A Linguistic Analysis Of form and Content of Al-Shabaab's Press Statements on the Recent Kenyan Terror Attacks

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Abstract
This paper examines the form that is structure as well as the content of the statements and press releases of Al-Shabaab at different times with the hope of establishing a pattern of phraseology and consistent references to dogmatic terrorism themes. The study explores the linguistic form and function in statement releases of the Al-Shabaab and their relation to the communicative purposes. Moreover, the study analyses the content of the press statements with regard to unearthing the most recurrent themes in them namely, militancy, terrorism and extremism propagated through the use various linguistic indicators. The socio-cultural approach to CDA used by Teun van Dijik has been used in this study. Constructions for this study have been analysed from press statements released by the Al-Shabaab on the recent terrorist attacks in which it claimed responsibility namely, the Mandera bus attack, the Koromei quarry attack and the Garissa University attack. Qualitative content analysis is adopted in analyzing data for this study. The study offers insight into the structure of the Al-Shabaab press statements and also shows how the language used in the statements propagates ideologies held by terrorists and militants.
Keywords: Al-Shabaab, Press Statement, Terrorism, Militancy.

Bionotes

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Introduction

In the North Eastern region of Kenya, hardly a year passes without incidents of militancy-driven challenges which include incidents of killing. The latest of such attacks was recorded on Thursday 2nd, April, 2015 when an unidentified gunmen swooped on Garissa University killing 148 people, 142 of whom were students and the terrorist disappeared unnoticed. Levs and Yan (2015) posit that the death toll is the highest in a terror attack on Kenyan soil since the United States (US) Embassy was bombed in 1998 where more than 200 people died in the Nairobi blast.

Further, they observe that the attack was deadlier than the Al-Shabaab attack on the Westgate shopping center in Nairobi in September 2013 that left 67 people dead. Garissa University College, which has an enrollment of 815 students, was established in 2011 (Levs and Yan, 2015). Moreover, it is the only public university in the North Eastern region. A total of 147 people were killed according to the official Twitter account of Kenya's National Disaster Operation Centre and Kenyan media reports. The agency also said 79 people were injured and 587 people are said to have been evacuated unscathed (Levs and Yan, 2015)

In a statement, Al Shabaab claimed responsibility and it also threatened to stage more attacks in the country. In a statement issued on Saturday 4th, April, 2015, the group warned Kenyans that their cities will "run red with blood". The Al Shabaab Militia further said that what happened is inevitable unless President Uhuru Kenyatta intervened to ensure immediate release of Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) from the Republic of Somalia or rather all Muslims lands.

Al Shabaab Militia has since 2013 launched successful coordinated attacks in Westgate (200 people dead), Mpeketoni (48 people dead), Gamba, Mandera (28 dead in bus attack and about 40 people in Koromei quarry). In fact, Al-Shabaab always claimed responsibility of several bombings namely; the Mandera bus attack, Koromei quarry attack and Garissa University attack which are the focus of this paper being. Incidentally, none of these outrageous acts has ever prompted adequate response from the government. The government has been out to find a solution as the Al-Shabaab intensifies invasions on the country. This implies that militancy and terrorism have remained a very potent security challenge to Kenya.

Fairclough (1992) postulates that there is a relationship between language and ideology so ideologies exist in texts. Language thus propagates ideology and is enriched by ideology. Therefore, ideologies are reflected on both the form and context of texts. A case in point is the press statements of the Al-Shabaab which will be analysed in this paper so as to unearth terrorism, militancy and extremism as depicted in such texts.

Al- Shabaab

This is a militant group known as Harakat Al-Shabaab Al Mujahideen (HSM) but commonly known as Al-Shabaab which stand for 'The Youth' or 'The Youngsters'(AMISOM ARTICLE-http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/al_shabaab.html). It has also been observed that, it is an off-shoot of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) which splintered into several factions after defeat in 2006 by Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the TFG's Ethiopian military allies. Al-Shabaab is noted as a jihadist terrorist group based in Somalia which pledged allegiance to Militant Islamist Organization, Al-Qaeda (United Nations, 2014). Moreover, the Mujahideen refers to Muslims involved in terrorist acts against the Western infidels to realize the new Islamic world order; an expressed will to power and a great drive to reconstitute a Caliphate, a great Arab-Muslim state, (Alexander, 2004; Sageman, 2004).

