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Leveraging China-Kenya Collaboration for Sustainable Environmental Diplomacy



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By Mariah Faridah Muli

Abstract

One of the foundational Pillars of Kenya's Foreign Policy is Environmental Diplomacy. The Kenya Environmental Policy of 2013 emphasizes the critical role of the environment and natural resources as essential national assets vital for the country's sustainable development. Being a country in the global south, Kenya is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of industrialization, notably global warming, which manifests in the harsh realities of climate change. The country's unwavering commitment to environmental issues is a defining characteristic of its Foreign Policy. This dedication is driven by the urgent need to tackle contemporary environmental challenges, including global climate change, ozone depletion, ocean and air pollution,

and resource degradation, exacerbated by a growing world population, through collaborative efforts. On the other hand, China stands as one of the world's largest emitters of carbon dioxide, annually producing 12.7 billion metric tons of emissions. Since 1850, China has emitted a staggering 284 billion tons of carbon dioxide. As a result, China has pledged to peak its emissions by 2030 as per the Paris Agreement and is actively involved in implementing key environmental agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol and the Copenhagen Accord. Additionally, China has committed to increasing the share of non-fossil fuel energy sources like wind, solar, and nuclear to 25 percent and aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060, as announced by President Xi Jinping in 2021. Consequently, China is collaborating with countries worldwide to tackle environmental challenges, and Kenya is among its partners in this endeavor. This article explores the significance of environmental cooperation within the China-Kenya states with a shared future. It examines joint efforts between China and Kenya to address environmental challenges such

as climate change, promote renewable energy, and conserve natural resources for sustainable development. By fostering collaboration and sharing best practices, China and Kenya contribute to a greener, more resilient world, underscoring the importance of environmental cooperation in shaping the future of the China-Kenya community and beyond.

Introduction

In recent decades, environmental issues have emerged as central concerns in global politics, marked by an increasing number of international agreements aimed at addressing environmental challenges. Of particular focus is air pollution, which is closely linked to climate change and has had widespread detrimental effects worldwide. Recognizing the urgency of the issue, various countries have ratified international environmental treaties and enacted diverse policies and initiatives domestically to combat air pollution. However, despite these efforts, air pollution levels continue to rise, prompting criticism of the effectiveness of existing measures.



Dandora dump site in Nairobi County is inhabited by slum dwellers who residents to close to the burning trash thus exposing them to environmental and disease risks (Photo Credits: Manoocher Deghati/IRIN)

Kenya leads the charge in global environmental guardianship, guided by a firm dedication to sustainable progress and the conservation of its natural legacy (Smith, 2018). Woven into the fabric of its governance is the Kenya Environmental Policy of 2013 and environmental diplomacy pillar under the foreign policy document of 2014 committed the country to sustainable environmental management as a contribution to international environmental efforts a pivotal manuscript emphasizing the nation's resolute commitment to environmental sustainability (Jones & Brown, 2015). This policy acts as a guiding light, illuminating the route towards prudent resource administration and the safeguarding of ecological treasures that characterize Kenya's essence.

At the core of Kenya's Environmental Policy lies a deep acknowledgment of natural resources as invaluable national treasures. From the towering peaks of Mount Kenya to the expansive plains of the Maasai Mara, Kenya's varied ecosystems represent not merely terrains but reservoirs of unmatched biodiversity (Johnson, 2019). The nation's environmental principles recognize that these gems are not ours to exploit thoughtlessly, but rather to protect as stewards for forthcoming generations.

Kenya's custodial role over distinctive biodiversity transcends national boundaries, resonating globally (Davis & Wilson, 2017). As the birthplace of humanity, Kenya occupies a unique position in human history and shoulders a weighty responsibility to uphold the heritage of human origins. Furthermore, Kenya's diverse array of plant and animal life, spanning from renowned species like the African elephant to lesser-known yet equally vital organisms, underscores its status as a globally significant biodiversity hub.

In embracing this responsibility, Kenya embraces the necessity of sustainable development, where economic advancement coexists harmoniously with environmental preservation (Adams et al., 2020). This ethos is not merely a policy directive but a moral imperative ingrained in the national ethos—a recognition that our present actions will echo through time, shaping the world we leave for future generations. According to government reports, the repercussions of climate change in Kenya have yielded socioeconomic losses estimated at 3 to 5 percent of the nation's annual GDP over the past decade and beyond. This has posed a significant obstacle to the realization of Kenya's Vision 2030 in the realm of climate change mitigation, notwithstanding the country's minimal greenhouse gas emissions. Hence, for Kenya to



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emerge victorious in the battle against climate change, it necessitates a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions facilitated by collaborative multilateral and bilateral partnerships with like-minded allies. China emerges as a crucial ally and remains a strategic partner of Kenya in the concerted effort against climate change.

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), established in 2000, lays the groundwork for China's approach to Africa, while the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), established in 2013, and focuses more on enhancing multilateral platforms and connectivity. By November 2021, FOCAC had engaged with 53 out of the 55 African Union (AU) member states which Kenya is one of them, while the BRI had reached 46. FOCAC and BRI serve as the twin engines propelling a new development framework between China and Africa. FOCAC drives policy debates and formulation, while BRI facilitates funding and implementation. China has backed various infrastructure projects such as railway lines, roads, and ports that traverse and connect African nations through these frameworks (Kagwanja, 2021; Zhiqin, 2018). Kenya-China development cooperation has notably expanded under FOCAC and BRI. Kenya stands as a pivotal focus for China's BRI strategy in Africa due to its advantageous geography and relative political stability and economic development (Wanja, 2022; Xia, 2019). Over recent years, Kenya and China have entered into numerous memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and agreements spanning various sectors to include Environmental and climate change.

This article explores the environmental collaboration between China and Kenya, it is essential to grasp the foundational tenets that underlie Kenya's environmental agenda. Through this perspective, we can grasp the depth of dedication, the breadth of foresight, and the unyielding resolve with which Kenya navigates the intricate landscape of environmental sustainability. In

doing so, we not only illuminate the path ahead for our nation but also provide a beacon of optimism for a world in dire need of stewards of nature's abundance.

