CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE, RELIGIOUS PROPAGANDA AND RADICALIZATION IN KENYAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

Radicalisation which leads to violent extremism has been a worrisome phenomenon which has assumed global dimension and has engaged the attention and concern of governments, civil society, security agencies and institutions. The violent aspect of radicalisation has greatly decimated populations, maimed innocent citizens and destroyed unqualified number of property. This negatively affects the social-economic and political development of affected nations. Religion which occupies a central position in human life becomes a medium of propagating this socio-political conflict into a moral one. This research surmises that the misuse of Religion is executed by those whose motivations and aims have a predominant religious influence is rooted in the misinterpretation of theological epithets, or it could be the result of extreme forms of delusion that may alter reality, and thus subject an individual or a group of people to distorted versions of religious facts and episodes. The research uses Kant's philosophy of categorical imperative as its theoretical framework. The theory states that we should always treat people as an end rather than means to an end. The research reveals that the focus on training of highly skilled labour at the expense of instilling values in learners makes it possible for radical elements to target them and use them as means for their political end. Religion that is also supposed to play a vital role in society is also being used as a means to an end rather than an end itself. The research recommends pedagogical reorientation so as learners as exposed to all forms of religion, by doing this they will appreciate others who have divergent religious views thus value their dignity.

Keywords: religion, propaganda, ideology, radicalization

1. Introduction

The Collins English dictionary defines radicalisation as a process by which an individual or group comes to adopt increasingly political, social or religious ideals and aspirations that reject or undermine the status quo, or reject or undermine contemporary ideas and expressions of freedom of choice (Collins English Dictionary, 2012). On the other hand, Mohammad (2014) defines radicalisation as a process in which a person gets indoctrinated by others or self-motivation into rigid ideology or otherwise, equipped with set of goals and plans that may eventually lead to extremism, militancy and terrorism aiming at national and/or international systematic change for governance and regulating human lives. From the above definitions, it is agreed radicalisation does not occur spontaneously, there is a process through which an individual undergoes before they are fully radicalised. Different scholars have come up with stages individuals go through before they are fully radicalised. The process differs from one individual to another, depending on the environment be it political or religious. The key thing that is required here is the presence of a charismatic person who is capable of delivering persuasive speeches not only in Mosques but also in schools, universities or even prisons (Pretch, 2007) Borum (2014) observes that radicalisation begins when an individual feels aggrieved by perceived injustice attributed to their policies or institutions. As a result, they begin to withdraw themselves, with an ulterior motive of demonising the persons or institutions that have sidelined them and therefore feel justified to adopt violence to redress the anomaly. McCauley & Moskalenko (2008) propose that for one to be fully radicalised, they are motivated by factors which they refer to as ''push'' factors.

These factors include grievances against the system of government or institutions or their policies. To be fully convinced, the target groups are attracted with money or material gain. They refer to these incentives as ''pull'' factors. They further point out that homes, kinship bonds, schools, religious institutions and prisons serve as the ground for recruitment. These individuals undergo gradual progression of becoming violent as time goes by. At this point, they are introduced to ideologies based on a narrative that gives an ugly picture about something being wrong and some persons or institutions are to be blamed for it. Van san & de Winter (2013) point out that youngsters are easily lured into extremist ideologies because they feel they need a sense of belonging. Is it possible for parents and teachers to notice when these students are being indoctrinated? Can the problem of identity crisis that most young people suffer from be addressed? These are some of the questions this study intends to address in relation to radicalism.

2. Categorical imperative

The categorical imperative is the central philosophical concept in the deontological moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant; it states that people should be treated as an end and not as a means to an end. The function of any religion in society is to instill morals. Kant (1952), therefore, believes that morality presents itself to human agents as categorical imperative and all our specific moral duties are derived from it. He holds that the fundamental principle of our moral duties is a categorical imperative. It is an imperative because it is a command which commands us to exercise our wills in a particular way or not to perform some action or other. It is categorical since it applies to us unconditionally and simply because we possess it as a rational will without reference to any antecedent end or goal for ourselves. The categorical imperative is the true moral imperative. We should always strive at highest good. This end which grounds for moral duties is rational in nature. The highest good consists in a world of universal, maximum virtue, guaranteeing universal and maximum happiness. Kant's account for the highest good is important in that it emphasizes that virtue is unconstitutionally good, whereas happiness is conditionally good this implies that happiness is good when and only when it is pursued and enjoyed virtuously. The two are heterogeneous in that no amount of happiness can make up for a deficit of virtue, and no amount of virtue despite its unconditioned goodness can make up for a deficit of happiness (Stumf, 1977). The highest good requires both. Categorical imperative commands actions that are good in themselves and not actions as means to another good. For instance, the act of killing others as a way of getting reward in the next world is not categorical imperative in nature. Actions which are good in nature as Stumf (1977) points out, is imperative because of its instant application to all rational beings, and it is imperative again because it gives the principles on which all humans actions ought to be based. This implies that religion should focus on common good for everyone. It should not be used as means to achieving political end by radical elements to lure young men for their political satisfaction