When Al-Shabaab is designated as a terrorist organization then we anticipate that its statements would propagate particular ideologies because Badran (2001) postulates that 'Islamic' means Muslim-related, while 'Islamist' tends to be an extreme version of Islamic and has connotations of militancy and terrorism.

Al-Shabaab describes itself as waging *jihad* that is war against "enemies of Islam" as vividly expressed in the press statements and is engaged in combat against the Federal Government of Somalia and the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) (AMISOM ARTICLE-http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/al_shabaab.html).

Al-Shabaab has been designated a terrorist organization by European countries such as the United States (Rice, 2008). Further, the group has been suspected of having links with Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb and Boko Haram, a Nigeria based terrorist group. The groups synchronize and coordinate their activities through sharing funds, training and explosives.

A terrorist organization is an illegal secret organization that consists of planners, trainers, and actual bombers or killers. Consequently, a terrorist organization is bound to have various structures, such as an identifiable hierarchy of command, a horizontal structure where leaders are non-identifiable or have no major role, or a situation where the terrorists can operate independently (Hoge and Rose, 2001). Al-Shabaab thus fits to this description because it is a clandestine group whose motive is retaliation through attacks that lead to mass deaths (United Nations, 2014). Moreover, Rice (2008) postulates that the United States has asserted that just like Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabaab poses a global threat.

Through the religious arrogance, Al-Shabaab attempts to recruit and radicalize potential candidates, and also demoralize their enemies. It is evident from AMISOM killings that Al-Shabaab is determined to portray the war as an affair between Christians and Muslims (United Nations, 2014).

Since the TFG-led *Operation Linda Nchi* between the Somalian National Army (SNA) and the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) against Al-Shabaab militants in Southern Somalia began, Al-Shabaab has been intensifying its publicity (United Nations, 2014). Militant forces is thus becoming endangered because it continuously suffers heavy losses.

Press Statements

Lassen (2006, p. 13) defines a press release as "a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by the members of professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs".Press statements provide information that is believed to be of interest to the general public (Pander-Maat, 2008). Press statements or release as a genre provides a ready pre-formulated piece of news written in a news-style format. Therefore, reporters copy and retell a press release to the public almost verbatim (Martini, 2012).

A press release has a suitable headline followed by a leading paragraph which elaborates on the relevant topic (Jacobs, 1999). It is also written bearing in mind the linguistic and metapragmatic devices and thus it is objective (Jacobs, 1999; Sleurs and Jacobs, 2005).The statements of Al-Shabaab were downloaded from their website as releases so as to deny reporters freedom to manipulate or modify a terror press release since the statements should always reflect the accuracy and precision of terror attacks.

Terrorism, Militancy and Extremism

Terrorism

The word 'terror', points to a recurrent and fuzzy political strategy defined as the threat of violent action intended to cause fear for political reasons routinely (Tilly, 2007). In the search to identify outstanding characteristics of terror, Hoffman (2006, p. 41) proposes that terrorism is "ineluctably political in aims and motives; violent – or, equally important, threatens violence designed to have far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target; conducted by an organization with an identifiable chain of command or conspiratorial cell structure (whose members wear no uniform or identifying insignia); and perpetrated by a sub-national group or non-state entity".

In essence, several studies have come up with numerous definitions of terrorism. In fact, Simon (1994) observes that at least 212 different definitions of terrorism exist across the world; 90 of which are frequently used by governments and other institutions. However, some scholars have defined terrorism variously, for instance, Ruby (2002, p. 10) notes that the US State Department defines terrorism as "politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience".

Hoffman (2006; 1999) postulates that terrorism may be viewed as a means of communicating a message and using violence so as to solidify the triumph of their cause. He further establishes some common characteristics such as strategic targeting and undeniable belief in the ultimate triumph over an institution's enemies.