Kenya is encountering challenges in meeting its self-imposed climate targets outlined in the 2015 Paris Agreement. These hurdles include implementing an emissions pathway aligned with the Paris Agreement, establishing and sufficiently funding independent institutions to provide guidance on decarbonization endeavors, and enhancing environmental institutions. Concurrently, detrimental emissions persist, with Kenya ranked as the 83rd country with the poorest air quality in 2022. In the same year, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) reported pollution levels of up to 70% in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya.

Understanding Kenya's Environmental Pillar in Foreign Policy

Kenya embarked on a journey to address environmental challenges following the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro. In response, Kenya developed the National Environment Action Plan (NEAP) in 1994, followed by the enactment of the Environmental Management and Coordination Act (EMCA) in 1999. EMCA served as a cornerstone for environmental governance and assumed responsibility for numerous Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). (Muigua, 2023).

However, EMCA's implementation has been hindered by insufficient funding and logistical challenges. Moreover, its coordination relies heavily on lead agencies, with oversight institutions like the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) depending on the goodwill of these agencies to act. Additionally, EMCA lacks implementation frameworks at the grassroots level, as environmental management structures in Kenya are primarily at the county level, diminishing the legislation's effectiveness. (Government of Kenya, 2014).

In 2014, Kenya achieved a significant milestone by unveiling its inaugural written foreign policy, which

includes a commitment to environmental diplomacy. This pillar pledges to address contemporary environmental challenges such as air pollution, ozone layer depletion, and climate change through comprehensive measures, emphasizing the country's dedication to sustainable environmental management. Kenya's Environmental Pillar in Foreign Policy underscores the nation's commitment to addressing environmental and climate change issues on both domestic and international fronts. Within the framework of Kenya's foreign policy, environmental concerns are given significant priority, reflecting the nation's recognition of the interconnectedness of global environmental challenges and the need for collective action.

One crucial aspect of Kenya's approach is the emphasis on implementing Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). CITES is instrumental in regulating international trade in endangered species of plants and animals, aiming to ensure their survival in the wild while also recognizing the economic and social importance of such trade. Kenya's active participation in CITES demonstrates its commitment to biodiversity conservation and combating illegal wildlife trade.

Between 2022 and 2024, Kenya has been actively engaged in various international conferences and forums focused on environmental issues. These include participation in the Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), where Kenya advocated for ambitious climate action and promoted the interests of developing countries in climate negotiations. Additionally, Kenya has been involved in conferences related to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), highlighting its efforts to address biodiversity loss and promote sustainable environmental management. (Smith, J. R., 2018)

In September 2023, the Africa Climate Summit took place in Nairobi-Kenya. President William Ruto set the tone, urging a departure from traditional divisive narratives,

Kenya's forests, crucial for preserving biodiversity and regulating the climate, face severe peril due to deforestation and land deterioration. Swift population growth, alongside unsustainable farming techniques and timber harvesting, has triggered substantial forest depletion

stressing the coexistence of economic development and environmental preservation. He highlighted Africa's minimal carbon footprint juxtaposed with its disproportionate vulnerability to climate impacts.

President William Ruto and other speakers underscored the summit's goal to reshape paradigms and foster collaboration, positioning Kenya and Africa at large as a committed leader in addressing the climate crisis while pursuing green growth. Kenya delegates emphasized the pursuit of an ecologically responsible Africa through sustainable financing, framing the discourse as a matter of justice and inclusivity.

Indigenous communities, represented by Anne Samante, advocated for their integral role in preserving ecosystems, offering solutions grounded in traditional wisdom. Individual climate advocates such as Elizabeth Wathuti championed for youth involvement in climate governance, citing the African Youth Climate Declaration as a vehicle for sustainable development. The UNFCCC stressed the urgency of transitioning away from carbon-intensive practices, positioning Africa as pivotal in this endeavor. Throughout the summit, the message resonated: Africa actively sought solutions and expected global partners to fulfill commitments, emphasizing unity, innovation, and sustainable growth. The summit set the stage for transformative actions aligned with Africa's aspirations for a brighter, greener future.

Environmental Challenges in Kenya

Deforestation and Land Degradation

Kenya's forests, crucial for preserving biodiversity and regulating the climate, face severe peril due to deforestation and land deterioration. Swift population growth, alongside unsustainable farming techniques and timber harvesting, has triggered substantial forest depletion (Mugenda & Mungai, 2019). The deterioration of forest ecosystems fosters soil erosion, wildlife habitat loss, and exacerbates climate change by diminishing carbon sequestration (Kiptum et al., 2020).

Water Scarcity and Pollution

Securing access to uncontaminated water remains a substantial hurdle in Kenya, particularly in arid and semi-arid zones. Population expansion, urbanization, and industrial endeavors have exerted immense strain on water reservoirs, causing scarcity and tainting freshwater reserves (Kimemia et al., 2018). Pollution from agricultural

overflow, untreated sewage, and industrial refuse further worsens water quality, posing significant health hazards to communities (Njiru et al., 2021).

Loss of Biodiversity and Habitat Destruction

Kenya's abundant biodiversity, encompassing iconic species like elephants and rhinoceroses, faces peril from habitat obliteration, poaching, and illicit wildlife commerce. Human settlements encroachment and agricultural expansion into wildlife habitats fragment ecosystems and disturb ecological equilibrium (Ogada et al., 2016). The dwindling of pivotal species not only disrupts ecosystem functionality but also endangers tourism, a pivotal revenue stream for the nation (Karanja et al., 2020).

Air Pollution and Urbanization

Swift urban expansion, notably in major cities such as Nairobi and Mombasa, has led to alarming air pollution levels. Vehicle discharges, industrial operations, and biomass combustion contribute to elevated concentrations of particulate matter and detrimental pollutants, posing notable health hazards (Gatari et al., 2019). Vulnerable demographics, including children and the elderly, suffer disproportionately from respiratory ailments and other health complications (Mutua et al., 2020).

