

## **RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM: A THREAT TO INTERFAITH DIALOGUE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In recent days extremism has posed a serious threat in Kenya. This jeopardizes not only our social and economic life but also our very existence. Despite much effort in the fight against terrorism, terrorist incidents continue to rise, particularly among the Muslim communities. There are cases reported of terrorism recruitment in the prevalent Muslim areas like Pumwani-Nairobi Lamu, Mombasa, North Eastern among other counties. In many cases the recruitment are found among the poor slum dwellers where Muslims are majority. These include all majengos in Kenya. This has highly affected interfaith dialogue efforts. This paper aim at determining challenges facing inter faith dialogue; establish the impact of religious extremism to interfaith dialogue; find out the strategies to be implemented to promote interfaith dialogue. The paper will help both the religious and political leaders to promote cohesion. This is in line with Murrays, (1976) findings which noted that discussion with the other religion is actually essential to survival, necessary for the sake of peace in the world.

The world not getting any smaller: the migration of peoples, new methods of communication, and the vast expanse of knowledge about others are increasing rather than diminishing. The study will only focus on two religions; Islam and Christianity. The paper is divided into four subsections; the introduction of the paper; review of some related literature; the journey in interfaith dialogue; the challenges of interfaith dialogue, the remedies to the challenges facing interfaith dialogue and the impacts of interfaith dialogue; summary; findings; conclusions and make recommendations.

**KEYWORDS:** Pumwani-Nairobi, Lamu, Mombasa, North Eastern

### **INTRODUCTION**

Throughout history of mankind, religion has played an important role in politics and international relations. In 1893 during the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the world witnessed not only the birth of the Ferris wheel, but also the birth of interreligious dialogue. A formal meeting during that Chicago Fair brought together religious leaders and theologians from different faiths marking the beginning of global interreligious dialogue. This first "Parliament of the World's Religions" set the foundation for discourse and cooperation among different faiths that is so essential in helping maintain open lines of communication and peace in today's unpredictable world. Despite the differences in worship and theology, all religions share a common teaching: peace. International interfaith dialogue forums serve a key role in highlighting the role religions in global affairs can serve by promoting shared values as a means to achieve peace. Sadly, it seems as though this dream has not come very far since 1893 (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996).

Technology and globalization have narrowed the gap between peoples and communities, making IFD more important than ever before. According to Mohammed Abu-Nimer, a seasoned scholar and practitioner of IFD, critics of IFD claim IFD efforts are often naive and miss a central problem with religion: that it is a significant source of intolerance, and often leads to wrangles and deadly violence.

People from different religions as well as different religious denominations have refused to work together even on social problems due to lack of dialogue. This has contributed so much even in inter group clashes in different areas of Kenya. Some politicians have taken that opportunity to divide people by aligning themselves to different religious groups to get their support in their political ambitions. This has made some mosques as well as some churches be seen as attached to different political parties. Religion has been associated with violence across the millennia, and over the last 40 years global media has intensified the perception that behind much contemporary violent extremism, terrorism and state violence is the hand of religion: religious fundamentalism; religious extremism; religious bigotry; anti-Semitism; Islamophobia; anti-Christianism. This paper will therefore focus more on why there are wrangles between religions for example between Muslims and Christians and why people overlook the common values that unite religions. What necessitated this study is the current terrorist activities in Kenya.

### **Religion and Conflict**

Conflict appears to be part of the human condition. Violent conflict has existed throughout five millennia of 'civilization' and the last century witnessed the worst violence ever recorded. Yet, many humans evidently live relatively contented and peacefully. Religion is virtually a human condition. Whilst the Western media asserts a secular world, over five (5) billion people, the significant majority of humanity, claim to be religious adherents. Today, humanity continues to live with insecurity, fear and violence. Much of that violence is associated with religion and yet religious leaders across the world aver a theology of peace. Violent extremism and terrorism has closely associated with religion has become the main concern for many.

Helmick & Peterson's work, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy, and Conflict Transformation* (2001), seeks to address the balance with contributions from 20 academic researchers; sociological peace practitioners; and religious leaders, who together inform the field with a range of approaches, including: Peterson's theology of forgiveness as central to Montville's scripturally underpinned "track two" diplomacy; for which Botcharova develops an implementation model of forgiveness from religious communities-based research in the Balkans; and Lederach's biblical-wandering inspired five qualities of humilitative, accompanied, relationship-centric, restorative reconciliation practice.

Selengut, who adopts a dialogical holistic case-study approach to *Sacred fury: Understanding Religious Violence* (2003), confirms 'the whole field of conflict-resolution is new'. He takes theological, historical, economic, social and psychological perspectives into account when citing apocalypse, political and economic issues, with an undergirding of sacred places, religious history, honor and truth, as root causes. He sees informed laity and intra-faith subgroups as central to understanding and reconciliation; with judicious state violence and charismatic leaders as factors in the cure; and NGOs, affiliated with the UN, as mediators.

