” 2015, accessed 15 March 2020, <http://en.unesco.org/youth-and-internet-fighting-radicalization-and-extremism>.

met an Indian national through the same platform, who, although married, expressed his desire to marry her. After a period of online communication, the two decided to travel to Syria and Iraq to fight jihad and “martyr” themselves or to be “martyred” elsewhere. The heartbroken and rejected Aisha, was “taken in” by the Indian man who made her believe that fighting jihad and martyrdom was her true calling as a Muslim. She also was indoctrinated to hate non-Muslims.

Interestingly, all of Aisha’s recruitment was online. She never met anyone from the WhatsApp groups or her recruiter/lover in person. “I was in love with him,” Aisha explained. “He was married. I wanted to be married to him. What I liked, he also liked it. He said we would go to Iraq, marry, fight together, and go to Jannah together. Sunni Muslims have long beards. I love bearded men. We used to call them lions. It was a Sunnah [saying] of the Prophet. I thought we will go, fight together, and die together. By then if a woman wanted to become a mujahida (female warrior), her main dream to have a man beside her. “You cannot not be a lioness unless you have a lion beside you.”⁷⁸

Indeed, Aisha seemed to have been trying to heal her broken heart and loneliness as well as vent out her anger and frustration by finding a new partner, pursuing jihad, and opting out of this life with him and moving together to the next life, where she hoped things would be better. The relationships that Aisha was drawing her nurture from, were entirely online, through social media, and were leading her to self-destruction. Even with her online lover, Aisha made it into a fantasy of going to Paradise: “I didn’t imagine

⁷⁸ Speckhard and Shajkovci, “The Jihad in Kenya,” 20.

being sexual with him. Only fighting big fights in which there is no possibility of surviving.”

She also recalled how her online community celebrated when Muslims managed to blow up non-believers. “We were happy! On social media everyone was praying and saying, ‘Subhan Allah! [Praise to Allah!].’ And when France or America attacked Syria, we praised when the U.S. missiles did not kill anyone.” As Aisha got sucked into the online communities, she began to believe jihad was a necessary part of her faith: “It is just for the religion, just for the faith. A lot of people have that faith; I’m helping them.” Likewise, Al-Shabaab, ISIS, and Boko Haram condemned and endorsed violence against all others who did not subscribe to their strict community faith: “The Koran says, though I do not remember the exact verse, ‘When you see them in their field, cut off their heads.’ We would say, ‘The kuffar is our enemy and jihad is our way,’” Aisha explained.

Despite being employed by a Shia Muslim woman, whom Aisha said loved and treated her well, Aisha had been taught to hate Shia Muslims as well. “They used to call them pigs,” she stated. Aisha was also searching for a sense of dignity and personal significance. She recalled, “At that moment, I wanted to protect my people. I am a woman. A lot of people say women are not allowed to be leaders. Even in Islam we are the followers.” Regarding the image of the ISIS woman who had attracted her on Facebook, she noted, “She was independent. I wanted to help the men. I wanted to be recognized.” When asked if becoming a suicide bomber was a form of feminism or

female empowerment for her, Aisha put it in terms of her religious beliefs, “[I thought] I will be completing my faith.”⁷⁹

Musa

Musa reflected, “In 2006 when the Islamic Courts Union started, it was all over on Al Jazeera and BBC. I started hearing about it through the news on television and radio.” He confessed that the news itself was appealing: “Of course that is what appealed to me, just hearing about it. And also, in the village, people influenced me, imams and others said that the world had issues, the region had issues, and only shariah law would make things right.” Musa was also exposed to global terrorists’ propaganda, though at that time from Al-Qaida: “I was convinced through videos, and the recruiters took advantage of my love for my religion. Back then, they would not go for guys who were troublesome in the society, smokers, and drunkards. If you seemed well-grounded in the religion and loved it, they took advantage of that. Through those videos they convinced me.” At that time, Musa stated, “I was not much into the Internet and social media. There were no social media accounts. They would download videos from the Internet and made CDs and then they would put Abu Mansour from Somalia on the cover. They would show us [jihad in] Chechnya, Sudan, etc.” He continued, “We would ask the sheiks, ‘Why are you showing us this? Is it to travel to Chechnya or Somalia?’” The sheiks would explain that “the message was being spread as an awakening to the young men, a clarion call, to say that the country you are in is not under the Islamic flag and law. You are paying taxes to a government that is not Islamic, a kuffar [unbelieving] government.

⁷⁹ Speckhard and Shajkovci, “The Jihad in Kenya,” 21.

You should go to the closest country that is compliant to the Islamic law.” Musa recalled, “I was desiring a certain way of life. I was unemployed. I wanted to get married. They were telling us that there would be a pay. You can take care of yourself. I did not know the other side of it. It was a darker side that I could not see. This was 2006 and I was 23.”⁸⁰

Joseph

Joseph, who joined Al-Shabaab at age 28, stated, “I was the driver of Sheikh Abdul Rogo in Nairobi. He was my friend, I liked him very much. When he spoke about the religion [Islam], you would start hating the Christians. I liked him. If you had a problem, any problem, and you tell his son, he would sort it out.” Joseph recalled being taught about the “invaders—Americans, Israelis, Ethiopians—we have to fight them back. They have invaded a Muslim country and we have a duty. It is a must. You have to go.” Joseph became convinced of the righteousness of the cause and learned to hate: “I felt like this is the right way, the right thing. I started hating my stepfather. I hated the people I grew up with because they did not follow Sheikh Aboud Rogo.”⁸¹

Joseph’s recruiters then isolated him once he began to align with their ideals and considered delivering him to Somalia: “You are not supposed to tell anyone when you are going. You must leave your phone. You must stay quiet, until you reach Somalia. [They tell you] if you tell someone, [the security forces will] take you and you’ll never be seen

⁸⁰ Speckhard and Shajkovci, “The Jihad in Kenya,” 22.