Pedahzur (2001) confirms that there is no universally agreed-on definition of terrorism. However, he points out that most universally accepted definition of terrorism, is that terrorism is the use of violence to create fear for political, religious, or ideological reasons. More often than not terrorists target the most innocent that is, civilians and iconic symbols so as to attain publicity. The meaning of terrorism is socially constructed because terrorist violence and damage not only the immediate target victims, the government or military but also civilians or society as a whole. Terrorism is distinct from regular crime because it is set to achieve particular objectives which if not met are deemed a worse consequence than the deaths of civilians.

Irshad (2011) observes that religion is one of the major causes of terrorism thus religious terrorism is the main type which has been associated with the Al-Shabaab Militia in this study. Religious terrorism is one whose basis is religious fanaticism as is the case with radical religious Islamism. According to Juergensmeyer (2004), religious terrorism consists of acts that terrify and have been advanced through a religious motivation, justification, organization, or world view.

Militancy

D'Arcy (2011) posits that militancy refers to any action or activity that is motivated by grievance, adversarial, confrontational, and collectively carried out. Militancy is 'grievance-motivated' since it is neither entertaining nor resourceful, but is rather motivated by a desire to protest against something. A militant action is 'adversarial' because its targets are not treated by the protesters as potential allies or partners, open to being convinced or won over, but rather as stubborn enemies who should be pressured and if possible defeated through a melee. Militancy is 'confrontational' due to the fact that it seeks to initiate or intensify the brawl rather than seeking consensus.

According to King (1963b), the aim of militancy is to create a crisis and propagate tension that would force a given institution to confront an issue that it has always been reluctant to negotiate on. Worth to note is that militancy is a 'collectively carried out' action because it is commonly performed by affiliates in social scuffles who act in concert with their fellow protestors. Therefore, militancy involves any form of grievance-motivated, adversarial and confrontational collective action. There are four basic modes of militancy which capture the semantic import of a typical militant tactic whose merits are assessed along two axes, that is, moral acceptability and strategic efficacy. These are:

   i.   Symbolic defiance
   ii.   Physical confrontation
   iii.   Property destruction
   iv.   Institutional disruption.

      In this paper, physical confrontation and property destruction are identified as the militant tactic adopted by Al-Shabaab so as to intensify conflict and compel its enemy (the Kenyan Government) to initiate meaningful social changes.

Extremism

Neuman (2010) defines extremism political ideologies that oppose a society's fundamental values and principles. He further notes that the term can be applied to any ideology that advocates racial or religious supremacy and/or opposes the core principles of democracy and universal human rights. The term can also describe the methods through which political actors attempt to realise their aims by using means that 'show disregard for the life, liberty, and human rights of others' (Neuman, 2010).

      Following the above definitions of extremism, in the current study extremists, the Al-Shabaab, are observed to hold perceptions of a crisis involving violations of postulated sacred values as well as justification for the use of violence to reach a solution for such problems. Extremist ideologies of a secular or religious nature are therefore the major cause of terrorism. Such terrorism arises from perceived feelings of discrimination based on ethnic or religious origins (Irshad, 2011).

Theoretical Framework

Given the goal of the paper is to examine the discourse surrounding Al-Shabaab in order to determine terrorism, militancy, and extremism, Fairclough (1992) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was conducted on HSM press statements issued after the most recent three terrorist attacks that have faced Kenya. The socio-cultural approach to CDA used by Teun van Dijik which operates under the belief that media is quite intentional in the way in which it controls and shapes public discourse, utilizing language that taps into the socio-cognitive dimension that is those attitudes, stereotypes, preconceived notions people hold so as to reinforce ideological messages (van Dijik, 2000). Moreover, CDA is chosen because it typically focuses on discourse beyond the sentence level (Tabolt, Atkinson and Atkinson, 2003).