Holden's action research, in Northern England, for *Religious Cohesion in Times of Conflict: Christian-Muslim Relations in Segregated Towns* (2009), identifies three models of religious cohesion: contributory; experiential; and dialogical. Ignoring religious exclusivists, however, limits this contribution to effective peace building. The history of Abrahamic religions –Judaism, Christianity and Islam is chequered. From the medieval inquisitions of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, to the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation in the Middle Ages—the history was bloody. After the Calvinist reformation, the bloody thirty years of war starting in 1617 and ending in 1648 decimated large parts of Europe. Germany lost up to 30 per cent of its population and almost the entire Europe was plunged into bloodletting.

The war that is referred to as ‘30 years of religious war’ culminated in the signing of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648—giving birth to what we now refer to as the modern nation-state.

The common history between Muslims and Christians, is, to say the least, bloody. Nothing exemplifies the tense relations than the Crusades from the first Crusade launched by Pope Urban II, to the ninth Crusade led by Prince Edward, massive suffering of both Christians and Muslims was witnessed. Religion in Africa is ever present, and influences the day-to-day living for most Africans. In fact, there has been a renaissance of religion in Africa during the last twenty years. Increasingly, religion in Africa is influencing politics. It is also a subject to intense debate, now, with increasing radicalization, rising extremism and the potentials to export ‘religiously inspired’ terror beyond Africa, and destabilize international politics.

Religion commands a strong force in Africa with networks and structures that permeate all levels of society. In some of the conflict situations, it is only religious institutions that have survived the effects of war. In Somalia for example, hospitals and dispensaries associated with faith groups or faith-inspired humanitarian organizations are the only remaining providers of medical services where most organizations have withdrawn or evacuate their staff and services. The same has been observed in Mozambique, Sierra Leone and other conflict areas in Africa.

Most Africans consider themselves to be very religious, and that religion play ‘very important’ roles in their lives, ranging from the high of 98% in Senegal to a low of 69% in Botswana.<sup>1</sup> Christians and Muslims in Africa know little of each other according to the Pew survey. There is increasing levels of hostilities between the two faiths with cases noted in Nigeria, Sudan and Liberia to a large extent; and Kenya, Uganda, Senegal and other countries to a smaller extent. Tension has been noted between adherents of different religions in many other African countries.

### **Religion and Conflicts in Africa**

Religion plays a big role in peace building, or conflict generation in the continent. Misuse and misinterpretation of religious teachings and injunctions are increasingly being cited as major drivers of violent conflicts in some African countries. Religious extremism and militancy are recent developments, associated with religions, to be creeping in many African societies and countries.

The renaissance of religion in Africa has followed different lines, and most observable has been its challenge to the state. While it is not the intention of this paper to introduce the ‘Clash of Civilization’ debate, and how this might be panning out in Africa, it is however important from the outset to dispel some misconceptions the debate itself might seem to credibly explain when superficially considered. In most conflicts in Africa, weather inter-state or intra-state, none appear to be following (or caused by) ‘inter-civilization fault-lines’. Even those that might appear to be, for example Sudan, Nigeria and others, a closer look indicates that they are all politically motivated, or as a result of competition for resources and for power. Religion is however mis-used in these conflicts to mobilize foot soldiers, and as intensifier of the conflicts. (For example Boko Haram)

The Horn of Africa conflict system demonstrates the non-civilization nature of the conflicts in the region. Ethiopia and Eritrea which are religiously mixed have gone to war recently. While relations between the Muslim-dominated Sudan and Christian ‘led’ Ethiopia ‘are quite amicable... relations between the two almost entirely Muslim countries, Somalia and

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<sup>1</sup> In comparison, Europe and America registered a high of 57 per cent in the US and a low of 8 per cent of Swedes saying that religion played ‘very important’ roles in their lives.

Djibouti are quite strained.<sup>2</sup> Religiously mixed countries with sizeable majorities from both Islam and Christian such as Tanzania, Ethiopia and Eritrea, would, if the Clash of Civilization thesis is applied, be experiencing serious intra-state instability occasioned by religion and religious differences. This is not the case. In fact they are more peaceful than the 'religiously homogenous' societies such as Somalia, Uganda or Democratic Republic of Congo. In the same vein, Sudan exemplifies how an intra-state conflict between the Government-led force and the JEM led rebellion – both conflicting parties professing same faith.<sup>3</sup>

### **Emergent Violent Extremism**

There is increasing intra-religious and inter-religious tensions within the Muslim communities, and between Muslims and Christians. The intra-religious and inter-religious tension is compounded by the increasing targeting of religious leaders including imams, clerics, pastors and others, by the yet to be identified assailants

The hatred preached by violet extremists is finding its way in schools, and other spaces where children and young people imbibe in this hatred. And this is 'poisoning' the minds of many children and young persons—subliminally, subconsciously or knowingly. Many are being prepared on the path of radicalization into violent extremism. We have seen the targeting of innocent people. We have witnessed the law enforcement officers and government officials being targeted by violent extremists.