⁸¹ Ibid., 23.

again.” The group isolated him from his family while in Somalia as well: “By the time I reached there, after six months of training, I started missing my family. I did not know anything about what was happening in Kenya. We were not allowed to make any phone calls.”⁸²

In a video recorded shortly before he departed from Somalia, one of the Kampala suicide bombers, identified as Salman al-Muhajir, warned of the Al-Shabaab’s plans to expand the scope of its jihad to other countries in East Africa.⁸³

Also, beware because soon we are also going to come into your countries to attack you there. And it’s going to be very soon. The Mujahideen who are coming to undertake this operation are not of Somali origin, unlike what you think. We are your citizens! We are neither Somalis, nor do we have any Somali lineage and we are coming to undertake this operation in your country; a country that we know inside out. We will be in your neighborhoods while you are in your homes and busy conducting your daily activities, so don’t be surprised when the operation takes place . . . Don’t be deceived. The fact that we could reach Burundi or Uganda doesn’t mean that we have forgotten about Nairobi. Passing through Nairobi on our way to Burundi or Uganda (without carrying out an operation in Nairobi) doesn’t mean that we have forgotten you, rather be forewarned of an imminent operation in the making! Insha’Allah Yesterday, the war was in Mogadishu; tomorrow, it is going to be in Nairobi, Kampala, and Bujumbura.”⁸⁴

⁸² Speckhard and Shajkovci, “The Jihad in Kenya,” 22.

⁸³ Matt Bryden, Jörg Roofthoof, Ghassan Schbley, and Babatunde Taiwo, *Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea pursuant to Security Council resolution 1916 (2010) (S/2011/433)* (New York: Security Council Committee, 2011), 137, accessed 7 August 2019 <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/report-monitoring-group-somalia-and-eritrea-pursuant-security-council-resolution-1916>.

⁸⁴ Matt Bryden and Premdeep Bahra, “East Africa’s Terrorist Triple Helix: The Dusit Hotel Attack and the Historical Evolution of the Jihadi Threat,” *CTC Sentinel* 12 no. 6 (July 2019): 7.

Families

Nurturing family relationships have been identified as the foremost protective factor from involvement in crime and violence, and this might be expected to extend to terrorism too. WHO et al. argue that families provide a nurturing environment in which individuals develop, derive self-esteem and security, learn values, social skills, and conflict resolution skills.⁸⁵ However, in the Coastal region, families are believed to be under pressure, and local women see this as a factor in radicalization. For example, Lewthwaite, also known as Sherafiyah Lewthwaite or the White Widow, a British woman wanted the world over for acts of terror. Lewthwaite's parents separated in 1994, and friends later reported that she was "badly affected by the break-up" and "sought solace from Muslim neighbors whom she believed had a stronger family network."⁸⁶

Findings by Mkutu and Opondo indicated that after divorce, a woman becomes the main provider for the children and becomes constrained because she cannot get divorce papers without an identification card which is difficult to obtain and therefore cannot remarry.⁸⁷ For the same reason she cannot get anything more than casual labor.

⁸⁵ World Health Organization, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and United Nations Development Programme, *Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2014), accessed 1 October 2019, https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/status_report/2014/report/report/en/.

⁸⁶ *The Daily Telegraph*, "Soldier's daughter who turned to Islam," 1 March 2012, 4, accessed 10 September 2019, <https://www.pressreader.com/uk/the-daily-telegraph/20120301/282913792420188>.

⁸⁷ Kennedy Mkutu and Vincent Opondo, "The Complexity of Radicalization and Recruitment in Kwale, Kenya," *Terrorism and Political Violence* (2019): 1-23.

A peace actor feared that, children who lost their fathers in this way were even more disadvantaged and vulnerable and could also become victims of radicalization.⁸⁸ At the family level, six out of the sixteen had parents who had died during their upbringing, and twelve classified themselves as impoverished in their childhoods. Ten described growing up in dysfunctional families, four had parents who divorced in their childhood, and two left home early to live in boarding school or with strangers. Two had a father who had multiple wives, causing tensions in the family, and one was a product of an illicit affair. All of these issues left the individual less supported than others who were surrounded by healthy and loving families and who were raised in better economic conditions.

Abu Paul

Abu Paul, who is the product of an illicit affair and traveled to join al-Shabaab in 2008 at age 14, blamed his father for joining: “My life was difficult being raised by my stepmother, and my father didn’t care for me.”⁸⁹

He learned only after he defected from the Al-Shabaab that his father had secretly financed his travel to the group, perhaps to hide his affair: “He always said he’d love it if all of his family could travel and go there, but I was the only one [he sent] there. So, in reality, he just dumped me there.”⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Hassan Mwakimako, Halimu Shauri, and Hamadi Iddi Boga, *A Survey of Mosques in Kwale County* (Voi, Kenya: Taita Taveta University College, 2006), 9.

⁸⁹ Speckhard and Shajkovci, “The Jihad in Kenya,” 17.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

Abdirahim Abdullahi

Not all al-Shabaab recruits are from impoverished backgrounds. Abdirahim Abdullahi (one of the terrorists involved in the Garissa University attack) is an example of a young man who, had lived a comfortable life, being the son of a government administrator. He had attended prestigious schools and universities and lived a well-integrated life up until the point of being radicalized and subsequently recruited into Al Shabaab. In most of the cases of successful radicalization and recruitment into the Al-Shabaab, the youths are reported to be from families that fully subscribe to the group's ideals. In some cases, siblings or the entire families join the group. In a research study of youth radicalization in the Kenyan Coast, eleven percent of al-Shabaab respondents indicated that their parents supported their decision to join the organization, and six percent of the respondents revealed that they joined with their families, while four percent revealed that their siblings were aware of their decisions to join the Al-Shabaab.⁹¹

Abu Shaheed

Abu Shaheed got into extremism after failing in school and becoming upset for living with his father, who had divorced his mother earlier in his life: *"I couldn't face mum after leaving school,"* he recalled. Instead of dropping out of boarding school at the age of sixteen and going home to one or the other of his parents, Abu Shaheed ran away, not telling either of the parents and ended up having to fend for himself in Mombasa city.

⁹¹ Fathima A. Badurdeen, "Al Shabaab Terrorist Recruitment into Kenya: Contributions from the Social Movement Theory," International Political Science Association, n.d., accessed 29 January 2020, http://paperroom.ipsa.org/papers/paper_54136.pdf.

He stated, “My anger was at my Dad because he had money and never contributed to my upbringing.”⁹²

Isolated and feeling that he needed to find a way to prove himself, Abu Shaheed found work and eventually succeeded in the fishing business. He started making new friends who were mainly Sunni Muslims. The newfound friends started encouraging him to go listen to Koran teachings in a particular Mosque in the city. “Hey Musa! Look, you have a car, you have the money, let’s fill it up and go hear the speaker at the Masjid Musa Mosque in Majengo.” The first lecture I attended was about jihad. It was a teaching I had never heard of before. I had been reading the passages and verses, but I never understood it this way. My thinking was jihad as a thing of the past. This lecture awakened something in me, encouraged me, and gave me a new sense of direction, a zeal. [After this] my friends would find me in the mosque seated at the front. I would get there before the others.