Methodology

Adams (1996) posits that statement analysis can be an important investigative tool and should also aid law enforcement interviewing approaches. Therefore, if such analysis is

effective in illegal acts, then it can be useful in counterterrorism as well. In this connection, statements from the spokesman of Al-Shabaab provide a useful baseline. This group has continued to issue periodic statements calling for continued militant and terrorist attacks on the Kenyan government and providing justifications for such attacks. Statements from the groups' spokesman were selected and analyzed to evaluate the manner in which words, phrases and expressions used are organized into longer elements and also pointing out the recurrent themes. (See. Appendix A)

For the purpose of this study, press statements of the recent three terror attacks in Kenya released by the Al-Shabaab spokesman, Sheikh Ali Mohamud Rage, were selected from the Al-Shabaab Website. As noted earlier, Al-Shabaab is a well-known terrorist organization which aims at propagating terrorism and militancy thus endangering public security. The press releases issued by the group on Kenyan attacks represent a good sample of the group's press releases of attacks. Moreover, the statements represent the purposes and practical orientations of the group. The statements used in this study were obtained from the Al-Shabaab Website because it is believed that the internet is the most heavily utilized by Al-Shabaab and other militant Islamic groups like Al-Qaeda because it is the easiest and most cost-effective way to reach a large audience according to the AMISOM article obtained from http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/al_shabaab.html.

The sample for the study may be viewed as small, however, the sample is deemed appropriate because it conforms to one of the principles of text and corpus analysis as noted by Stubbs (1996).Stubbs further observes that 'the unit of study must be whole texts' (p.32) because whole texts give a better representation of a given genre in contrast to segments of a text. In addition, "the samples are homogeneous because they belong to one organization thus aiding an in-depth analysis and identification of common patterns in a group with similar characteristics" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 127)

Qualitative content analysis is adopted and it involves qualitative interpretation analysis of data under focus (Dörnyei, 2007). The analysis thus involves interpreting the meaning and purpose of selecting linguistic and stylistic features such as lexical and grammatical forms related to self-reference and time deixis in the corpus by examining the role they play in regard to the social context, occasion and purpose thus motivating selection of these forms.

Results and Discussion
Form and Style
As indicated earlier, Jacobs (1999) posits that Press Releases are usually provided with a headline succeeded by a leading paragraph then supportive paragraphs that explore what is entailed in the topic. A press release or statement thus looks similar to a news report.

Just like press releases, it is observed that two of the statements of the Al-Shabaab attacks on Kenya corpus considered for this study, have proper headlines followed by a leading paragraph the other paragraphs that have elaborated on the themes of each of the press statements. For instance, the Garissa and Koromei quarry attacks have specific headlines; the Garrisa attack is titled, 'Garissa attack: Burying Kenya's hopes' whereas the Koromei quarry attack is titled "HSM Release: Koromei". This implies that the statements are reporting confirmed news (Martini, 2012).Moreover, the title of the statement released after the Garissa attack communicates a lot in regard to the attack.

Firstly, it would insinuate that the Al-Shabbab has eradicated the most elite in the society that would have moulded the future. Secondly, it would mean that the republic of Kenya ought to expect more terror attacks unless the government withdraws KDF from Somalia. The Koromei attack title implies that the text is offering details regarding the realities surrounding the Koromei quarry attack.

The Mandera bus attack statement however has no title yet the procedure of writing a leading paragraph is followed by further elaboration on its theme. Providing a concise headline followed by a leading paragraph that offers details on the topic ensures that Al-Shabaab Press releases are copied and retold verbatim thus hindering the media from reformulation of the issued statements. Whenever writers of a press statement adopt a journalistic style in writing statements they encourage the media to adopt it as it is with very minimal modifications (Martini, 2012).

Linguistic and Metapragmatic Forms

Results from Jacobs' study (1999), confirm that press releases tend to be deictically neutral in terms of person, time, and space reference. Jacobs attributes this neutrality to the nature of a press release which is supposed to be objective and tellable. Objectivity, neutrality, and self-distancing gives the press release a sense of credibility achieved by taking the stance of both the reporter and the reader. Tellability means that the PR should possess a certain quality that allows its reporters to re-tell its content as accurately as possible at any point within time (Jacobs, 1999).