We live in a context where, today, puritanical tendencies leading to exclusivist identity is on the rise. This puritanical identify is dictating that a section of citizens is fundamentally 'different' from others, and it alone has the truth, and has nothing in common, and cannot live side-by-side with the 'other'. There is increasing construction of a belligerent 'other' in which the different 'other' is essentially considered as an enemy within or foreign, and that 'they' threaten our existence.

We live in a context where there selective, partial and literalist discourses in churches, mosques and the social media. The selective and literalist discourse feeds into a context is where violent behaviour including verbal and physical aspects directed at the 'other' is becoming the norm rather than the exception. The use of religious texts and concepts to legitimise alienation, discrimination and violence is becoming fashionable among some groups.

The good news is that radicalization into violent extremism can be contained. This requires necessary strategies to be adopted by the relevant authorities and bodies in a timely manner. The bad news is that, radicalization into violent extremism and terrorism can be transformed into a bleeding, brutal asymmetric violent conflict pitting the state on the one hand, and the terrorist groups and networks on the other. The prospects for such unending and unwinnable war are real.

The population is often caught in between this catastrophic web of violence. A choice on how we respond—as a government; as a religious community; as a religious platform and as a nation is important. The choice of how we respond will determine how we counter and transform radicalization into violent extremism and terrorism.

We can chose to respond to radicalization and violent extremism with the brutal use of blunt force. Or we can chose to respond to violent extremism through measured use of law enforcement instruments, and working with communities to prevent further radicalization into violent extremism.

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2 Moller Bjorn, Political Islam in Kenya in Political Islam and the State in Africa, Edited by Hussein Solomon, Akeem Fadare and Firoza Butler. CIPS, University of Pretoria. 2008. 95.

3<sup>1</sup> See Warburg, Gabriel. Islam, Sectarianism, and Politics in Sudan Since the Mahdiya. London: Hurst & Co. 2003.

We can also use systematic ideological mobilization to reduce and defeat violence and terrorism. Most of the violent conflicts across the world and history are erroneously being termed as religious wars. But were they? Or was religion simply used as motivation, as an effective and lethal mobilizing tool for political ends?

There is an eerie semblance of what happened in history, and what is happening today. When we look around every quarter with violent conflict, we find despotic, client regimes, terrorist, violently extremist regimes—all with nothing but one interest—self-preservation, power and maintenance of territory.

Those without power and territory—the non-state actors—have engaged in a brutal and bleeding violence, in the name of religion and God—each proclaiming that God is on their side. From Somalia to Afghanistan, Mali, Libya, Syria to Egypt and other lands, the script is the same.

Today, history is repeating itself. Religion has been hijacked by power-hungry, religiously illiterate individuals, who now mis-use religion to mobilize to grab or to maintain power. The sympathizers of Al Shabab and Al Qaida are fighting to establish Khilafa. But in their fight, they are killing, displacing and maiming the very people they are fighting for. Who, in this fight, have been on the receiving end? Which lands have been rendered homeless, so violent that most refugees now happen to be Muslims? These are questions often asked.

Today, we are seeing an attempt to take us back to the murky history when religion was hijacked for purposes other than its intended spiritual and a path to God. How can we as Muslims, not learn from the bloody history whereby mis-use of religion led to massive suffering in Europe, a situation that also contributed to the undermining of religion itself?

How can we not see that what is largely referred today in the media for journalistic convenience, and by political leaders as *Islamism*, *Jihadism*, Fundamentalism and religious terrorism is in fact, primarily geopolitical struggle for power and influence? And how can we be party to this wanton hijacking of religion for political purposes? Can we not draw parallels with the early times in Islamic History when religion was hijacked, mis-used, mis-interpreted and bastardized by those without power to access power, and those in power to retain power?

It is erroneous to even think that there is Jihad in Somalia. It is not possible to have Jihad in Kenya. What groups like Al Shabaab and other similar groups are engaging in using the name of religion and God, is naked aggression against their own brethren. It is war against religion. It is war on God.

Most young people serving within the ranks and files of Al Shabab have been duped into a fight that has nothing to do with the preservation or strengthening of Islam as claimed by those groups. All we can learn from the wars in which religion supposedly played a leading role, is, that religion itself was mis-used for political expediency. Religion was used as lethal and effective mobilizing tool, for aims, objectives and results that were largely political. Religion was bastardized, mis-interpreted, hijacked for political reasons in the past. It is so today. It will be the case in future unless preventing its mis-use is carefully done.