Abu Shaheed started following Sheik Aboud Rogo. “[My friends] then started encouraging me to cross over to Somalia. “They would always say let’s go to Somalia, but I had no reason for going there, I was earning good money. The fish business was good,” he recalled. His mother had warned him not to be fooled by the so many women who were hanging around him lest he fall into sin and contract terminal diseases. He, therefore, moved to the mosque to keep himself “pure.” Living at the mosque, he sunk deeper into the influence of the ideological preaching at the mosque. He was later recruited into the Al Shabaab.

⁹² Speckhard and Shajkovci, “The Jihad in Kenya,” 17.

After serving for some time as an Al-Shabaab fighter in Somalia, Abu Shaheed admitted that fighting provided him an avenue to vent out the anger he harbored for his father. “I found a way to vent out. [Fighting] made me happy. The blame lies with my father,” he stated about having been turned into a killer. “If it wasn’t for him, I wouldn’t have been there.”⁹³

Indeed, it is important to underscore the role dysfunction families play in fueling anger, hatred, and the desire to escape into violent movements by the young people who often are the victims of collapsed families. By joining terror groups, they earn some identity and a means to vent out their anger, hatred, and frustration through killing.

Sub-Section Summary

From the analysis of the collected data on social factors associated with radicalization it is evident that there exists a strong relationship between social factors and violent radicalization among youth in Kenya. The results demonstrated that some of the former Al-Shabaab jihadists joined the group due to Peer and community influence. Young people when required to make decisions in the heat of the moment or social situations, their decisions are often influenced by external factors like peer pressure. Some former jihadists like Abul Paul decided to join the Al-Shabaab because most of his friends and village mates had crossed over to Somalia and they were just two of them left in their group of friends who had not joined. Joseph and Abu Paul admitted that their influence to join the Al-Shabaab was through charismatic teaching by Sheikh Aboud Rogo who was a radical Muslim preacher and recruited young people for the terror

⁹³ Speckhard and Shajkovci, “The Jihad in Kenya,” 17.

group. ISIS and Al-Shabaab used social media sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter to influence Aisha into joining them through grooming and brainwashing. They took advantage of her situation at the time, having had just divorced her husband, and poor upbringing by a single mother. Terrorist groups use media, especially social media to target individuals or groups of people who can be easily swayed towards terrorist ideologies because of their experiences, state of mind, or sometimes upbringing. Families where radical beliefs are approved, where radical individuals are regarded as heroes and dysfunctional families are likely to influence their young people into joining extremists' groups. Individuals who have poor parent attachment or lack of strong role models are more likely to be recruited by terrorist organizations where a strong sense of identity can be accessed. Abu Shaheed who was raised by his father after his father deserted them lacked a role model in his life. He admitted that joining the Al-Shabaab and fighting provided him and a venue to vent out the anger and hate he harbored for his father. He said that fighting and killing made him happy and a hero.

Relationships Between Cultural Factors and Violent Radicalization Among Youth in Kenya

Culture refers to the elements and knowledge of a distinct community or group of people encompassing sets of beliefs, moral values, traditions, language, and laws (or rules of behavior) held in common by a nation, a community, or other defined group of people. Culturally determined elements include the language used; religion practiced; customs; acceptable gender roles and occupations; and other aspects of behavior. The study sought to establish the relationship between cultural factors and violent radicalization among youth in Kenya. How people value their cultural identity exposes them to the threat of

radicalization. There are several known terrorists who came from circumstances where they were securely entrenched in most of the Western culture. Why this may predispose one to radicalization is not clear.

A radical's opposition to the Western culture and way of life, stems from the understanding of the perceived negativities within the Western culture and this existing disagreement between these values and the person's value system curtails the person from assimilating the culture more and makes him embrace the opposite perspective.

A focus on the negativities of both majority and minority culture leaves religion as the only viable option, which is seen as perfect. Although this pathway in most cases leads to radicalization it may also lead to non-radicalized religiosity.

Religion Tolerance to Extremism

Abu Layth

Abu Layth told about how during the rule of the Islamic Courts in Somalia and the evolution of the Al-Shabaab, the group was openly recruiting and playing upon disillusioned minds with religious fanaticism: "I started inquiring around. I heard that they want to establish an Islamic state. I used to talk to guys over there over the phone. Their social media site was in their real names. Even Al-Qaeda was operating on social media, with their real names. At first, I was reluctant [to join] and I remember how some of my close friends who went ahead me would say bye to us, 'If we don't meet in this life, then we meet in the next.' I was about 25 years of age."⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Speckhard and Shajkovci, "The Jihad in Kenya," 14.

Abu Layth had failed in his first arranged marriage. He then ran off with a woman he described as his true love. That relationship failed as well. Feeling ashamed, he turned to his religion for a new beginning: “I went to the mosque and studied the Koran, repenting for my sins and following Islam. In the process of following my religion, I decided to go to Saudi Arabia. I visited Jeddah, and to my surprise people there were smoking weed, about 40 minutes drive from Medina. I had gone to follow my religion, but I wanted to be out of there.” From that point on, Abu Layth decided to seek an Islamic life by traveling to Somalia and joining the Al-Shabaab.⁹⁵

Looking back, Abu Layth described how he was compliant as a child, but he finally reached his boiling point over suppressing his needs and desires: “I avoided conflict. It was not healthy. At one point I got angry and I started talking back to people.” It didn’t end there, as he further explained: “I then ended up indulging in other bad stuff like smoking weed, playing women, and spending most of my nights at the night clubs. I would bump on fellow Muslims while leaving the clubs early morning while they went for the morning prayers. I knew I was deeply in sin. I once heard if I traveled to Somalia [to join Al-Shabaab]my sins would be forgiven. I thought that was a short cut, but, it was not like that. Repentance comes from one’s heart.”⁹⁶

Jermaine Grant

Jermaine Grant, who traveled from the United Kingdom to join the jihad in Kenya and Somalia explained, “Jihad for me is a strive for oneself to make the Islam religion

⁹⁵ Speckhard and Shajkovci, “The Jihad in Kenya,” 17.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 20.

victorious.” Citing his duty to what he believes is everyone’s duty to Islam [fard-al-ayn], he continued, “Every individual Muslim has to defend Islam. The religion of Islam is under attack, under threat by an enemy.” Jermaine Grant stated, “The strongest opinion lies with the jihad scholars,” reflecting many who follow the militant jihadi, scholars’ view that those who incite violence portray strength rather than academically judging Islamic scholarship. Converts are often susceptible to militant jihadi recruiting by not knowing Islam well enough. They are also likely to have created some distance from their families by converting.