3. The genesis of radicalisation in Kenya

Radical Islam has been the frontier of radicalisation in the whole world. It is worth to note that this study is of a view that the extremists do not represent Islam and Muslims. However, an important question here is where do the extremists interpretation of the Islam originate? The radical elements have politically motivated actions which they desire to achieve. Politics according to (Mansoor, 2010) is the exercise of power,

allocation of values, and resolution of conflict the competition among individuals, groups, or states pursuing their interests. Marxists on the other hand view politics as the struggle between social groups in particular social classes. Basing on political motivation in relation to radicalism, it is important to note that the leaders of these groups usually have a fairly specific ideology with clear political objectives but many of their followers are never aware of it (Drake, 1998). They mainly hide behind religion so as to appear relevant. Religious rhetoric has always been used as a method of legitimising their politically motivated actions and lure the Muslim society (Botha, 2014). Therefore, the youth are lured into this conflict without knowing the motive behind their radical leaders. They end up being used as a means to their political end. As pointed out by (Cannon, 2016) Kenya has the presence of western interests, investments, installations, diplomatic corps and the headquarters and international agencies such as UN. More so, the country has close military relationships with a host of western counties e.g. US, Britain, France and Israel (Cannon, 2016) this comparatively large western presence is the main attraction and target of anti-western terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda.

The second geopolitical factor that contributes to radicalisaion and terrorism in Kenya is its close ties to Israel, a country that Muslims around the world dislike for its persecution of Palestinians (Otiso, 2009). This relationship is a major irritation to foreign and native Muslims who have repeatedly but unsuccessfully been calling for the severance of the relationship. The strong relationship ways back in 1976 when Kenya decided to offer Israel crucial logistical support in its raid on Entebbe Airport in order to free Israeli hostages held there by Palestinian hijackers allied to then Ugandan dictator Idi Amin (Otiso, 2009). Also during the 1998 attack in Kenya by terrorists, the Israel team was the first to arrive from abroad. Given that one of Al Qaeda's major grievances against the US is its support of Israel at the expense of Palestinians, it is not surprising that Kenya's long pro-Israel stance is viewed by Al Qaeda as evidence of Kenya's support of US policy in the Middle East. Whether right or wrong, this makes Kenya a bona fide Al-Qaeda target (Otiso, 2009). More so, the Kenya's tourism sector according to (Cannon, 2016) is also a major contributor to radicalisation. Tourist are mostly attracted at the coastal region of the country, this is at odds with at local Islamic culture and custom for instance, Islam teaches that women should cover their bodies except the eyes while in public and also prohibits consumption of alcohol. However, the tourists walk barely naked and alcohol is sold at the bars for tourists. These facilities are oriented to Western tourists whereas most locals practice an - Arabized Muslim lifestyle that is largely incompatible with the norms of Western style tourism (Botha, 2014).

This dis-junction between tourism and the dominant local culture have created anti-tourism sentiments in the coastal regions of Kenya. The Kenyan government has not shown enough sensitivity to this issue because its hands are tied given the many economic benefits of tourism. This has made it easier for groups like Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab to infiltrate the area in the guise of providing solutions to poverty and local Islamic cultural erosion. Moreover, in targeting Kenya's tourism facilities, Al-Shabaab hopes to increase its chances of intimidating prospective tourists (Otiso, 2009). More so, many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have a large Muslim populations, however Kenya stands out with predominantly Christian population and relatively large economy. This presents a major stumbling block to radical Muslims who desire to play a larger role in regions affairs by offering Sharia law as a solution to regions socioeconomic challenges (Otiso, 2009) the failed state of Somalia has also led to spread radicalism of in different parts of East Africa, Kenya being one of them. The rise of Al-Shabaab which had links with Al-Qaeda has contributed a lot to youth radicalisation in Kenya (Botha, 2014). The US led global war on terror is one of the contributing factors to this. Kenya has been on target because she sent her troops in Somalia and also its perceived support of the US.The terror gang looks keenly on the challenges that young people in Kenya face and exploit them thus making them vulnerable. Therefore, it is important to point out that radicalism is mainly driven behind sociopolitical agenda. The youth are the main target of the radical elements that have a big desire to achieve their political end.