Today, 1.6 Billion Muslims live in about 50 Muslim majority countries in the world. Islam has bequeathed the world remarkable and outstanding legacy, and has contributed to today's civilization. The Muslim lands possess most of the oil reserves and precious natural resources. Many predominantly Muslim countries like Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia have unrivalled strategic geopolitical importance. Muslims, have a religion that regulates our whole life, and even ensures a place in paradise based on our conduct and deeds in this world.

Yet, today, even with all these attributes, boons and blessings, the Muslim world presents a depressing picture. Fifty per cent of the world's poor are Muslims. Large Muslim populations in Asia, Middle East, North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe are steeped in a myriad of challenges—from illiteracy, disease, malnutrition to appalling economic, political, social and governance problems. Violence prevails in Muslim countries. Why, you may ask, are Muslims in this state? Is it because of some inherent deficiency of Islamic teachings? Or is it because of the bad leadership in Muslim countries, lands and Ummah, that has, mis-used religion for other purposes? Or is it that others have conspired to keep Muslim countries and communities in this rather tragic situation?

### **Freedom of Religion in Kenya**

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the Kenya Constitution – right to religious freedom. Some people have argued that religion is not a divisive issue in Kenya, and has had nothing to do with the sporadic outbreaks of 'ethnic violence' that have plagued the country since the early 1990s. According to Koul, (1992), The map of ethnicity in Kenya largely overlaps with the map of religions and denominations basically because as colonists scrambled for the best agricultural lands, missionaries scrambled for 'souls' and of course land on which to build mission centre in which to effect civilization. Hence, religions, especially certain denominations in Christianity and Islam participate in politics as ethnic blocks making religions participators in ethnic violence

Christianity is perhaps the greatest of world's religions in terms of numerical strength scattered in all corners of the world though perhaps not in terms of adherence to its teachings (Gray, 1958). In Kenya, it is estimated that about 65-70 % of the country's population is Christian. Throughout the ages, Europeans have taken Christianity as their possession and used it as a tool to establish and maintain their control and suppression over other races. Yet Christianity was in Africa long before the coming of the Christian influence or missionaries of the 15th and 19th centuries respectively. The history of Christianity dates back to the Pentecost event where the apostles assembled to await the Holy Spirit as promised by Jesus Christ. (Acts 12 presents the birth of the Christian movement after the death and resurrection of Jesus).

In his last words, Jesus mandated the apostles to be his “witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:7-8). Then there was the succession question with regard to the position of Judas, then Acts 2-8 is on Christianity in Jerusalem, acts 8-12 is on Christianity outside Jerusalem but within Palestine, and Acts 12-18 begins with the Pentecost Event which marks the spread of Christianity outside Palestine throughout the then known world. Among the first places of “the end of the world” where Christianity spread within the early times is Africa: the first seeds of Christianity were sown in present day North Africa within the first centuries of the faith. Moreover, initial evangelization work lay significantly in the hands of Africans. If this be the case, then it seems that writers of Christian history may consciously or unconsciously have omitted and probably added certain facts to support their understanding of Christianity as a European religion. There is need to correct this impression (Gray, 1958).

A few African scholars have endeavoured to meet this need. According to J. S. Mbiti (1969), for example, “Christianity in Africa is so old that it can rightly be described as an indigenous, traditional and African religion”. Another example may be given of John Baur the author of *Two Thousand Years of Christianity in Africa*. There are numerous evidences to support these allegations. These include relevance of Africa to Judaism to secular and religious oral histories, and biblical evidences.

### **Islam and Interfaith**

The history of Islam—from the early days of Khilafat Rashideen, to the Golden ages, Muslims progressed and the Ummah lived in peace, with itself and with the others. At this time, the rulers led as ordained by Prophet Muhammad

(Peace be Upon Him).

Pluralism, respect for the other, welcoming the other and generosity was such a cherished principle and practice during the times of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). All was well when Muslims, individually and collectively, and with others, lived as required by the Glorious Quran, the Sunnah and the Hadith. Muslims, progressed in those days. The Shariah, then, was used for its intended purposes; purely for five reasons: preservation of *Deen*; preservation of life; preservation of property; preservation of progeny and preservation of intellect.

How, then, does one explain the narrow, exclusivist attitude of a section of the scholars today who project themselves as defenders of the purity of the faith? In Islam, as in other faiths, there has always been a segment of the religious elite who regard an inclusive, universal, rational outlook as a challenge to the integrity of their religion. It is not widely known for instance that even in the past, a section of the scholars reviled and derided illustrious scholars such as Ibn Sina (980-1037), Ibn Rushd (1126-1198) and Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) for their rational, cosmopolitan thinking which sought to highlight the quintessence of Islam. It was this type of scholars that insisted upon closing the door to '*ijtihad*'.<sup>4</sup> They perpetuated their own monopoly upon the divine truth.