Jeffrey, a young man who could not attend school past eighth grade due to poverty, converted to Islam in his teen-age as most of his friends were Muslims. Later, at the age of 17, while working in Lamu Island, he met a recruiter: “I met him in Lamu. He was a fish trader bringing fish from Somalia for sale in Kenya. After several encounters with the new-found friend, he one day asked me, “How long will you live a kuffar’s life? Why don’t you travel? We can go to Somalia together.”⁹⁷

Saleh

Saleh, an orphan and from a disadvantaged background, dropped out of school in tenth grade and eventually joined a local violent gang before joining the Al-Shabaab. When he got fed up with the activities of the gang and wanted out, he realized it was not easy. He lamented that “It’s very hard to leave a gang. You must move far away from the

⁹⁷ Speckhard and Shajkovci, “The Jihad in Kenya,” 21-22.

group, where no one knows you. I, therefore, moved to Mombasa from where I was recruited.”⁹⁸

Women Following Their Men

Asmina

Asmina was from a poor family and had dropped out of school in the eighth grade due to financial difficulties. She began doing odd jobs as a seamstress and could not get married until the age of twenty-seven years as she shouldered the responsibility of supporting her family. When she got married, Asmina was grateful to have found a man who accepted her and was able to support her. However, there was a slight problem; she did not know him well. “He was about 40 years and a convert,” she explained. “I remember we were married for about two months when he one day told me, let us go to Somalia and work there. Life will be the same as here in Kenya.” I resisted the suggestion, but my husband insisted. I told my mother, and she believed now that I was married, I had to obey him.” Before marrying, Asmina had faced many financial challenges: “I had problems. I did not have a permanent job. I was happy that I got a man to marry me and help me financially. I loved him.”⁹⁹

Revenge

Muslim human rights activists reported that twenty-one disappearances and extra-judicial killings of Imam and preachers between 2000 to 2014 at the coastal region. This

⁹⁸ Ibid., 16.

⁹⁹ Speckhard and Shajkovci, “The Jihad in Kenya,” 17.

was followed by reports to the effect that recruitments of youths to Al-Shabaab occurring in response to the killing of radical religious leaders whom they considered their mentors.¹⁰⁰ The controversial Kenyan Muslim cleric Aboud Rogo, who was well known to be radicalizing and recruiting for the Al-Shabaab, was among those killed in 2012.¹⁰¹ He was shot in broad daylight while driving his wife to hospital along Mombasa Malindi Highway, resulting in youth loyal to him accusing the Anti-terrorism Police Unit (ATPU) for the death. This sparked riots targeting churches in the coast region. The youth attacked the Salvation Army Church, which was next to the mosque where Sheikh Aboud Rogo used to preach.¹⁰² Some in this sample referenced the Kenyan troops' invasion of Somalia to fight the Al-Shabaab as the reason for joining the group to avenge for their Muslim brothers against atrocities perpetrated by Kenya and AMISOM.

Sub-Section Summary

The cultural factors that were identified in the analysis to influence youths into radicalization were the religious tolerance to extremism, women following their men, and revenge. Some ex-jihadists admitted to having joined the Al-Shabaab for religious

¹⁰⁰ Al-Jazeera, "Muslim Religious Leader Killed in Kenya," 5 November 2014, accessed 7 January 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/11/muslim-religious-leader-killed-kenya-20141151763249140.html>.

¹⁰¹ Al-Jazeera, "Kenyan Cleric 'With al-Shabaab Links' Killed," 27 August 2012, accessed 7 January 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2012/08/201282713161688107.html>.

¹⁰² Joseph Akwiri, "Youth Burns Church, Riot in Kenya's Mombasa after Imam Killed," Reuters, accessed 4 February 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kenya-shooting/youths-burn-church-riotin-kenyas-mombasa-after-imam-killed-idUSBRE9930C420131004>.

reasons. Most of them were new converts and they were convinced that joining jihad to defend Islam and fighting against injustices was a religious duty every Muslim must undertake. Jeoffrey and Jermaine joined the Al-Shabaab and jihad in Somalia to defend the religion. Women like Asmina joined the Al-Shabaab in search of a Muslim man to marry her. Others joined the group as they wanted to re-unit with their husbands who had already joined the group. The concept of revenge is another cultural factor that influenced some ex-jihadists to join the terrorist group to avenge for the killing of Muslims in Somalia by the Kenya Defence Forces and other AMISOM Forces, avenge the killing of the radical Muslim preachers who were allegedly assassinated by the Anti- Terrorist Police Units and avenge for the arrest and conviction of some jihadists in Kenya. The findings support the argument of relative deprivation theory for example in the case of Jeffrey and Jermaine, felt that those Muslims in Somalia for jihad were complete and better Muslims and those who had not joined the jihad were incomplete and to fill the gap or the relative deficiency was by joining the terrorist group for Jihad.

Relationship Between Economic Factors and Violent Radicalization Among Youth in Kenya

Every year, Kenyan Government and development partners disburse huge amounts of money to communities in the coastal to degrade the attraction and malign influence on the youth by criminal gangs, militias, pirates, and terrorist organizations. This is however based on very little empirical evidence; it is a sector that is marred by obscure payments and unexpected results. In a study in Mombasa County, an important tactic used by recruiters is based on the promise that recruits would be able to send

money back to their families within a matter of weeks on arrival in Somalia.¹⁰³ In Kwale County, promises of up to 1000 USD per month were mentioned. A Muslim peace worker described how Al-Shabaab recruiters went about winning the support of communities through promises of monthly remittances, and other benevolent activities towards those in economic need.