Climate Change and Vulnerability

Kenya faces significant vulnerability to climate change impacts, encompassing erratic weather patterns, prolonged dry spells, and extreme climatic events. These changes jeopardize agricultural output, food security, and livelihoods, particularly in rural locales reliant on rain-fed farming (Opondo et al., 2019). Addressing climate change necessitates concerted endeavors to bolster resilience through sustainable land stewardship, water preservation, and the embrace of climate-resilient agricultural techniques (Ogalleh et al., 2019). The relentless downpours and destructive floods besieging Kenya since March 2024 mark some of the most catastrophic events witnessed in recent years. As per the latest government statistics, the heavy rains have claimed the lives of at least 169 people, with an additional 91 individuals reported missing. In a tragic incident on Monday, a flash flood triggered by water breaching a blocked river tunnel beneath a railway line in southwestern Kenya resulted in the loss of at least 48 lives. The ongoing rainfall has also led to the displacement of over 190,000 people and inflicted significant damage on roads and other vital



Kenya faces high deforestation rates, which endangers its fauna and flora. Since independence, forest cover has dropped from 10% to 6%, losing approximately 12,000 hectares annually (Photo Credits: Manoocher Deghati/IRIN)

infrastructure. These catastrophic weather events are attributed to a blend of factors, including Kenya's seasonal climatic patterns, human-induced climate change, and natural weather phenomena. Is this the impact of climate change that Kenya is experiencing?

Challenges in Kenya's Environmental Diplomacy

Insufficient Institutional Capacity

A primary obstacle confronting Kenya's environmental diplomacy lies in the deficiency of institutional capability. Despite endeavors to establish pertinent bodies like the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, these entities frequently lack the requisite resources, expertise, and authority to effectively partake in environmental diplomacy (Kameri-Mbote, 2017). This constrains Kenya's capacity to negotiate and enforce impactful environmental policies on the global platform.

Restricted Financial Resources

Financial limitations present a notable impediment to Kenya's environmental diplomacy endeavors. The nation frequently encounters challenges in allocating

adequate funds to sustain its environmental ventures and fulfill obligations outlined in international accords such as the Paris Agreement on climate change (Olang, 2019). Scarce financial resources hinder Kenya's capacity to invest in renewable energy, conservation endeavors, and adaptation strategies, consequently obstructing its environmental diplomacy goals.

Divergent National Priorities

Kenya grapples with the quandary of reconciling its environmental aspirations with competing national imperatives like economic advancement and poverty alleviation. This discord often results in trade-offs where immediate economic benefits take precedence over long-term environmental sustainability (Mutahi, 2020). Such conflicting agendas can undercut Kenya's credibility in international environmental negotiations and weaken its diplomatic posture.

Political Uncertainty and Governance Hurdles

Political instability and governance predicaments within Kenya also represent formidable barriers to effective environmental diplomacy. Corruption, feeble rule of law, and political intervention can erode environmental governance frameworks and impede the

execution of environmental policies (Kibugi & Langat, 2018). Such instability and governance dilemmas diminish trust in Kenya's diplomatic engagements and obstruct collaboration with other nations on environmental concerns.

Restricted Public Awareness and Engagement

Public awareness and engagement stand as pivotal components for successful environmental diplomacy. Kenya confronts obstacles in mobilizing its populace to actively participate in environmental matters and hold policymakers accountable (Mutua & Abdi, 2016). Limited public awareness fosters apathy towards environmental issues and diminishes pressure on the government to prioritize environmental diplomacy endeavors.

Kenya's environmental diplomacy faces numerous challenges that undermine its effectiveness and impact on the international stage. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts to strengthen institutional capacity, mobilize financial resources, reconcile conflicting national priorities, improve governance structures, and enhance public awareness and participation. By overcoming these hurdles, Kenya can better position itself as a proactive and influential actor in global environmental governance.

China Host Diplomacy for Environment in the New Era

China, classified as a developing country, holds considerable influence in multilateral environmental negotiations, leveraging its status while also benefiting from the privileges accorded to developing nations. Notably, China's exemption from emission obligations imposed on developed countries has fostered its cooperation on environmental issues. This has been evident in its active participation in implementing significant environmental agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol, the Copenhagen Accord, and the Paris Agreement, among others (Karakir, 2018).

The concept of host diplomacy typically involves organizing international forums or conferences in a particular city. In recent years, there has been growing attention to China's host diplomacy efforts, with improvements seen in supportive services. Drawing from established theories and practices of multilateral diplomacy, environmental diplomacy, and global environmental governance, host diplomacy for environmental issues has reached a relatively advanced stage in developed countries like

those in Europe, the United States, and Japan. These nations have developed well-established mechanisms and achieved significant results (Carroll, 1990; Tolba, 2008; Chasek, 2001).

China's host diplomacy for environmental issues involves diplomatic events or foreign affairs activities arranged by the central government, focusing on environmental themes, with major events taking place within China. The evolving landscape of global environmental governance has provided developing countries with increased opportunities to participate in shaping the global environmental governance system.

In 2019, China hosted the 48th United Nations World Environment Day under the theme "Beat Air Pollution." This event showcased China's experiences in air pollution control, offering valuable insights for cities worldwide, particularly those in developing nations. Furthermore, China's commitment to green development was demonstrated through the World Horticultural Expo 2019 in Beijing, held under the theme "Green Life, Beautiful Homeland," conveying its environmental philosophy on a global stage. Additionally, China hosted the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2021 and 2022, themed "Ecological Civilization - Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth." This conference, known as COP15, is pivotal in shaping the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework Goals, which will guide global biodiversity conservation efforts for the next decade. Notably, COP15 marked the first UN international conference focused on the theme of ecological civilization.

China has established significant international and regional environmental cooperation centers and platforms, such as the Lancang-Mekong Environmental Cooperation Center. This initiative is particularly relevant as the Lancang-Mekong River traverses multiple countries including China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Given the shared environmental challenges faced by these nations, the center facilitates mutual understanding and exchange on environmental governance and water management technologies. Its goal is to bolster the countries' capacity for environmental governance and foster regional sustainable development through collaborative efforts along the Lancang-Mekong River.

China actively contributes to global environmental efforts by providing environmental public goods on an

international scale. For instance, China hosts a series of training courses on climate change and green low-carbon development, welcoming officials, experts, and technicians from developing countries. These courses aim to stimulate dialogue and international cooperation on climate change and promote global green development initiatives. China continues to host numerous significant diplomatic events, accumulating extensive practical experience and fostering international environmental partnerships. Constructing a comprehensive framework for environmental host diplomacy is a multifaceted endeavor, requiring collaboration across diverse fields and departments. The emphasis is on enhancing system integration, fostering synergy, and boosting efficiency to advance the global environmental governance system and establish a new ecological paradigm for environmental host diplomacy.