When the centres of Islamic civilization in Central and West Asia were devastated and destroyed by the Mongol invaders in the 12th and 13th centuries and when Muslim kingdoms in Andalusia were defeated and demolished by Christian conquerors in the 15th century, the influential strata within the *Ummah* lost its vigour and vitality, became inward looking and began to develop a siege mentality. It was this mentality that the conservative scholars exploited as they sought to promote an exclusive worldview obsessed with a narrow notion of religious purity. If anything, the long centuries of Western colonial domination that followed from the 16th century onwards reinforced this mindset within the *ulama* and the *Ummah*.

It is this huge historical baggage that the Muslim world carries on its shoulders in the present post-colonial decades. It explains why for a significant segment of the *Ummah* a narrow, exclusive idea of Muslim identity defined in terms of forms and symbols, rites and rituals has such a powerful appeal while the substance of the faith expressed through a *Tauhidic* (oneness of God) worldview embodied in perennial values and principles has limited attraction. The situation has been worsened by the double standards and gross injustices prevalent in the existing hegemonic global system, vividly mirrored in the sufferings of the Palestinians and Iraqis. It has heightened the siege mentality within the *Ummah* and consequently tightened the grip of the narrow-minded defenders of a pure, exclusive religious identity. It is a notion of identity which has been promoted aggressively for a few decades now at the doctrinal level by the bigoted, dogmatic and violently extremist oriented interpretation of Islam.

Islam's pious teachings of preservation and all that mattered were set aside by Kings who established despotic regimes in the name of Islam, and 'legitimized' by handpicked scholars who were only accountable to themselves and their benefactors. They had least regard or care for the Islamic values of tolerance, respect for life, modesty, scholarship, and perseverance.

The despotic kings lived majestic lives. They built huge and grand palaces. They lived like pharaohs, wallowed in unbridled luxury and dazzling opulence despite Islam's emphasis of modesty. There were no shortage of scholars who embraced them and explained their behaviour as necessary, and even in line with Islamic principles.

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<sup>4</sup> *Ijtihad* means creative intellectual effort guided by the Quran and the *Sunnah*

This was completely opposite of what Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him) – characterized and encouraged—hard work, scholarship, simplicity and self-denial. For the love of power, domination and greed, Muslims undermined each other. Baghdad was burnt to ashes by the Mongol hordes in 1258 because of the sectarian rift between the Sunni Caliph and Shia Prime Minister—the Grand vizier.

No civilization in history demonstrated a more resolute commitment to pluralism than Islam. The principles of pluralism are anchored in the Noble Quran itself. A number of verses attest to this.

- And among the Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colours: verily in that are Signs for those who know. (Surah 30:22).
- To each among you have We prescribed a Law and an open way. If God had so willed He would have made you into a single people, but (His Plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. (Surah 5: 48).
- To every people have We appointed rites and ceremonies which they must follow: let them not dispute with thee on the matter, but do thou invite (them) to thy Lord: for thou art assuredly on the right Way. (Surah 22: 67)
- O mankind ! We have created you from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things). (Surah 49:13).
- If thy Lord had so willed, He could have made mankind one people: but they will not cease to dispute. (Surah 11: 118).

The Quranic message on pluralism and diversity was reflected in the Charter of Medina which the Prophet Muhammad (may peace be upon him) formulated. It brought together different religious and ethnic communities bestowing upon each of them equal rights and responsibilities. The treaty which the Prophet forged with the Christian monks of Najran, protecting their monastery and guaranteeing them freedom of religion was yet another testimony to pluralism.

It was largely because of the inclusive, accommodative approach to religious and cultural diversity embodied in the Quran and the Sunnah that generations of Muslim scholars and philosophers from the 9th to the 14th centuries opened their minds to the vast corpus of knowledge found in all the other religious and cultural civilizations, be it Hindu and Confucian or Greek and Roman. A positive attitude towards ‘the other’ was undoubtedly a major factor in the emergence of Islamic civilization as the fount of learning and the harbinger of the modern scientific method.

This was further evidenced in the enthusiasm that some of the scholars showed for the study of other religions and religious communities. It was a Muslim Abu Rahyan Al- Biruni (died 1051) who undertook the first comprehensive scientific analysis of another religion and community in his magnum opus, Kitab Al-Hind. The empathy that he displayed for the Hindus of India was echoed in the writings of other Muslim savants such as Ibn –a-Nadim (died 995), Al-Shahristani (12th Century) and Rasheeduddin Fadlullah (14th Century) in their studies of Buddhism and Buddhist communities. It was Shahristani who authored the first encyclopedia of religions.



None of these illustrious scholars felt that their faith (aqidah) was threatened by their attempts to understand other religions. On the contrary, many of them were revered by the people for their piety. It was because openness was an outstanding characteristic of the early Islamic intellectual tradition that famous Muslim kingdoms from Granada in the West to Melaka in the East were homes to diverse religious and cultural communities. Pluralism, accepting the other in that sense was synonymous with the splendor of Islamic civilization.