4. Radical ideologies

Rosand and Miller (1975) define ideology as the beliefs, values, principles, and objectives however ill-defined or tenuous - by which a group defines its distinctive political identity and aims. According to Karl Marx, an ideology is a widely held body of ideas systematically biased towards the real or imagined interests of a particular sex or social group or class within society, it is a set of beliefs through which people are deceived or deceive themselves (Cranston, 2014). He further points out that ideology is a false consciousness. Marx states that people, who do not have the means of production, are subject to the ruling class and this ruling class spread false ideas among them. They control thinkers and historians, rewrite history, and falsify facts (Taha, Zahra & Al-khaoli, 2008). Marx postulates that all ideological systems are the products of social and economic conditions. The material interests of the ruling class determine how people look at their social conditions, their real existence and their ideas (Terry, 1976). Laws for example, are not products of divine reasons but are made in a way

which fits the personal interests of the dominant class; they spread some false ideas in society in order to change the formula of existence. These ideas play a significant role in shaping the ordinary people's mentality. The ideas appear objective so as it may hide the self-interest of the dominant class (Taha, Zahra & Al-Khaoli, 2008). What makes people to give in to these false ideas? Terry (1976) considers ideology as inescapable; it lives in us and constitutes us. On the other hand, Mattei (1994) argues that ideology differs from philosophy since it is accepted uncritically and is not articulated intellectually, he further points out that it operates at the level of group suggestions rather than individual thinking. The main function of ideology in radicalisation is to provide a motive and framework for action. It makes the terrorists justify their violence by displacing the responsibility to their victims whom in ideological terms they hold responsible for the state of affairs which the terrorist claim led them to adopt violence (Drake, 1998). It is therefore a key part of the radicalisation process as it offers doctrinal arguments that serve to legitimise extremist positions. The radicalised individuals are made to believe that acts committed in the name of faith will be forgiven and perhaps rewarded in the next world. Violence is legitimised as long as it is an expression of the will of one's deity (Rotberg, 2005). Mostly, the terror warlords masquerade as devoted religious leaders, they will want to dominate under the pretense of submission to a greater cause or set of principles. However, most of them are ache-typical warlords, harbouring deep desires within their hearts to hold to power and dominate others (Rosand & Miller, 1975).

The warlords grossly misinterpret religion and use it to appeal to people's soft spot. Their ideology is faith-driven and spread through exploitation of the religious sentiment of the masses. Botha (2013) notes that those who are mostly used are new young converts to Islam who don't understand Koran very well. In most cases, school-aged youth have fallen prey to their ideologies and have been used to carry out terrorist attacks or serve on the front line in battles against the opposing forces. This is because they are more likely to evade detection by security forces and also they are not willing adults (Bott, 2009). Kant's ethical philosophy opposes such kinds of actions of manipulating or exploiting people for our own interests. He states that act so that you treat humanity, weather in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as means only (Rachaels, 1986). This implies that people are never to be manipulated or be used to achieve particular purposes, no matter how good those purposes may be.

Kant in his *critique of pure reason* written in 1781, Kant himself expressed his unwavering belief in the existence of God and a future life. However, according to him, the belief in God, freedom and immortality, which brings happiness to man and foster

world peace, cannot be rationalised, indoctrinated and turned into ideology (Kanz, 2014). As discussed, ideology as related to this study is a false consciousness it is a set of belief that people use either to deceive themselves or even others. Radical ideologies have been employed by terror gang to lure young people to engage into acts of terror. Through the use of ideologies, the intrinsic worth that is the dignity of humanity is tampered with and people are used as means and not as an end.

5. The role of propaganda in radicalization

Propaganda can be defined as the employment of non-logical, or affective, appeals in the public dissemination and modification of ideas, attitudes, and beliefs (Pratkanis & Aronson, 1991).The term propaganda became widely used during early twentieth century during World War I, and was later employed to describe the persuasive tactics of totalitarian regimes (Pratkanis & Aronson, 1991). They further state that after World War I, the term soon came to denote the influence through the manipulation of symbols and the psychology of the individual, with the ultimate goal of having the recipient of the appeal come to voluntarily accept a position as if it were their own. Throughout history, religions have been effective vehicles for propaganda, especially when it comes to disseminating political and social ideas (Jowett & O'donnell, 2006).