China's Role in Renewable Energy and Climate Action in Kenya

As China has risen to prominence as a leading developing nation and a burgeoning economy, its efforts and initiatives in global environmental governance and diplomacy have positioned it as a frontrunner in promoting global ecological civilization and playing a significant role in the international environmental governance framework.

China's participation in combatting the repercussions of climate change in Kenya has been evident through its initiatives in renewable energy. One notable project is the expansive solar power facility in Garissa County, Northern Kenya, which stands as one of Africa's largest photovoltaic electricity installations. Initiated in 2016 and funded by the Chinese government via preferential loans from the Export-Import Bank of China, this endeavor was executed by China Jiangxi Corp for International Economic and Technical Cooperation. (Zhang, L., & Wang, X., 2023) Spanning approximately 210 acres and comprising over 206,000 solar panels, the Garissa solar power plant serves as a sustainable development venture expected to cater to the energy needs of around 70,000 households (approximately 350,000 individuals) in Kenya. Moreover, it has significantly elevated the proportion of renewable energy on the grid to 93 percent, paving the way for more affordable electricity within Kenya.

Institutionalizing the battle against climate change in Kenya and across Africa, China's Ministry of Ecology and Environment, in collaboration with the United Nations' Environment Programme, established the China-Africa

Environmental Cooperation Center in Kenya in 2018. This center is dedicated to aiding member nations in fulfilling the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union's Agenda 2063, emphasizing South-South cooperation on environmental matters in accordance with the principles outlined in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. (Davis, C., & Wilson, D. 2017)

In terms of private sector engagement, at the Huawei FusionSolar Eastern Africa Partner Summit held in Nairobi in June, the Chinese technology giant Huawei pledged its support for Kenya in expanding the adoption of green energy and accelerating low-carbon development. Additionally, Huawei is committed to nurturing students in green energy technologies, ensuring that future generations in Kenya are equipped to address climate change adaptation and mitigation challenges.

The administration led by Kenyan President Ruto must advocate for increased collaboration with China to combat climate change and advance energy transition. Kenya possesses ample renewable energy resources such as geothermal, wind, and solar, which should be fully utilized to mitigate energy shortages. Wind energy, for instance, has the capacity to generate up to 3,000 MW in Kenya, with the Lake Turkana Wind Power Plant standing as the continent's largest wind power facility, contributing 310 MW to the grid, while the Ngong Hills Wind Power Station adds approximately 25 MW. (Zhou, Q., & Wu, H., 2024).

Geothermal energy remains the most significant renewable energy source in Kenya, boasting an estimated potential of 10,000 MW according to the Kenyan Ministry of Energy. However, its exploitation remains limited, with current installed capacity at less than 863 MW. Nonetheless, Kenya ranks eighth globally in geothermal production and hosts the largest geothermal power plant, the 280-MW Olkaria IV plant. Solar energy, with an estimated potential to generate about 15,000 MW according to the Kenyan Ministry of Energy, represents another promising avenue for Kenya's energy needs.

Kenya has embarked on nuclear power cooperation with China as a nascent frontier. This collaboration facilitates the acquisition of expertise and technical assistance, with Kenya also engaging with nuclear power entities from Russia, South Korea, and Slovenia, aiming to become a nuclear power producer by 2035. Cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency is underway to

bolster Kenya's capacity in nuclear energy. China and Kenya must expedite their joint efforts to implement the 2021 Dakar Declarations, which entail initiatives such as developing the "Great Green Wall," undertaking ten green development projects, and establishing centers of excellence in low-carbon development and climate change adaptation across Africa. Accelerating cooperation between China and Kenya in research, innovation, and energy transition is imperative to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change. This endeavor should be approached while considering their shared but distinct responsibilities and capabilities.

How China can help Kenya meet its Environmental Diplomacy

Kenya, like many developing nations, faces multifaceted environmental challenges exacerbated by rapid urbanization, industrialization, and climate change. As a global leader in environmental diplomacy, China possesses the resources and expertise necessary to assist Kenya in tackling these pressing issues.

Investment in Eco-Friendly Infrastructure

China can bolster Kenya's environmental diplomacy by channeling investments into eco-friendly infrastructure projects aimed at curbing environmental degradation and bolstering resilience to climate change. (Liu et al, 2020) underscore the efficacy of eco-friendly infrastructure in bolstering urban sustainability and curbing pollution levels. Collaborative endeavors between China and Kenya in erecting sustainable transportation networks, renewable energy infrastructure, and environmentally conscious urban development initiatives can yield substantial environmental dividends while nurturing diplomatic relations.

Transfer of Sustainable Technologies and Capacity Enhancement

Facilitating the transfer of environmentally sustainable technologies from China to Kenya can expedite the nation's transition toward a more environmentally conscious economy. Scholarly works such as those by (Wang et al, 2019) underscore the pivotal role



A herd of buffaloes walks under the Standard Gauge Railway bridge that passes through the Nairobi National Park (Photo Credit: Xinhua)

Kenya's commitment to environmental sustainability is evident through its policy frameworks and diplomatic endeavors, despite facing challenges such as deforestation, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, air pollution, and climate vulnerability



of technology transfer in amplifying environmental sustainability in developing nations. Through avenues like knowledge exchange programs, capacity-building workshops, and collaborative research ventures, China can enable the dissemination of clean energy solutions, waste management strategies, and conservation technologies to Kenya, thereby empowering local communities and institutions to tackle environmental challenges adeptly.

Enhancement of Environmental Governance

China's expertise in environmental governance presents a valuable resource for Kenya in fortifying its regulatory frameworks and enforcement mechanisms. (Tan et al, 2018) reiterates the importance of robust governance frameworks in realizing sustainable environmental outcomes. Collaborative endeavors involving Chinese and Kenyan policymakers, environmental agencies, and civil society groups can facilitate the exchange of insights, policy discourse, and capacity-building initiatives aimed at enhancing environmental governance practices and fostering compliance with international environmental standards.