### **Some Missionary Activities and Division**

The missionaries divided the country into small different portions which depended on their missionary group which had sent them, before coming of missionaries and later colonialists to all parts of Kenya where people used to stay together in communities which believed in oneness (Koul, 1992).

There was establishment of sphere of influence to limit the conflicts of doctrines. An imaginary line was drawn. Colonial masters invited churches which they favored in the areas or their jurisdiction (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996). The sphere of influence meant the negotiations of religious boundaries which were imaginary with little regard on the wishes of Africans affected. For example there was an imaginary boundary line drawn between Ngong hills and Mount Kenya to separate the church missionary society and the Scottish mission (Gray, 1958).

There was a contention between CMS and United Methodists free churches missions over territory of Embu. Apparently the governor had offered the Embu region to the Methodists while the land commissioner who was a member of the local governing body of the Anglican missions had it given to the CMS. It is documented that the conflict delayed the missionary occupation in Embu area for more than a year. African Inland Mission was established as a faith mission in 1895. It was interdenominational and comprised of Baptist, Methodists, Presbyterians and Anglicans. It was established in Ukambani but later moved to Kijabe (Gray, 1958).

Mombasa County just like the rest of Kenya can be described as conglomeration of many small churches who feel they have a mandate to communicate the gospel. Some of these churches like Mormons have strange doctrine that orthodox Christians find unorthodox and which acts as a source of conflict among Christians. On the other hand Islam dominates Mombasa hence see Christianity as a competitor as sometimes as a threat.

In the history of coming of Christianity, conflict arose from the members of different mission groups as well as the same groups. There was friction between Holy Ghost missions and Consolata Missions because both had set imaginary boundaries to divide the region of their evangelization (Gray, 1958).

According to David Barret, factors which led to coming up of indigenous churches were accelerated by the missionaries themselves. Some included American traditional culture. This meant that one would not separate the gospel from the culture of where he came from. Some of the missionaries brought about American religious which they intended to teach Africans.

Currently there are numerous emerging churches in Kenya which include but not limited to Charismatic churches such as Jesus Is Alive Ministries founded by Bishop Margaret Wanjiru, the Deliverance Church, Kuna Nuru Gizani (literally translated it means there is light in darkness) associated with Pastor Pius Muiuru, among others. An interesting perspective in the emerging churches is the role of women. Most emerging Christian churches are led by women (Kerlinger, 1973).

The other major religion in Kenya is Islam with its two branches of the Sunni and Shiite Muslims. The exact population of Muslims in Kenya is not clear but it is estimated that Muslims comprises about 10-25% of the Kenyan population. Most of this population is concentrated either in the Coastal province or in the North Eastern province of Kenya. Nairobi too has a significant number of Muslims and so do some pockets of Western region of Kenya (Koul, 1992).

The Kenya constitution recognizes Shariah and the Islamic kadhi courts but only on civil law such as family matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance. One of the controversial issues in the review of the Kenya constitution is the question of kadhi courts whereby some Kenyans think that recognition of sharia by the Kenya constitution is favouring one religion yet, Kenya is supposedly a secular state, the controversy of what constitutes a secular or religious state notwithstanding. (Nthamburi, 1991).

Some tension exist between Christians and Muslims especially in North Eastern Kenya. Politically, the Muslims feel marginalized because of their minority status in political leadership. When Kenya adopted multiparty politics in 1992, Muslims attempted to rally themselves together for political expediency by forming the Islamic Party of Kenya, the only party formed along religious lines but this was denied registration because of its religious inclinations. Since the August 1998 bombing to the United States embassy in Nairobi (popularly referred to as 9/11) Muslims complain of government mistreatment and marginalization as they are treated like security concerns (Kerlinger, 1973).

Other religions in Kenya include Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Bahai, among others. Most of the adherents of these oriental religions are Indians who originally came to Kenya during the colonial times and pre-colonial times as cheap labour especially during the building of the Lunatic Express otherwise referred to as the Kenya-Uganda Railway. Most of these reside in major towns and cities across Kenya (Nthamburi, 1991).

In response to socio-political, economic and spiritual situations in postcolonial Kenya in a global context, a number of religions are emerging. Some are based on the desire to uphold African values while others are breaking away from what they consider as imperialistic and dogmatic traditions. In this section, we present two cases to illustrate emerging religious movements in Kenya (Nthamburi, 1991).

The development of indigenous churches movement in Africa started during the colonial period and has not been brought to an end even with the attainment of political independence. It is estimated that today there are more than seven thousand indigenous churches in Africa with more than 35 million Christians. It is evident that those churches are growing much faster than the historic founded mission churches. It is surprising to find out that proliferation of indigenous churches took place in an area where missions were so well received and where the response to missionaries teaching was positive (Kerlinger, 1973) it is also interesting to note that despite the overwhelming number of many religious followers, inter faith dialogue has remained a challenge because of the seed of hatred sowed during early evangelization (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996).