Various metapragmatic and linguistic forms are utilized in order to achieve objectivity and tellability in writing a press statement. Third person self-reference is a common metapragmatic device that reflects the objectivity of a press statement (Jacobs, 1999). Another linguistic technique which might be employed in order to achieve neutrality and self-distancing is the use of passive or passive-like constructions (Jacobs, 1999; Sleurs & Jacobs, 2005; van Hell, Verhoeven & Oosterhout, 2005).

Some features that may contribute to the quality of tellabilty in a press release are tense, aspect, and time deixis. For this study, only objectivity and tellablity are explored by comparing the use of referentials, passive voice as well as tense and time deixis in the two corpora which are the focus of this study.

Instances of the first person self-reference in the plural form 'we' occurs in the Al-Shabaab press statements. A total of eleven instances have been identified in the press statements analysed in this study. This shows that the spokesman, Sheikh Rage, is one of the group members. This further shows that he is talking on behalf of the entire group and he is also a member of the group.

The third person is however the frequently used form of self-reference which signifies that the press statement writers take a neutral stance (Jacobs, 1999). The third person self-reference is used by press release writers so as to distance themselves from the hard news on terror they are reporting. For instance, in the Al-Shabaab corpus reference to Al-Shabaab is mostly made by using the alternative name 'Harakat Al-Shabaab Al Mujahideen' or 'Mujahideen'. The frequency of using the third person self-reference is minimal as can be seen in table 1 below

Table 1: Frequency of third person in the Al-Shabaab press statements

Reference item	Harakat Al-Shabaab Al Mujahideen	Mujahideen	Total
Frequency	3	3	6

However, the corpus for this study shows that the terrorist organization gladly claims responsibility of the terror attacks resulting to frequent use of the first person self-reference. This implies that Al-Shabaab maintains that it is responsible for the criminal acts.

Passive voice is said to indicate objectivity and self-distancing (Jacobs, 1999; Sleurs and Jacobs, 2005). The patient is foregrounded and the agent is back grounded. Consequently, self-reference is avoided because it becomes unnecessary to mention the agent. However, Al-Shabaab seem to be claiming responsibility of the attacks so the agent is mentioned. Al-Shabaab news involve terror that has admitted thus self-distancing or neutrality is inappropriate in formulation of press statements of this manner.

Referentials and Time Deixis

A press release, in this case a statement, is assumed to report an event which can be reiterated easily and accurately by the reporters (Jacobs, 1999; p. 217). This means that even if the PR cannot be altered even when it shifts from its original writer to the journalist; person, place and time references should remain the same (Jacobs, 1999). One of the strategies that helps in fixing referentiality is the use of third person-self reference and the proper name of the organization as illustrated in table (1) above. This usage keeps referentials in the statement unchangeable by further editing processes in the event that the press statement is being retold.

Another type of reference which is cannot be modified in retelling is time reference. Lexical and grammatical time deictics can be realized as time referentials. Lexical deictics are words that refer to indefinite time such as: now, today and yesterday while grammatical or syntactic deictics are formulated by tense and aspect constructions (Grundy, 2008). Implementing these referentials aid formulations of a tellable and retellable piece of news that serves specific goals of the organization that has issued the press statement.

The use of the exact date format is missing in this corpus yet such a format fixes the time of the event that is going to be reiterated by either the journalists or the readers. The use of 'Monday, Thursday, 3 a.m.' is sometimes justified by the fact that such words give the information provided by the press statement its news' worthiness (Jacobs, 1999). In the Al-Shabaab press statements some sentences refer to events that occur in 'recent days', 'early this morning', 'previously'. These indicate that this event is worthy of being considered as news because even when these time adverbials are used they refer to actions accomplished in the past that have an impact on the present as well.

The simple past tense has been extensively used in the press statements. This implies that the statements report or announce the events of the past, therefore, it introduces activities accomplished by the organization in a period that has already passed. Several examples depicting the simple past tense have been identified from each of the statements considered in this study. The exact words have been italicized as illustrated in the examples given below:

(i)   In the Mandera bus attack statement the Al-Shabaab spokesman declares that "the Mujahideen successfully *carried* out an operation near Mandera early this morning

which resulted in the perishing of 28 crusaders, as revenge for the crimes *committed* by the Kenyan crusaders against our Muslim brethren in Mombasa"

(ii)   In the Koromei quarry attack the following constructions have been identified:

(a) In another successful operation *carried* out by the Mujihadeen, nearly 40 Kenyan crusaders met their demise after a unit from the Saleh Nabhan brigade *raided* them in the midnight hours of Monday at Koromei on the outskirts of Mandera."