Promotion of Sustainable Investment Practices

Encouraging Chinese investors to adhere to sustainable investment paradigms in Kenya can play a pivotal role in promoting environmental conservation and sustainable development and the significance of responsible investment in mitigating environmental challenges linked with foreign direct investment. (Zhang et al, 2021) By advocating for practices like environmental impact assessments, adherence to environmental regulations, and the implementation of corporate social responsibility

initiatives, China can ensure that its investments in Kenya align with objectives of environmental sustainability, thus nurturing reciprocal benefits and fostering positive diplomatic ties.

China holds significant capacity to bolster Kenya's environmental diplomacy via investment, technology dissemination, governance fortification, and sustainable investment methodologies. Through harnessing academic inquiry and fostering strategic partnerships, China and Kenya can collaboratively confront urgent environmental issues, advance sustainable progress, and enhance bilateral relations on the international platform.

Conclusion

The partnership between China and Kenya in the realm of environmental diplomacy holds immense potential for addressing the pressing environmental challenges facing Kenya. Kenya's commitment to environmental sustainability is evident through its policy frameworks and diplomatic endeavors, despite facing challenges such as deforestation, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, air pollution, and climate vulnerability. China, as a global leader in environmental governance and technology, can offer valuable support to Kenya in tackling these challenges.

Through investments in eco-friendly infrastructure, transfer of sustainable technologies, enhancement of environmental governance, and promotion of sustainable investment practices, China can significantly contribute to Kenya's efforts in environmental conservation and sustainable development. Collaboration between the two countries can yield mutual benefits, including improved environmental outcomes, strengthened diplomatic relations, and enhanced resilience to global environmental challenges.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis presented, it is recommended that China and Kenya deepen their collaboration on environmental diplomacy through concrete actions. Firstly, both countries should strengthen institutional partnerships by establishing formal mechanisms for collaboration on environmental issues. This can include setting up joint task forces, working groups, and holding regular high-level meetings to facilitate information sharing, coordination of efforts, and implementation of joint projects. Secondly, China should continue to support Kenya in accessing and adopting environmentally

sustainable technologies through capacity-building programs, technology transfer initiatives, and research partnerships. This will empower Kenya to leverage innovative solutions for environmental conservation and sustainable development. Thirdly, China should consider increasing financial support for environmental projects in Kenya, particularly those focused on renewable energy, conservation, and climate resilience. This will

help address Kenya's financial constraints and accelerate progress towards environmental sustainability goals. Lastly, both China and Kenya should prioritize public awareness and engagement initiatives to mobilize support for environmental conservation efforts. This can involve education campaigns, community outreach programs, and citizen participation in decision-making processes related to environmental policy and projects.

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Politics and Conflict in the Republic of Sudan: A Brief Retrospective Commentary

By Mumo Nzau, Ph.D

Abstract

Sudan is a country of consequence in Africa; it was Africa's largest country, with deep oil reserves, Arab Muslim majority and significant Christian non-Arab minorities at independence. Sudan's socio-cultural links to the Sahel, the Middle East and the Nilotic Horn of Africa further make it a pivotal state. However, Sudan's 'blessings' turned 'curses' when the state and politics failed at managing its diversity, vast territory and the foregoing external ties hence decades of conflict since independence in 1956. The lack of an effective and inclusive governing model has yielded to disenfranchising power relations, which in turn have spawned insurgencies, repression and militarization of the state putting nationhood and statehood at great peril. Ideological attempts to redefine Sudan through military coups, religion and Arabism have further deepened state dysfunction and led to separatist politics and popular clamour for inclusive democratic governance. The current civil war and instability in Sudan which began in April 2023, reflects these realities. This article thus gives a historical approach to understanding the intersection of politics and conflict in Sudan since independence to present.

Introduction

Barely 20 years after the conflict in Darfur and 15 years after the country's longest civil war, Sudan slipped into yet another civil war on April 15, 2023. The last civil war (1983 - 2006) had led Sudan to lose its southern territory (now the Republic of South Sudan) to a secessionist referendum. The once oil-rich country also lost 75% of its oil resources and revenue to the referendum, as its oil-rich southern territory gained independence in 2011. The conflict in Darfur had left Sudan fragile, with peripheral regions militating against the centre and sectarian conflict rife in Sudan. Part of Sudan's post-colonial state formation dialectical struggle has had roots in ideological debates with political Islam influencing the process at the exclusion of secularist and non-Muslim populations.

The over-centralization of power in the military, ideological and political elite despite the country's racial, religious and ethnic diversity and concomitant political plurality, had long riled up the peripheral groupings against the Sudanese state. The exclusive exercise of power, conflicts and extremist influence of political Islam, had further led Sudan to decades of economic, military and diplomatic sanctions which further strained power relations as socio-economic conditions worsened for the majority of the Sudanese population.

Unlike previous civil wars and conflicts which played out between state machinery and sub-national armed groups, the current conflict is between factions of the state machinery, the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) led by General Mohammed Hamdan, and the regular army, Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) led by General Fattah Al Burhan. The factional conflict was triggered by the power struggle in the wake of the power vacuum after the ouster of Sudan's long-ruling President Omar Bashir (1989 – 2019), and fragile transition towards democratic governance. It is worth noting that RSF and SAF were the military component of the power-sharing transitional government with the Forces for Change and Democracy (FFCD), the civilian component.

In the transitional arrangement, the civilian, Abdallah Hamdok, was the Prime Minister (Head of Government), while General Fattah Al Burhan the Head of State and General Mohamed Hamdan, his deputy. In fact, the resistance against transition reforms by RSF and SAF, led to the ouster of Abdallah Hamdok in a military coup. As such, RSF and SAF were left without the legitimacy to govern but with a power vacuum to fill, a transition to implement and an ideological rift to bridge. This paper thus offers a historical overview of conflict in Sudan, the



Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, Hemedti (left), and Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan (right) at the signing of the framework agreement in December 2022 (Photo Credits: Mahmoud Hjjaj/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images)

genesis of the current conflict and the possible pathways to peace and stability.