Among the churches in Kenya which fall in to this category of indigenous churches Are Legio Maria, Church Of Christ In Africa, The Johera, African Israel Church Nineveh, Dini Ya Musambwa, Akorino, Arata, Kavonokye, Andu -A-Iremba and Aroti among others. African Brotherhood Church in Ukambani split with the parent mission over allegations that the mother mission was reluctant in allowing African Christians with leadership gifts to exercise it (Nthamburi, 1991).

### **Church Unity and Cooperation**

Having looked at how different mission organizations came to Kenya and specifically to evangelize and some of the challenges which they encountered due to the so called sphere of influence to limit the conflicts of doctrines, there was

need for the church to unite. They felt that it was scandalous when two or more missions engaged in outward rivalry. They found that in their endeavor to evangelize, their paths would criss cross and there was need to have a lasting solution (Nthamburi, 1991). There was also the fact that people had to move to major centers to look for job and so it was not easy to confine evangelistic work to one's own sphere as they had been marked.

Emergence of other pastoral problems arose calling for corporation between different missions. A good example was that African preachers would be expelled from one mission for misbehavior and they would be engaged by another mission just a few miles away at a higher salary, by this, their followers from their previous mission would follow them in the new mission which would be eager to accept them (Kerlinger, 1973).

With time the missionaries thought of having the same training school for African clergy in all protestant churches. It was also agreed that the spheres of influence be abolished and Christians were encouraged to seek communion within other denominations (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996). Several meetings were held by top organs of different missions to reach a common unit of churches which would bring them together. These kinds of meetings were held in Kenya at kikuyu 1913, 1918, 1922 and 1924 (Koul, 1992).

Formation of Christian council was formed in 1943. Today there has been spirit of corporation in Catholic and Protestant churches. The Catholic Secretariat together with the Christian Churches Education Association participates in formation of educational syllabus. The same corporation has been exercised through joined chaplaincies in universities, The Bible Society of Kenya and other corporations. Missionaries were of the same race with colonialists and that is why some critics cannot dissociate the missionary movements with the colonizers. It is evident that some missionaries were the first Europeans to come in to contact with the Africans and they welcomed the intervention of Europeans government and in many ways encouraged British government to annex East Africa (Kerlinger, 1973).

### **Some Factors Leading to Extremism in Kenya**

Due to Unemployment, ignorance, poverty and political marginalization, generation gap between the youth and the old, Islamic leadership gap, the radicalization among Kenya's youth especially Muslims is increasing. This must be addressed through education, advocacy and economic empowerment as well as preaching's in the mosques and teachings in Islamic institutions.

Youth unemployment is extremely high, as are levels of political disenchantment. An estimated 75 percent of out-of-school youths are unemployed, according to the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

Yusuf Hassan, the Member of Parliament for Nairobi's Kamukunji Constituency, which has a large Muslim population was reported saying, "The unemployment crisis is a ticking bomb. Over 60 percent of the population is under 25. You cannot ignore that," he added, "A huge and significant population is restless. And the gap between the rich and poor is getting wider."

It is for this reason that a string of grenade attacks - some allegedly by Somali Islamist insurgent group Al-Shabab or their sympathizers - have occurred in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, Garissa town and Mombasa town this is after Kenya began its military incursion in Somalia in October 2011.

Currently there is quite a big number of Muslims in Kenya. The percentage always depend on those reporting. However Muslims believe that they are 25% of Kenya's population. large Muslim communities are found in the Coast and north-eastern regions of Kenya.

The major problem is that some young Kenyan Muslims have been influenced by radical preaching on Jihad which make them believe that wars being fought against some Muslims countries abroad - for example, in Afghanistan and Iraq - are part of "a global campaign against Islam". There is also an extreme interpretation of Islam on jihad which triggers youth to cross the border to Somalia for 'jihad' [holy war].

Education is a key factor in development of any community, society or even the entire universe. Religions have in history instituted their own schools. In Islam such schools are *madrassa*, *zawiyas*, *markaz* and *duksis* among many others. These schools are so significant for they play a vital role in shaping the value system of children leading them to be honorable decent citizens. The religious teachers (*maalims*, *ustadhs* etc) administering these institutions are at the forefront on imparting religious and general positive values in the children they handle. The function therefore of religious institutions and their teachers cannot therefore be ignored for what is taught here impacts the value formation of a young mind.

Muslims in Kenya form about 30 % of the total population. They are spread all over the country with higher densities in the urban areas. Predominant Muslim populations may be found along the coast areas, the north eastern and eastern provinces. All these area have many *madrassa* and also increasing number of orphans who only attend *madrassa* for it is free in many areas.