(b) The latest attack was part of a series of attacks *planned* and *executed* by the Muhajideen to serve a response to Kenya's occupation of Muslim lands…"

(iii)   In the Garissa University attack the simple past tense has been used in the following constructions:

(a) …nearly ten thousand Muslims were summarily *executed* to the mass detention, torture and extra-judicial killings of Muslims, the systematic persecution of the Muslims in Kenya was *carried* out with such savagery that

(b) …the Kenyan military *embarked* on a series of mass killings, torture and systematic rape of the Muslim women in Somalia.

(c) Tens of thousands of Muslims *were displaced* from their homes, hundreds more were killed and thousands injured as a direct result of the Kenyan invasion.

(d) Kenyan jets *shelled* refugee camps and hospitals killing dozens. They *strafed* entire villages from the air, killed livestock and bombarded Madrassas and educational institutions, crushing, with such malice, the dreams and hopes of an entire generation.

(e) …the Muslims were *stripped* of all their dignity and subjected to the most inhuman treatment for failing to succumb to the subjugation of the disbelievers."

(f) The latest attack *occurred* at Garissa University College on Thursday.

(g) At around 3am the Mujahideen *stormed* the university compound and swiftly *proceeded* to the halls of residence…

(h) …since the attack *targeted* only non-Muslims, all Muslims were allowed to safely evacuate the premises before executing the disbelievers.

It is explicitly evident that all the examples above report on events that have been finished thus adopts the simple past tense.

Future time-reference has been used by the spokesman to warn of the expected planned attacks by:

1.   referring to future events that are scheduled,

In the case of Al-Shabaab corpus, present structures are used to express future actions in order to serve as a grammatical device which issues warnings of expected attacks. Such examples are given below as appearing in the press statements:

(i)   Koromei quarry attack:

As Kenya *persists* in its occupation of Muslim lands, kills innocent Muslims, transgresses upon their sanctities and throws them in to positions…

(ii) Garissa University attack:

(a) For as long as your government *persists* in its path of oppression, implements repressive policies and *continues* with the systematic persecution against innocent Muslims, our attacks will also continue.

(b) Do not *dream* of security in your lands until security becomes a reality in the Muslims lands…

The constructions outlined above recount the plans that Al-Shabaab have in place in the near future.

2. Making predictions or simple statements of fact about the future. Several examples have been identified as they occur in the press statements.

    (i)   Mandera bus attack:

    (a)…by Allah's permission you *won't* stand alone in the defense of your religion, sanctities and lives.

    (b)…we reiterate to you that you *will* have no safety until you cease your hostilities against Muslims.

    (ii)   Koromei quarry attack:

    (a) …we Harakat Al Shabaab al- Mujahideen *will* persist to defend our land and our people from their aggression.

    (b) …we *will* do whatever necessary to defend our Muslim brethren suffering from Kenya's aggression.

    (iii) Garissa University attack:

    (a) No amount of precaution or safety measures *will* be able to guarantee your safety…

    (b) How long *will* you be lulled into a false sense of security by your government's repeated lies?

    (c) You are vulnerable and you *will* always remain vulnerable.

    (d) You *will* not find safety in your schools, universities, workplaces and even in your homes.

    (e) We *will*, by the permission of Allah, stop at nothing to avenge the deaths of our Muslim brothers until your government ceases its oppression and until all Muslim lands are liberated from Kenyan occupation.

    (f) …there *will* come a time when the notion of peace would be but mere reminiscences of a past long gone.

    (g) You *will* regret at a time when regret *will* be of no avail.

    (h) Our message *will* be written to you not with words, but with the blood of your people.