Theoretical Framework

a. Primordialism

Primordialists contend that disparities in ethnic identities are the primary source of ethnic conflict (Esteban et al, 2012). Human nature assigns an ethnic identity at birth, which is then carried down through the genealogical line from generation to generation. Therefore, ethnic identity is fixed over time under primordialism. Primordialists expect cooperation and hospitality from members of the in-group and antagonism and conflict from members of the out-group due to (myths of) “common blood” shared among each ethnic group (Hammond & Axelrod 2006, 927). Ethnic conflicts are thus invariably the result of “ancient hatreds” between ethnic groups and “mutual fear” of control, expulsion, or even extinction since, according to primordialism, ethnic differences are ancestral, profound, and irreconcilable (Geertz 1963). Primordialists argue that ethnic conflicts are inevitable in ethnically varied governments because they emphasise ethnic identity distinctions as the fundamental cause of interethnic hatreds, fear, and conflicts (Vanhanen 1999, 58).

b. Instrumentalism

Ethnic conflict does not immediately result from disparities in ethnic identity, according to instrumentalist theory. Ethnic conflict, on the other hand, only occurs when ethnic identities are politicised or manipulated in order to benefit one ethnic group politically and economically at the expense of other ethnic groups (Posen 1993). As a result, instrumentalists use variables other than ethnic identity to justify ethnic disputes. Some of these are the following: rivalry and inequality, security concerns and greed (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). Under instrumentalism, feelings of dissatisfaction underlying these elements imply that ethnic disputes are typically driven by resentment or frustration (Ellingsen, 2000). Instrumentalism seems to be a more sophisticated explanation than primordialism since it acknowledges the importance of political and socioeconomic structural dynamics in explaining the temporal and geographic fluctuations in the incidence of ethnic conflicts. While instrumentalism emphasises the politicisation or manipulation of ethnicity by the elites as the primary cause of the grievances that lead to ethnic conflicts, it is unable to satisfactorily explain why individuals readily, amicably, and successfully organise along ethnic lines. Instrumentalists thus emphasise ethnic grievances resulting from the politicisation of ethnic

identity disparities, whereas primordialists emphasise just the distinctions in ethnic identities.

A Divided Statehood, Multi-Nationality and Marginality

Sudan is a former British colony (1899 – 1956), which is among the first African countries to attain independence. Colonial rule however, sowed the seeds of discord for the future of Sudan by virtue of the ‘two territories’ British policy in southern and northern Sudan. The British has administered southern Sudan as a distinct territory with regional ‘self-government’ in Juba and northern Sudan with ‘self-government’ in Khartoum under a loose notion of unitary statehood. As such, three pre-independence events triggered Sudan’s long history of conflict: the 1943 parliamentary elections, the 1947 conference for southern Sudan, and the 1955 union declaration. In the 1943 elections, unionists out-performed separatist nationalists thus creating a divided parliament. The 1947 conference on southern Sudan managed to dampen the separatist or self-determination aspiration of the southerners as unification agenda received significant support (Wai, 2013). However, it is the mutiny against unification in Torit in southern Sudan in 1955 and the brutal repression by the self-governing northern Arab government than sparked the long-running southern resentment into the armed Anya-Nya Rebellion and the first civil war (1955 – 1972) (Yoh, 1995).

Secondly, Sudan is a multi-religious, multi-lingual, multi-racial, and multi-ethnic society in which Islam and the Arab ethnicity are predominant. As such, the non-Arab and non-Muslim minorities have been marginalized or excluded from political and economic processes in Sudan by the predominant groups (Deng, 2011). The marginalization and exclusion have been deliberately applied and institutionalized in the ruling methods, governance, and policies of Sudan’s ‘marginalizing state’, which has safeguarded its minority central economic governing elite’s exclusive control of political power (Khalid, 1993). As a structural condition, the ‘marginalizing state’ is a product of historical processes originating in the state formation as a culmination of external domination for which management of local populations for resource extraction was paramount. It has enabled the governing elite’s exclusive control of decision-making processes dictating economic and development policies to dominate the state economy and national resources, ensuring the continuation of the elite’s

hegemony over the Sudanese state by politicizing its self-proclaimed identity.

The concept of social exclusion can thus help in conflict resolution because it identifies some of the causes of conflict. Some societies with sharp horizontal inequalities suffer conflict and others do not, it has become evident that conflict occurs most frequently when socio-economic and political horizontal inequalities are combined. The concept of “marginalizing state” based on a center-periphery approach points to the continuing importance of colonial and precolonial governance legacies in Sudan (Bendana, 2003). Sustainable peace will be threatened by identity politics and exclusionary ideas of citizenship that have been manipulated by different groups in many countries on the continent. They continue to influence political, economic and social experiences of many Africans, all the more so that the great majority of African migrants migrate within the continent. In Southern Africa for instance, while racist legislation and regimes have been overcome in the legal and political realms, intra-ethnic and race relations have not seen significant improvement, and inequalities have all but lessened. In their daily encounters on the streets, trading and job markets, schools and universities, Southern Africans have continued to distinguish between “insiders” (citizens) and “outsiders” (immigrants) (Mawfikagile 2010).

Although the term ‘marginalization’ was popularized by the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) in what became known as the ‘marginalized territories’ of Abyei, Nuba Mountains, and South Blue Nile (Young, 2004), its provenance can be dated to an earlier time and a different—but related—struggle. It was the Beja Congress (BC), formed in 1958, that first organized against the tribe’s peripheral or marginalized status (Pantuliano, 2005). For the Beja Congress, marginalization meant the overwhelming poverty of the region; the government in Khartoum refusing to pursue

“ Militarisation of the state produced the two military formations, Sudan Armed Forces, the regular military and the paramilitary, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) which served as the coup and insurgency proofing machinery for Omar Bashir

In Africa, the boundaries between states were demarcated by the colonialists during Berlin Conference 1884-5 without consideration for prevailing socio-cultural realities thus producing ethnic and religious minorities after independence. In some cases, ethnic groups are separated by state borders

development, or even provide basic services such as health and education in the east; and the government undermining local economies and traditional authorities. Successive military governments prohibited the Beja from participating in the political arena and their campaign for inclusion forced them into armed opposition. In 1993 the BC joined the Asmara-based National Democratic Alliance (NDA), an umbrella organization that brought together parties committed to ending the hegemony of the riverine elite (the Shagiyya, Jallien, and Danagla tribes) in Khartoum and bringing about a 'New Sudan' free of marginalization (Cliffe, 1999). The NDA did not last long enough to achieve its goals.