They offered money to locals to assist and empower them. They built a mosque for the village and brought in a teacher whom they paid. The teacher was then given resources to offer scholarships to the local community's "needy children." The children were taken away in the name of scholarship, and the state did not speak. When the children arrived in Somalia (the extremist group), things changed. They were told they can learn religion, but they must first join the military. After two weeks they were asked to provide phone numbers for their parents and guardians. They were sent money. As a parent how would you refuse? Recruitment agencies are registered by the state anyway..¹⁰⁴

Poverty is usually linked to political marginalization and powerlessness. It forces people to live in unsuitable environments and this exposes their families to illicit activities such as drugs, crime, and violence. Most of the young people in Kwale County drop out of school due to a lack of fees which land them into doing casual jobs. When it comes to industry and investment, locals are either excluded from benefits or are

¹⁰³ IPSOS Synovate, *Kenya Coast Survey: Development, Marginalization, Security and Participation* (Paris: Ipsos, 2013), 102. <https://www.africabib.org/rec.php?RID=K00002899&DB=k>; Kennedy Mkutu, Martin Marani, and Mutuma Ruteere, *Securing the Counties: Options for Security After Devolution in Kenya* (Pretoria, South Africa: Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies, 2014), 102, accessed 16 January 2020, http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/bitstream/handle/11295/85852/Marani_Securing%20the%20counties%20options%20for%20security%20after%20devolution%20in%20Kenya.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

¹⁰⁴ Mkutu and Opondo, "The Complexity of Radicalization, page 7. Interview with Muslim peace worker, Kwale, 12 April 2016.

displaced by the projects. For example, the establishment of the Base Titanium Company in Msambweni Sub-county in Kwale saw many families displaced without adequate compensation for their land. Again, the job opportunities that the project created had little to benefit the local population because most young people are semi-literate and could only do casual jobs. They lack capacity and education and therefore are often perceived as being slow or lazy. Youths expressed, “There is no work . . . There are no training opportunities. Once a job is advertised it is those who have certificates who get them. Coast region is not poor, but everything is given to people from ‘bara’ (up-country).”¹⁰⁵

There are other similar stories: in Shimoni village of Kwale county, a young man operating boat excursion to the reef had graduated from high school and done two years of Aeronautical Engineering in a university in Nairobi but dropped out for lack of college fees. Such young people are at that point.

According to Rink, Anselm, Sharma, and Kunaal, economic marginalization has been a particularly prominent explanation for religious radicalization in coastal Kenya.¹⁰⁶ A report by the International Crisis Group emphasizes the role of socio-economic marginalization in Kenya’s deteriorating security environment.¹⁰⁷ Such commentary also

¹⁰⁵ Mkutu and Opondo, “The Complexity of Radicalization and Recruitment in Kwale, Kenya, 8-11; Isaac K. Nyamongo, Lorie Broomhall, and Elisa Ballard, “FGD, Boda-Boda Drivers,” in *Formative Assessment of Most-At-Risk Populations in South Sudan: Report of Findings* (Washington, DC: Dexis Consulting Group, 13 April 2016), 48.

¹⁰⁶ Anselm Rink and Kunaal Sharma, “The Determinants of Religious Radicalization,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 62, no. 6 (September 2016): pp. 1-33

¹⁰⁷ International Crisis Group, *Kenya: Al Shabaab – Closer to Home*, Technical Report 102 (Brussels, Belgium: International Crisis Group, 2014), accessed 21 February

features in international media accounts, with one 2014 article by Al Jazeera stating that Kenyan Muslims may join and support Al-Shabaab for “the promise of a steady income.”¹⁰⁸

Financial Incentives/Employment Gains

Until recent changes in the Kenyan government’s programs of distribution of resources and universal mandatory primary education, schools were often out of reach for the disadvantaged pupils, who had to pay school fees to attend. Those who drop out of school at a young age find it hard to get employment or are employed in low-level and low-paying jobs that can be frustrating to sustain.¹⁰⁹ Personal issues of poverty that emanated from unemployment made it very easy for the Al-Shabaab to find an easy population to recruit from as depicted by this sample. The five were unemployed when they joined the group, and two of these claimed to have joined Al-Shabaab inadvertently by seeking employment when they were trapped into joining the group. Of those who were employed, many seemed intelligent individuals who had been forced by their family’s economic situation to drop out of school before graduating high school or college and become employed in low-paying menial jobs. They joined al-Shabaab to enhance their earnings.

2020, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/kenya/kenya-al-shabaab-closer-home>.

¹⁰⁸ Will Swanson, “The Struggle for Kenya’s Marginalized Youth,” Al-Jazeera, 2014, Accessed 6 February 2020. <http://fw.to/mHQCUCB>.

¹⁰⁹ Speckhard and Shajkovci, “The Jihad in Kenya,” 2-16.

Two of the participants in the sample had been involved in criminal activities before joining the terrorist group.¹¹⁰ One of them was a gang member who traveled to Somalia and joined al-Shabaab as a means of evading further criminal involvement in the gang as well as arrest by the police. William, an Al-Shabaab defector, stated, “Firstly, I blame illiteracy and ignorance, and secondly I blame poverty. Nothing else.” He perceived Al-Shabaab to be manipulating youth with the hope of enriching key individuals in the group’s chain of command. “The root cause of economic crime in many developing countries is corruption,” stated Thomas. “was is not for corruption, I could not have gone to Somalia. The young Kenyans are promised lots of money only if they accept to go to Somalia,” he added.

Musa, who joined in part, out of religious fervor and indoctrination, also needed a form of employment: “It’s very hard to get employed in my part of Nairobi city. You must be from the clans of the rich business people. Furthermore, I was looking for a formal and regular source of income. As a young man with a widowed mother, the biggest motivation for me was to take care of my mother.”

Abu Abdulsamad, who joined Al Shabaab in 2005 at the of age 19, stated that his friends convinced him to travel by boat to Somalia in search of better crab catches to enhance their earnings. “When we got there, one told me ‘hi, I did not want to tell you what we are actually up to. There is a group called AS (Al Shabaab) and we are here to join. It is fighting for the Islamic religion. Once we join, we will get money.’” Abu Abdulsamad was easily convinced to tag along. “At that time, I was young. I needed

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

money to spend, so I joined them.” After suffering in the group, he stated how he resented his friends for tricking him into joining the group. It is not only young men who are lured by promises of jobs and money to join the group, women, too, are lured with the same promises. Susanne, a poor widow whose husband had died fighting for the group and whose cousin had also joined the group, was recruited by her cousin. She said, “My cousin told me that when I get there, I will get a lot of money. I needed money. I had children.” The cousin encouraged her to abandon the children and cross over to Somalia where she could get money and marry another man. Despite joining for financial gain, many cited not ever getting paid or getting their money after they left Al-Shabaab.