Religious rhetoric has always been used as a method of legitimising politically motivated actions. For instance, the Islamist radical groups like the Al-Shabaab use religion as a vehicle to achieve its political agenda. The group claims that it wants to foster the noble cause of reinstating religious values. The group has sought to establish a theocratic state based on sharia law (Kissinger, 2011). It utilises religion, brainwashing and indoctrination to enlist support.Religious teachings are also used to justify or explain their political and sometimes violent acts. It uses religion to generate the support of Muslim people (Botha, 2014). Al-Shabaab, normally recruits its members through religious socialisations and through economic incentives (Botha, 2014). The group is said to identify people inclined to be sympathetic of Islamist group. The recruitment is voluntary in the sense that the recruits are not openly compelled to join. The group will always entice new members by showing them an alternative way of life. These recruits go through indoctrination and training, and are ultimately given terrorist assignments to carry out (Botha, 2014). Poverty, youth alienation and very high levels of youth unemployment in East Africa, are the main reasons that some of these young people leave their countries to join Al-Shabaab which remunerate them with a lot of money (Kissinger, 2011). Kant's categorical imperative commands actions that are good in themselves and not actions as means to another good. Religion should just be good in

itself but not as means to another good that cannot be universally accepted as moral law (Kanz, 2014). According to Torres et al. (2006) there are three themes found throughout most Jihad propaganda.

The first is a political theme that stresses the importance of establishing an Islamic state that can place religious values at the center of society and state affairs. In order to obtain this political reality, sympathisers are encouraged to support the removal of western supported regimes to ultimately end the west's corruptive influence in Muslim countries (Torres et al., 2006).

The second is a religious theme which reminds supporters of a golden age in Islamic societies. The recruits are encouraged to return to a more pure, pious society of which they are promised rewards in their second life if they adhere to that (Torres et al., 2006).

The third and final theme is instrumental, which promotes the necessary actions in order to arrive at an ideal political and religious society. Believers are directed to use force against western oppressors in order to restore the reputation of Islam, even if it entails certain death by suicide bombing. In order to achieve their goal, the radical elements commonly utilise one or many of the following four methods: persuasion, which assumes that an individual's behavior is shaped by his or her own ideas; a direct emotional appeal that targets certain sentiments intended to compel an individual towards a particular behaviour; direct suggestion, which uses repetition of emotionally toned ideas to evoke action; and indirect emotional appeal, which presents the propaganda as entertainment or news in order to inspire particular behaviors (Biddle, 1931) Terrorists often justify their violent acts by making claims that they are performed for a higher societal need, which can be understood in the context of social cognitive theory (Weimann, 2008). According to this theory, one may be emotionally impacted upon by the content they are consuming, but they are in no way just reactive organisms shaped and shepherded by environmental events or inner forces (Bandura, 2001). Instead, behavior is derived from a combination of personal agency and socio-structural influences that promote self-development, adaptation, and change (Bandura, 2001). As a result of this one may be motivated to act due to the anticipated self-satisfaction gained from fulfilling valued standards and evaluative reactions that stem from performing a particular action (Bandura, 2001). This is especially true when it comes to moral behaviours. There are two aspects of moral agency that every individual experiences, one inhibitive and the other proactive. Bandura proposes that individuals ought to be self-regulative and self-reflective. These allow the process of thinking, acting, and predicting occurrences that may result from individual behavior (Bandura, 2001). The adequacy of one's predictions is then judged on how well their thoughts

matched with the real outcome, a process referred to as thought verification (Bandura, 2001). The main aim of propaganda is to manipulate the thinking and the emotion of individual through indoctrination. On contrary, moral autonomy is the capacity to deliberate and give oneself the moral law, rather than merely heeding the injunctions of others (Young, 1986). It is the aspect of having authority over one's actions rather than letting the principles by which we make decisions be determined by political leaders, pastors, or society. Kant proposes the will should be the guiding principle for itself, thus connecting the idea of self-government to morality, instead of being obedient to an externally imposed law or religious precept; one should be obedient to one's own self-imposed law.

In Kant's essay on *Enlightenment* (1781) he describes enlightenment as the human being's emergence from his self-incurred minority and called on his readers to have the courage to use their own understanding without direction from another (Kant, 1952). However, Kant opposes the notion of emotions, feelings, and other non-intellectual features from determining our decisions. He feels that when they determine our actions then they are heteronymous rather than autonomous. Freedom of the will is very essential in determining our morality. This study addresses the issue of propaganda and how religion and politics are used as means of achieving the propaganda of the radical elements. Can individual autonomy be a solution to this?

6. Conclusion

Radicalization that leads to violent extremism is mainly propagated through religion and this is achieved by misinterpretation of theological epithets.

6.1 Recommendations
Based on its findings, this study arrived at the following recommendations:
- Kant's categorical imperative be adopted as a philosophical base for education in Kenya.
- There is need for curriculum adjustment so as to embrace peace education, this should adopt Kant's categorical imperative into it as a guide for curriculum in its formulation.
- Religious subjects be integrated and not taught as single entities, much emphasis be placed on acquisition of moral skills rather than cognitive skills. The integrated subject to be renamed religious education.

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