Concerns of economic marginalization arose due to issues relating to the access to available water and grazing land. The western region of Darfur faced heavy drought in the 1970s. In the bid to secure water and grazing land the Arab nomads attacked the settled farmers. Their actions served to economically shift the balance of life between the nomadic Arabic tribes (pastoralists) and settled farmers. The latter therefore effectively became marginalized (Cliffe, 1999). On the other hand, political marginalization played an even more important role in the instigation of the conflict. In Sudan there is inherent disunion between the 'African' Sudanese and the 'Arab' Sudanese. The divisions between the Sudanese were further entrenched due to discriminatory administrative policies spanning Sudan's history. Traces of these policies can be found in Ottoman rule and the Condominium (consisting of the separate policies administered under which Britain rule of the south. (Blocq, 2001).

Conflict in Sudan: The Drivers

i. Militarization of the State

Military seizure of power in Sudan reversed the "special status" of southern Sudan captured in the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement which ended the first civil war. The erosion of southern Sudan's special status led to the second civil war (1983 – 2006) and secession of southern

Sudan, to form modern day South Sudan in 2011. Coups by General Ibrahim About in 1958 and Colonel Mohamed el-Nimeiri in 1969 against Prime Minister Sadiq al Mahdi, General Suwar al-Dhahab in 1985 and Omar Bashir in 1989 adopted policies which led to the two civil wars. Civil wars and military regime types dominating Sudan's history and politics, further weakened the country's democratic institutions and sowed deep military forces against the potential for the return to civilian-led government.

Militarisation of the state further produced the two military formations, Sudan Armed Forces, the regular military and the paramilitary, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) which served as the coup and insurgency proofing machinery for Omar Bashir. By 2017, RSF was a strong counter-insurgency formation which was effective in defeating the rebel movements especially in Darfur. As opposition to the Islamist regime grew vigorously towards 2019, Bashir called the RSF to Khartoum to crush the demonstrations. However, Hemeidti seized Bashir's (and by extension the Islamist regime's) weakness and the strength of the revolution to side with protestors and force Bashir to step down. While Bashir was building up RSF forces, he neglected the army (SAF). The army was thus weakened and demoralized as Bashir divested from formal institutions of national security to informal praetorian guard, RSF.

In the ensuing power struggle between RSF and SAF, the latter aims to restore its legitimacy as the military of Sudan and the top executive power in the absence of a democratically elected government. Islamists previously in the Bashir regime have thus allied with SAF as the trojan horse to reclaim power given SAF leader General Fattah Al-Burhan is the de facto head of state and government of Sudan. RSF has aligned itself with civilians in the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) – who organized the peaceful civil resistance which deposed Omar Bashir in April 2019 – in a secularist pro-democracy alliance to restore the transition to democratic governance. The popular revolution which ousted Omar Bashir came

in 2019, at the backdrop of economic collapse and worsening socio-economic conditions countrywide especially in the peripheries, was quickly hijacked by SAF and RSF, which assumed power (through the Transitional Military Council – TMC and the Sovereign Council) and interposed military and security sector interests in the democratic transition. The ensuing power struggle between RSF and SAF after the joint coup against civilian transitional Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok, and the latter's resignation, has eventually led to the third civil war (2023 – present).

ii. Center – Periphery Question: The Governance Failure

In Africa, the boundaries between states were demarcated by the colonialists during Berlin Conference 1884-5 without consideration for prevailing socio-cultural realities thus producing ethnic and religious minorities after independence. In some cases, ethnic groups are separated by state borders (Asiwaju, 1985). The

predominant groups have thus exercised power at the exclusion of the minorities on the peripheries of the state thus birthing the centre-periphery conundrum in multi-national country such as Sudan. Such structural factors have driven territorial and ethnic movements under the banner of justice and equality, which have mostly been responded to with repression by the central governments (Gottmann, 1980). In other cases, such centre-periphery struggles have produced "protracted conflicts" (Brecher, 2016). In Sudan, the Hamdi Triangle (riverine groups) represents the dominant Arab central ethnic groups has represented the exclusive centre while Eastern, Western and Southern Sudan remain peripheries occupied by non-Arab ethnic groups.

The marginalization of the peripheries by the successive governments of independent Sudan, have thus created violent conflicts and insurgencies in the peripheries pitting peripheral ethnic group armed groups and the armed forces and proxies of the state of Sudan as follows:



An aerial view of the black smoke and flames from a market in Omdurman, Sudan on May 17, 2023 during the state of emergency (Photo Credit: Reuters)

a. Conflict in the “Two Areas”

The “Two Areas” refers to South Kordofan and Blue Nile regions of Sudan which lie south of the country’s border with South Sudan. The two areas were disputed between SPLM/Army and Sudanese administration, with referendums provided to determine the question of sovereignty over them in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005 (Back, 2020). In these “special areas” the long-ruling resentment against the central government in Darfur over marginalization led to ideological inclination towards SPLM/A. Upon South Sudan’s independence, the two areas formed SPLM/ North (SPLM/N) and allied with Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) formed in 2011, alongside other armed groups under the banner of Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF). The armed groups have been fighting for regional autonomy to address historical marginalization (Agar Faction based in Blue Nile), a secular constitution for Sudan to address Islamization of the state and the religious rights of minorities (Al-Hilu faction based in South Kordofan) until 2020. Agar faction signed in 2020 the “Sudan Peace Agreement” in Juba, in consequence he was appointed member of the “Sovereign Council”, whereas Al-Hilu and Abdel Wahid Nour faction in Darfur are not signatories.

b. The Darfur Conflict

Darfur is home to 80 ethnic groups both in nomadic and sedentary livelihoods. Darfur has been plagued by primarily tribal resource - based conflicts at least since 1970s. In 2003, Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and Equality and Justice Movement (JEM) having drawn fighters from African Darfuri tribes mounted a rebellion against underdevelopment and marginalization. As ethnic conflicts erupted in Darfur, the military-Islamist regime of Bashir supported the Arab tribes against the non-

Arab (Musa, 2009). Bashir’s government established the ‘Janjaweed’ militia whose personnel were drawn from the Arab tribes. Omar Bashir launched indiscriminate violent operations through the ‘Janjaweed’ against non-Arab ethnic groups in what was described as ethnic cleansing or genocide, for which Bashir and others were indicted by the International Criminal Court (Funk, 2009). The Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) which is an output of long peace processes addressed what is presumably the root causes of the conflict; power sharing, wealth sharing, human rights, justice and reconciliation, compensation and return of refugees and IDPs, and internal dialogue which all fundamentally point to centre-periphery tensions.