Despite the *Madrasa* institution being very crucial within the Islamic societal structure, here in Kenya little efforts and attention have been directed towards *Madrassas*. Most *Madrassas* in Kenya have no syllabus; have weak management organs and no schemes of service for employees hence lack of recognition by the state and other employment and regulating bodies. Majority of *Madrasa* teachers earn peanuts (between ksh 3,000-ksh 15,000/= per month). There are also some who work voluntarily for lack of sponsors. These situations make *Madrassas* vulnerable for manipulation, misuse and abuse. *Madrasa* teachers are ill prepared and ill equipped as teachers, many are not trained at all and lack of motivation only compounds their fate and vulnerability as individuals.

In addition there is no body which certifies *madrassa* teachers. Therefore anyone who speak little Arabic (including those who worked as casual workers in Middle east and learnt Arabic) can open and run *madrassa* in Kenya without any interruption. Some of the national intervention strategies are not sensitive to Muslim concerns and needs, among them recognizing the *madrassa* teachers, *duksi* teachers, mosque Elders/committee members, women and youth groups. The teaching of moderate Islam in *madrassas* or Muslim schools has been hindered by the lack of a teaching curriculum as well as lack of research among the *Madrasa* teachers. As an early childhood development children should be taught about inter-religious co-existence at that level.

The critical role that faith based institutions can play in the prevention and control of terrorism and extremism has now been recognized. The institutions have the capacity to reach out to the majority of their learners who also are regarded as Muslims scholars to be hence having influence in the society.

The Qur'an and the teachings of the Holy Prophet provide a strong foundation for preventing extremism and other problems in the society. In addition, the extensive network of mosques, *madrassas* and Muslim schools, the five daily prayers in individual mosques as well as the obligatory Friday congregation provide an opportunity for direct link to the community. The existing Muslim infrastructure has not been adequately mobilized and utilized in addressing social problems especially terrorism and extremism. As a result of poor education on moderation and lack of national coordination the Muslim response to extremism have been slow, inadequate and fragmented Muslims at all levels have expressed their anger and disagreement with terror attacks and groups but they lack information on how to organize their concerns. It is

expected that these researches will yield a more organized response based on the situation analysis of current situation among Muslim communities and the entire nation.

Once the research is finalized the participants will have clearly identified their roles and the role of each sector and group in the community in combating extremism.

## CONCLUSIONS

From the above discussion and quotations, it is clear that there is existence of some failures due to lack of dialogue. This has made it easy for wrangles and conflicts to come up. From our discussion we have seen that social and political interference has found its way to interfaith dialogue. This underlines the importance of dialogue in any society. Politicians has been able to align themselves to different faith groups thus giving faith groups a political outlook, of for example if prominent politician subscribes to a certain faith, Then the followers of that faith are seen to belong to certain political party which is not always the case.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

African people should reassert traditional communal values and ensure that these values are infused in all the institutions and form the basis of a national integrity system in order to counter the rampant conflicts in the communities. Religious institutions should organize workshops, seminars for leaders at all levels to remind them their duty of uniting the humanity as well as conduct researches on counter-radicalization to prevent young people from joining violent groups. if this is not done many youth will continue joining violent groups. There is also need to teach the new anti-terror bill components to Imams and madrassa teachers who should caution their members on some clauses which might get them off guard. For example association with terror suspects etc. There is need to introduce education to prioritize, prevent and mobilizing all sectors of society through Radio and television panel discussions. Radio by its nature reaches multitudes of people. Africa is responsible for its destiny and that of her people.

All religious Doctrines are rich in combating conflict, but religious leaders fail to interpret and implement the same hence the conflicts. Religious institutions should work with governments in reporting those who incite others to fight others creation of interfaith dialogue clubs in schools, distributing posters, to change the mind set of people and inculcate the new culture of interfaith dialogue in helping to ensure no more conflicts occur in our communities. Violent extremism tear interreligious dialogue fabric, to address this we have to go into the heart of the ideology that fuels violent extremism. We must address the ideology that connects terrorists and their movements in their destructive ways. Ideology that over the years, been manipulated by state and non-state actors in equal measure, to suit the context and time. We have to stop the flagrant misinterpretation, manipulation and bastardization of religion. All religious institutions should be both a center of worship and also a center of building peace. The leadership of religious clerics, *ulemas* and scholars, as well as their cooperation is key. Only together, and in cooperation with the religious platforms, can governments and wider society find the collective will and genius to confront violence and advance shared security.

Developing a counter-ideology that provides solutions as an alternative to interreligious violence is important, and must be undertaken by religious scholars. The government should address political issues including those of identity because some of them may appear as religious marginalization hence cause interreligious hatred. The media should Cover positive interfaith activities to encourage communities to follow others the role of interfaith platforms is extremely important to symbolically present religious leaders working together, in order to jettison the idea from violent extremist to unsuspecting individuals and groups that religious leaders cannot cooperate and work together across faiths.

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