Abu Paul said, “I never got paid. They gave me nothing. I only got a house to live in and food.” Describing how the food allowance worked, he stated, “The allowance is dependent on the size of your family. Being married with one child, I got \$200, which was not regular.” William, a Catholic, who as a young man, even enrolled to become a priest, stated that he traveled to join the Al-Shabaab to get a better-paying job as an English teacher, teaching 220 young children in Kismayo. Realizing he could not cross over into Somalia as a Christian, William recalled, “I converted before I even crossed the border. I converted for the sake of securing a job, but later the religion entered deeply into my blood.”

Thomas, who was a Christian, converted to Islam and joined the group for adventure and to earn money: “The person who recruited me assured me of a good salary. He never told me what the job was like and the consequences. For one to cross to Somalia, one must be a Muslim. I had to take refuge in the Islamic faith.”

Naysi, who came from a poor family and dropped out of school in grade six, claimed he was tricked to joining Al-Shabaab at the age of 18. The trick came to inform of the promise of a job opportunity in another city: They came to where we lived in Ukunda in Kwale County and told us there were jobs we could take. We traveled to Lakuni where we slept. Then, at about 2 a.m. we were bundled in a vehicle. In my mind, I was asking myself why were we being put into a car at night and where were we being taken to? The vehicle had tinted windows. We arrived there at night too. They did not want us to know where we were being taken to. They hooded our heads when they picked us up at 2 a.m. We were only told let us go for the job, but no one told us it was in Somalia and it was joining the Al-Shabaab as fighters. Once at the training camp, which Naysi recalled might have been inside Somalia, “They trained us to carry bags of sand and run for 30 kilometers. They said there was work, but to do the work you must be taught the skills, after which you will start receiving a salary. Once done with the training, you will forever live there never to come back home.” Naysi claimed that he had no idea of where he was. “You do not even know who your counterparts are because your faces are covered. We were in a small group of around 30 young men. I could not tell their ages but they were young and fit guys. Though I was tricked, but poverty landed me into joining the Al Shabaab.”

Saleh was also tricked into going to Somalia, believing it was for work. After separating from a gang and being unemployed, he offered his recollection of how he was recruited into the Al Shabaab: “During this period, I saw a bearded sheikh who said there were jobs in Somalia, construction and building mosques. They did not talk about Al Shabaab. They talked about job opportunities only. I, therefore, decided to go.” He

described his journey into Somalia: We were picked from a bus station in Nairobi and driven across the border. Shortly after crossing the border into Somalia, the vehicle stopped at some point, some armed people with covered faces came out of the bushes and took us. I thought they were to provide security. We were sixty of us. We were taken to a tented camp where we found food had already been prepared for us. We ate and slept. The following morning when we woke up we were lined up like a parade. Each one of us was issued with an AK 47 assault rifle and a long knife. We were told there were no construction jobs and that we were there to fight for the religion.

Sub-Section Summary

The analysis of economic factors identified unemployment and financial incentives as the main economic factors that attracted nearly all the ex-jihadists into joining the Al-Shabaab terrorist group. Some like William, Saleh, Naysi, Sussane, Thomas, and Abu Paul did not have any form of employment, and having been brought up in poverty, they needed to come out of their situation by securing an employment opportunity. There those like Abul Samad who was already earning some income through fishing and went to Somalia for better catches to boost his earnings only to be recruited in the terrorist group.

From the analysis it is also evident that only a few who knew the kind of job there were going to do when they joined the terror group. This because some of their friends were already in the group, however, the majority did not know. For example, William who was a teacher had been promised a teaching job in Kismayu only to be recruited as a fighter after crossing over. Abu Shaheed was convinced that he would make more money working in Somalia than what he was earning from his fishing business and this urge to

better his income pushed him to join the group. Lack of employment and economic marginalization at the coast has led the communities into abject poverty. This situation has resulted in many young people becoming hopeless, desperate, and frustrated and therefore vulnerable to attractions by terrorist group's recruiters. Everyone aspired to have a better lifestyle but they could not get it without having a job that provided a good salary. Therefore, the youth felt deprived of their right of good lifestyle due to lack of employment and economic marginalization which is in line with the Ted Gurr's theory of deprivation which quantifies the dissatisfaction that individuals experience when they compare their socio-economic status, measured by income or other indicators of perceived economic welfare, with that of their well to do colleagues and discern that those others own something that they do not have.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented, analyzed, and interpreted data from secondary sources. From twenty documented confessions and interviews from Al-Shabaab members who were jailed and reformed or defected from the group. The analysis was on the relationship between Social Factors and Violent Radicalization Among Youth in Kenya, Relationships Between Cultural Factors and Violent Radicalization Among Youth in Kenya and Relationship Between Economic Factors and Violent Radicalization Among Youth in Kenya.

Based on the analysis from this chapter, the study highlighted the following:

First, most published confessions and interviews from reformed al-Shabaab members revealed that there existed some cultural factors that influence youth to radicalization. The youths' behaviors and attitudes towards radical groups were

contributed by their feeling for revenge, norms related to their religion, and more so following their family culture and beliefs.

Second, Findings from collected data on social factors that influenced radicalization confirmed that, there exists a strong relationship between social factors and violent radicalization among youth in Kenya. The results showed that some of the jailed and reformed Al-Shabaab members joined the group due to family influence, community or peer influence, and media Influence. The findings confirm Gurr argument in the relative deprivation model that most of the evaluated jailed and reformed Al-Shabaab members were influenced by their families members, community and peers who felt that they have been the victim of an injustice and joining Al-Shabaab was the only of seeking their deprived justice by the regime in power.