The Al-Shabaab through the press statements promises to accomplish particular actions in the future. This has been expressed with a lot of certainty as expressed in the foregoing examples.

3. Talking about arrangements by using the present continuous tense in the press statements as in:

    (i) Mandera bus attack:

    "As for the Kenyan crusaders, you *are fighting* a losing battle against Islam…"

    (ii) Koromei quarry attack:

    "We *are uncompromising* in our beliefs, relentless in our pursuit, ruthless against the non-believers…"

    (iii) Garissa University attack:

"Your government *keeps promising* you a lasting security but fails to deliver on its promises."

The above constructions mention vividly that the Al-Shabaab have already thought out and shared particular plans for the future amongst themselves.

The present perfect tense has been frequently used in the Al-Shabaab press statements signifying the accomplishment of a task by the Al-Shabaab group. It thus indicates that the writer is reporting that an action was completed in the recent past or it extends to the present as in the examples below:

(i) Mandera bus attack

(a) The hearts of Muslims all over *have been left* in anguish in light of events in recent days which affected our brethren in Mombasa, from the desecration of mosques, killings, arrests and other violations of sanctities and rights.

(b) …you *have previously tasted* bitter reactions of your crusade campaign, and just as we *have warned* you before…

(ii) Garissa attack:

(a) …swiftly proceeded to the halls of residence where they *had gathered* all the occupants.

(b) It is a well-known fact that the Kenyan government *has perpetrated* unspeakable atrocities against the Muslims of East Africa.

(c) …it *has left* deep psychological scars in the hearts of many Muslims.

(d) In Somalia, the Kenyan military *has committed* a countless number of atrocities against the Muslim population.

(e) We *have repeatedly warned* you that the actions of your government will not be without retaliation.

Going by the examples presented, the present perfect tense has been used to talk about several different actions which have occurred in the past and at different times suggesting that the process is not complete and more actions are possible.

Militancy, Terrorism and Extremism

From the periodic statements of Al-Shabaab, it is obvious that the activists are more inclined to religious terrorism. Therefore in this section, the statements of Al-Shabaab are examined so as to determine the operational value of the linguistic themes and how the often-used themes by the militants and terrorists provide overt indicators of terrorism, militancy, and extremism.

The statements issued by Al-Shabaab spokesman, Sheikh Ali Mohamud Rage, portray consistency in terms of theme and phraseology as outlined in table 2 provided in Appendix A.

Table 2 thus shows the most recurring words and phrases in the press statements. It is from this set that the terrorist group implicitly communicate militancy, terrorism and extremism. In fact, statement analyses reveal that Al-Shabaab accuses Kenya of atrocities against Muslims in Kenya and the same by Kenya defense forces in Somalia, noting that Kenya would not "enjoy peace until security becomes a reality in the Muslims lands".

In a section directed at the Kenyan public, Al Shabaab said that Kenya had not learnt any lesson from the attacks at Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Mpeketoni, Gamba and Mandera

for which the group had claimed responsibility. They further accuse the Kenyan government of serving Western powers to the detriment of Kenyan citizens.

The Al- Shabaab Al-Mujahideen regards its attacks as "retaliation" on behalf of Muslims, and is always warning the Kenyan government and public to prepare for more bloodshed. In fact in a press release on the West gate mall attack Al-Shabaab indicated that the attacks were just retribution for the lives of innocent Muslims shelled by Kenyan jets in Lower Jubba and in refugee camps since the Kenyan government had not hearkened to Al-Shabaab's call to withdraw KDF from Somalia.

It is evident that Muslims are quick to recite the Qur'an, intone Allah-Hu-Akbar and declare "Allah is a merciful God." This is an implication that they owe a lot of allegiance to the Muslim religion. Curiously, Sheikh Rage encapsulates Allah's injunction to defend the Muslim religion and livelihood in the press statements by always invoking Allah's name and the fact that he has commissioned the Muslims do away with the non- believers, Christians. This is an evidence that Al-Shabaab perceive the divine quality in their God. Such doctrinal teachings suffice to explain the terrorist mentality.