Finally, findings from published confessions and interviews of jailed and reformed Al-shabaab members showed that the majority of them joined the radical group with a promise of securing employment opportunities and “unrejectable” financial incentives. This support comparative deprivation model that unemployed youth in coast felt deprived of their right for employment, hence reacted by joining Al-Shabaaab to fight the government which they thought is being unjust to them.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on documented evidence, analyzed data, and empirical findings, it is evident that violent radicalization is a threat that has resulted in deaths, misery, pain, destruction, and economic burden to many countries. This has been witnessed in Kenya on an astronomical scale since 1998 and it has been a matter of grave concern to the government. In East Africa with the exception of Somalia, Kenya has experienced most of the terrorist attacks as a result of violent radicalization. Thus, to curb the rising threat occasioned by violent radicalization, identification of the root cause of violent radicalization in Kenya must be done with a special interest in the coast region. This will enable the national and county governments to become more proactive in the fight against violent radicalization and terrorism. It will also assist in the development of sound de-radicalization and counter-radicalizations concepts and strategies. This thesis assessed and highlighted various social, cultural, and economic factors associated with violent radicalization in Kenya to answer the study questions in chapter one (What social and cultural issues are related to violent radicalization among youth in Kenya? What cultural issues are related to violent radicalization among youth in Kenya? and What is the association between economic status and violent radicalization among youth in Kenya?) The study used published testimonies and interviews from reformed and jailed Al-Shabaab members of Kenyan origin. The study investigated social, cultural, and economic factors that influenced youths from the coastal counties to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist group.

Findings

Based on the findings from jailed, defected, and reformed Al-Shabaab members, it is evident that social factors such as peer pressure, community influence, social media influence, and families are some of the key factors identified that drive Kenyan youths to violent radicalization. Peer pressure was shown as a key precursor of radicalization like in the case of Musa and Abu Paul. Community influence also made many youths to join Al-Shabaab. For example, from the reviewed cases, some youths claimed to have been influenced by radical Muslim Preachers within their community. Abu Paul and Joseph were radicalized and influenced to join the terrorist group by Sheikh Aboud Rogo who was the preacher at Masjid Musa Mosque which served as a center for radicalization in the Majengo community in Mombasa County. Most of the radicalized youths were observed to have come from the same community.

Media is another social factor that was highlighted as an influencer of youths to radicalization, particularly the social networks. Jihadists have over the years used the internet to persuade, convince, coerce, train, and lure unsuspecting youths into joining their organization. The Al-Shabaab for instance has a media branch, *al-Kataib* (The Brigade), which is responsible for producing video recruitment and propaganda content which is then disseminated for international audiences. It also runs a radio station (Radio Andulas) and twitter account (HSM Office). For example, Isha joined ISIS and later Al-Shabaab through her interaction with a stranger on Facebook and was later invited to join closed WhatsApp groups and Twitter through which she was manipulated and radicalized.

Family structures were also observed to influence youths. Single parenthood, lack of family support, and abuse and violence were found to drive youth to radicalization in search of inner peace. Some of the youths that joined the terrorist group lacked support from their families starting from their childhood. Most parents especially single parents do not spend enough time with their children to guide them. This poor parenting makes the youth easy targets to preying terror groups. Violent and abusive families encouraged children to seek solace with other Muslim families which might be sympathetic to Al Shabaab like was the case of Isha. Children of convicted and or killed jihadists were found to radicalize and join terrorist groups to avenge for the death and or incarceration of their parents or guardians.

Cultural factors identified by this study to be contributing to radicalization are religious tolerance to extremism, women following their husbands who had already joined the Al-Shabaab, and revenge. Some overly staunch Muslims tolerate and support radical Islam. Most of them believe executing violent jihad against non-believers and the governments they subscribe to is an obligation of every Muslim. These ideologies are preached and inculcated to unsuspecting youthful Muslims and converts who have little knowledge of the Koran and experience with Islam by some charismatic radical imams and preachers. For example, Abu Layth and Abud Salej joined Al-Shabaab shortly after converting to Islam to atone for their sins. They were radicalized which was a precursor for them to join the terrorist group. Some reformed Al-Shabaab members alleged they were convinced that by joining Jihad in Somalia they had the divine opportunity to fight and defend Islam from its enemies and make Islam the world religion.

The third factor identified in this study as an influencer to radicalization is economic factors such as unemployment, poverty, economic exclusion, and financial incentives. Based on the analysis in chapter 4, most of the youths radicalized and joined the Al-Shabaab with the hope of securing employment for a steady source of income. Unemployment provides a fertile ground for recruitment by Al-Shabaab and other terrorist organizations since they can provide a route out of poverty with economic opportunities that are not readily available through more legitimate means. For example, it is said Al-Shabaab offers to pay its militants about US \$200 every month, an amount which acts as an attractive incentive to local youths who are semi-literate, unskilled, marginalized, and jobless. Though individual poverty is not a justification for joining aggressive extremism, the instances of these young people demonstrate that the effects of poverty, such as idleness and low self-regard lower their dignity to the extent that when a glimpse of opportunity to fend for oneself show up, they are fast to leverage that opportunity. Poverty in the communities in the coastal region due to economic marginalization cause many children to drop out of school. This denies them the education and necessary skills to secure formal employment which exposes them to terrorist organizations seeking fighters. For example, Naysi, who came from a poor family, dropped out of school in grade six. He claimed that he was tricked to joining Al-Shabaab at the age of 18, a trick that came in the form of a promise of a job opportunity in another city.

Conclusion

The Government of Kenya has over the years since 1998 invested immense efforts and resources in the fight against terrorism. This is because terrorism has been

considered as a serious security threat. Much has been attained in the fight through coercive measures and the establishment of necessary institutions and legal structures. However, a favorable condition that allows radicalization emerges when various social-cultural, economic, political, and psychological factors converge, and therefore, a discourse about the root causes of terrorism, should not be about counter-terrorism. Proponents of the root-cause approach target on battling the conditions that generate terrorism and not terrorists themselves. Therefore, the case for social and economic development in the coast and northeastern regions of Kenya should not be considered in the context of counter-terrorism. The development strategies should not be about terrorists themselves, but rather, those that are more prone to the objectives, narratives, and messages of terrorism. Both the national and county government should understand that fighting radicalism rather than terrorism provides a better model and structure:

First, radicalism more correctly reflects the political, ideological social-cultural and economic extent of the threat. Regardless of how diverse the root causes, motivations, and ideologies behind terrorism are, all terrorist organizations attempt at pre-conceived violence against civilians and share the characteristics of violent radicalism.

Second, while terrorism is a lethal security challenge, radicalism is fundamentally a social-cultural, political, and economic threat against which non-coercive measures should be applied. Though there is nothing predestined in the possible change from radicalism to terrorism, it is evident though that majority of terrorists begin their route towards extremist violence initially by becoming radicalized followers. Since radicalism

precede terrorism, targeting radicalism amounts to averting terrorism at the nascent stage before it is too late for soft approach measures.

Finally, radicalism, unlike terrorism, has a social-cultural, political, and economic dimension. There are radicalized communities where acts of terrorism find solace and some level of support. It is impractical to describe terrorism as a social situation, however. There are no ‘terrorist’ communities. The relative admiration and support of certain terrorist organizations in the Islamic regions can only be explained within the structure of such radicalized communities where terrorist violence is met with an atmosphere of approval and implied support. Such radicalized communities are permeated by a deep sense of communal frustration, humiliation, and deprivation relative to expectations. This radicalized communal habitat is easily manipulated by terrorist’s organizations. Therefore, zeroing on the communal grievances behind radicalization is perhaps the most skillful way of dealing with the root causes of terrorism. This attempt at prevention can be formulated as a first line of defense against terrorism. The purpose is to significantly scale down the social, economic, and political attraction of terrorism by isolating terrorists and winning over prospective recruits. Once the challenge is determined as such, what follows next is to point out the practical strategy to battle radicalization.

Recommendations

Based on these study findings, the following policy recommendations were highlighted.

Governance: The government can partner with the private sector and civil societies to help bridge gaps in the provision of basic social services to the marginalized

communities and this in a way can help to alleviate existing communal grievances as well as show government presence. This can also strengthen the state-society relations which have the potential to have more long-lasting positive results. Public-private partnerships can also be particularly beneficial, especially when the provision of social services also helps create employment for local communities.

Education: The nexus between high levels of illiteracy and the growth of radicalization has been observed in the coast region of Mombasa, Kwale, Kilifi and Lamu Counties. Providing free and mandatory primary and secondary school education, and ensuring high quality of such education, can help youth develop critical thinking to challenge radical/ violent extremist ideologies and narratives. University and vocational training should also be made accessible to the youths from the region because it is through this education that they acquire skills that can earn them worthwhile employment.

Employment creation and means of living: The government should invest more in employment creation and livelihoods that are suited to zero on susceptible populations, especially the youth and women in the counties of Mombasa, Kwale, Kilifi, and Lamu, where poverty and economic marginalization is extremely high. The most effective solution to this vicious circle of unemployment is worthwhile jobs that give purpose, motivation, financial and non-financial rewards, and bridge the gap of social-economic exclusion by giving an alternative future. The employments created would also earn the government increased revenues, in form income tax enabling it to enhance infrastructure and design better-performing civil services. Since the government lacks the capacity to generate new jobs and direct foreign investment is no longer a viable option to create jobs

in the region, employment creation through entrepreneurship becomes a vital means of narrowing the gap. This can be attained through building youth's capacity by way of innovative business models and provisioning of cheap business start-up capital loans. This would help include the young people in the community and provide alternatives to radicalization

Social media tracking: Terrorist groups and networks use social media platforms to target the young people by using skillfully crafted messages and polished videos promoting their ideologies to shape the perceptions of the young people and recruit them into their cause. Government strategies here should include mechanisms to analyze, monitor, evaluate, and track the use of social media by terrorist organizations to propagate propaganda and ideological narratives to inform the necessary counter-narrative strategies.

Counter-narratives: The most effective way to counter the influence of terrorists' propaganda and ideological narratives on the internet and social media is through on-line counter-messaging. Extremist groups use social media platforms to target the young people by using smartly and skillfully crafted messages and polished videos promoting their ideologies to shape the perceptions of the young people and recruit them into their cause. Counter messaging can be attained through a focused strategic communication by the government, providing positive alternative messages that undermine extremist messages, and counter-messaging activities challenging the extremist messages head-on.

Public awareness campaigns: Public awareness campaigns should be designed to focus their efforts on encouraging individuals to disengage or dissuade them from joining terrorist groups. These campaign would be effective if conducted by the government in

partnership with non-governmental and religious organizations such as Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI) and HAKI Africa. The campaign should target the vulnerable communities and youths at risk and similar programs should be designed for schools and universities in the coastal region which is considered to be the hotbed for recruitment. The content of the campaign messages should cover stories of terror acts survivors, experiences of recruited youths and returnees, stories of parents of who have lost young people to terrorist groups, how radicalization process is done and how to recognize a radicalized person. Public awareness campaigns can be conducted using the traditional media, new media or social media, and direct engagement with vulnerable communities.

Partnering and building the capacity of religious institutions: Due to the important role played by religious institutions in marginalized and ungoverned areas of the coastal region in the provision of education, health care, provision of other basic needs, and psychosocial support, they form an important component of any strategy in countering violent radicalization and extremism. The resilience and governance capacity of mosques, Madrassas, and Imams, especially, needs to be strengthened to help create strong and unified approaches to countering radicalization.

Partnering with religious institutions like the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK), Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) and others can help generate critical arguments that can be beneficial in countering the religious basis for radical Islamists ideology, for example, deconstructing and replacing Quran verses that Jihadists manipulate in crafting their ideological messages. The religious leaders can help in the use of religious scriptures to engage in theological discourses with radical Imams and preachers and build the capacity of youths to detect early signs of radicalization.

These leaders in partnership with the government can develop programs to train Mosque monitors who would, in turn, be assessing the quality and content of sermons offered in the mosques, mosque attendance and administration, and the curriculum of education offered at the Madrassas. This initiative would assist in keeping away radical imams and preachers from taking over mosques and madrassas which they use as youth radicalization centers as well as Al-Shabaab recruitment centers.

Recommendation for Future Studies

Arising from some of the implications and limitations of the study, recommendations for further research are made. While this study successfully examined the conceptualized theoretical framework of the relationship between the social-cultural, economic factor and violent radicalization among youth in the Kenyan Coast, it has also presented rich prospects for other areas to be researched in the future. In terms of data used, the study was only confined to the published testimonials and data of jailed and reformed Al-Shabaab members. It would be important to do a similar study using primary data especially using in-depth interviews. Future research should also expand to other counties especially in Wajir and Mandera counties which have lately experienced numerous attacks from Al-Shabaab terrorist's group and the counties being other sources of recruits for the group. Future research may study radicalization in various Prisons in Kenyan which is reported to have been happening. Future research may re-examine the theoretical and conceptual model used in this research with a larger sample size so that the outcome can be generalized to a larger population.

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