Through various assertions by the Al-Shabaab spokesperson it is observed that the group portrays the Kenyan government as oppressive for instance the phrase in Mandera bus attack statement, "…we reiterate to you that you will have no safety until you cease your hostilities against Muslims". This that the group is opposing the current state of affairs thus do engage in terrorism as a method of expression.

In essence, it is conspicuously said in the Al-Shabaab press statements that by killing adversaries rather innocent civilians seek to publicize their cause, communicate demand, air grievances to level authorities, and sway the policy agenda. Furthermore, the Al-Shabaab intend to do all it takes for the sake of the religion especially singling out Christians and killing or murdering them mercilessly.

Moreover, the Al-Shabaab's central aim is to warn the Kenyan government of its capability to confront civilians by launching attacks on Muslim lands. Therefore, the group portrays extremism as it threatens out of its extreme nature to confront non-believers, thus disclosing a distinction that classifies the extremists as 'true believers' and the rest as 'non-believers'. Consequently, the Al-Shabaab believe that it is a sacred duty to eradicate the *Kafir*; non-believers, of their evil by forceful death that is through organized attacks, but be merciful to one another. This can be illustrated in the examples below drawn from each of the three press statements:

    (a) Mandera bus attack statement, "As for the Kenyan crusaders, you are fighting a losing battle against Islam, you have previously tasted bitter reactions of your crusade campaign, and just as we have warned you before, we reiterate to you that you will have no safety until you cease your hostilities against Muslims."

    (b) Koromei quarry attack statement, "We are uncompromising in our beliefs, relentless in our pursuit, ruthless against the non-believers and we will do whatever necessary to defend our Muslim brethren suffering from Kenya's aggression"

    (c) Garissa University attack statement, "And since the attack targeted only non-Muslims, all Muslims were allowed to safely evacuate the premises before executing the disbelievers. The Muslim blood is inviolable whereas the blood of a *Kafir* [disbeliever] has no protection except by *Eeman* [belief] or *Aman* [covenant of security]."

In fact, the Somalia's Islamic extremist group Al-Shabaab warns of more attacks in Kenya like by declaring that "Kenyan cities will run red with blood" in the press statement on the Garissa attack.

Conclusion

The analysis has shed light on some common features that characterize press statements of the Al-Shabaab terrorist group. The press statements have their own linguistic and communicative features which provide an understanding of the sociocultural conventions that restrict the form and content that press statements assume.

The study has offered insight into the structure or form that the Al-Shabaab statements have. For instance, Most of the statements bear titles to a hint on the information contained in the report. Secondly, the spokesman prefers frequent use of the first person "we" to minimal third person reference because Al-Shabaab maintains that it is responsible for the heinous attacks. Thirdly, lexical deictics such as, Thursdly, Monday, 3.00 a.m., yesterday, previously and early this morning are employed avoiding exact date formats. Fourthly, grammatical deictics are predominantly employed in the releases that is the simple past tense, the future tense and the present perfect tense.

Lastly the study has shown the press statements use language to propagate ideologies held by terrorists and militants. It therefore presents the common words, phrases and expressions as well as themes utilized by Al-Shabaab militant group so as to illuminate linguistic pointers to militancy and terrorism thus offering or shedding light on such extremism and dealing with it to prevent subsequent terrorist attacks.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

US- United States
KDF- Kenya Defense Forces
ICU- Islamic Courts Union
TFG- Transitional Federal Government
AMISOM- African Union Mission to Somalia
SNA- Somalian National Army
CDA- Critical Discourse Analysis

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Appendix A

Table 2. Sheikh Ali Mohamud Rage's phraseology

Text/words	Themes and phrases
Ransom	The Kenyans must shed blood and will not enjoy safety until Muslims are in peace
Infidels	Kenyan government and Christians
Killings	Killing of Kenyans especially non-Muslims
Amnesty	There is a corrupting influence in governance from the western
Freedom fighters	Release KDF from Somalia - Vacate Muslim lands because it is injustice to Muslims
Commission by Allah	Killing of *Kafir* is a sacred duty to Allah
Retaliation	The propagated attacks as a mission of revenge