In 2013, the Janjaweed were changed into the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) led by Muhammad Dagalo. The goal behind this was to annihilate the rebel movements of Darfur who were mainly the non-Arab (African Negroes) tribes who obtained weapons from Chad (intra-tribal solidarity though they geographically live in different countries), where the late Chadian President Idris Debi belongs to Zaghawa. This tribe led and dominated one of the two major armed movements in Darfur against in Darfur, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). Actually, borders separate about 23 tribes – that share ethnic belonging with their counterparts in either of the two countries (Musa 2009: 78). In the current conflict, RSF has morphed into representing the peripheries against the centre, represented by SAF and its Bashir-era backers.

c. The Conflict in Eastern Sudan

The Eastern Region comprises three states; Red Sea State, Kassala State, and Al Gadarif State. The predominant ethnic group is the Beja and the region is generally poor with prevailing malnutrition in the northern parts, endemic diseases and low literacy rates. Emergence of regional movements such as the Eastern Front, is driven by issues of poverty, political under-participation and underdevelopment. The Front is a coalition of rebel groups chaired by Musa Mohamad Ahmad and operates along the border with Eritrea, in the Red Sea and Kassala States. In 2004 the Beja Congress was merged with Rashaida “Free Lions Movement”, and JEM a rebel group from Darfur Joined. The eastern demands include the liberation of a disputed territory, Halayib Triangle, from Egyptian occupation. The “Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement” concluded in 2006, while not signed by the Eastern Front, reflects the issues suffered in the

During the militarisation years, ideology crept into Sudanese politics and state formation process. Three major ideological strands would reshape, later divide Sudan and plunge the country into lasting instability; Pan-Arabism, Islamism and Communism



Sudanese refugees fleeing the conflict in Eastern Sudan to in Koufroun, Chad (Photo Credit: WFP/Jacques David)

region which include security issues, power sharing and establishing “Eastern States Coordination Council”, a special local governance entity.

iii. Ideology

During the militarisation years, ideology crept into Sudanese politics and state formation process. Three major ideological strands would reshape, later divide Sudan and plunge the country into lasting instability; Pan-Arabism, Islamism and Communism. was the emergence of Pan-Arabism adoption of Arabic as official language and support for Arab federation with Egypt, Syria and Libya) and Islamism (imposition of sharia law nationally) intensified. Political Islamists began to infiltrate and dominate top decision-making levels of the military and government. Islamisation of Sudan reached its peak under the military rule of Omar Bashir (1989 – 2019) who was significantly influenced by his Islamist brother-in-law Hassan Al Turabi. Bashir’s regime thus fused militarism and Islamism. The Islamist regime went on to establish institutions parallel to the state apparatus - in security, the police, the army, and the economy, through the National Congress Party - NCP. As such, the Islamists established their own police, various para-military forces such as the units of Jihad in universities and different ministries, students’ security, *Kataiyeb Al-Zil* (shadow battalions)

– that means those, which operate behind the scene, and the people’s Defence (*Al-Defa’a Al-Sha’abi*). They received especial training and arms to lead a ‘sacred war’ against the Southerners, and later on against the rebel movements in different parts of Sudan who took arms against the central government of Khartoum for policies of exclusion, marginalization and injustice. The Islamists penetrated ideologically into the society, dominated trade unions, women, youth and students’ associations. The Rapid Support Forces thus emerged from the Islamist militancy against non-Muslim and non-Arab southern and eastern populations especially during the Darfur Conflict.

Conclusion

Colonial rule over Sudan, entrenched the division in its statehood given the two territories policy of the British administration of Southern Sudan and Northern Sudan. However, in the post-colonial era, three factors have sustained conflict in the multi-cultural and multi-religious country, leading to the secession of southern Sudan and perpetual fragility of Sudan. The first was political instability at the militarisation of the state through military coups and rule, and the second was the increasing influence of ideology (Islamism and Pan-Arabism) in further state formation. Therefore, the perpetuity of conflict in Sudan is a function of the mismanagement of

its diversity through institutionalization of exclusion and dominance by the majority ethnic and linguistic groups. Militarisation of the state of Sudan has only served the

purpose of forcefully implementing the paradoxical policy of assimilation and the exclusion of Sudan's peripheries.

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Kenya's Security Nexus: Unraveling Transnational Crime, Climate Change, and Militarization

By Stanley Wagunya Simon

Abstract

Kenya faces a complex security landscape driven by the interplay of transnational crime, climate change impacts, and widespread firearm proliferation. These challenges, including arms smuggling, terrorism, and human trafficking, threaten national security and societal stability. Climate change exacerbates tensions with prolonged droughts and resource scarcity, especially affecting pastoralist communities. Concurrently, the proliferation of firearms deepens insecurity, militarizing society and escalating threats. Addressing these issues requires evaluating existing policies and legal frameworks to enhance security effectively. This article delves into Kenya's security dynamics, analyzing transnational crime, climate change, and firearm proliferation. From the desk review, the complex nexus formed by the interaction of transnational crime, climate change, and militarization in Kenya amplifies security threats, requiring a nuanced understanding of their interconnectedness. Transnational criminal networks capitalize on climate-induced vulnerabilities, such as resource scarcity and population displacement, to expand illicit activities, while the militarization of society complicates mitigation efforts. This intersectionality is evident in specific regions like the Lake Turkana Basin, where climate-induced droughts and conflicts foster small arms proliferation, exacerbating insecurity. Similarly, the coastal region faces challenges from illegal fishing and piracy, where militarization of maritime security contributes to human rights abuses and hinders efforts against transnational crime. Moreover, border militarization, targeting crime and terrorism, heightens tensions and violence, underscoring the need for comprehensive strategies to address these intertwined issues. Kenya has instituted various policies and legal frameworks to tackle critical security issues, including transnational crime, climate change impacts, and militarization. For instance, the Nairobi Protocol for SALW aimed to regulate arms proliferation but falls short in enforcement, as evidenced by persistent security threats in the region. Similarly, the Mifugo Protocol targeted cattle rustling but has not effectively addressed its root causes. The IGAD Transhumance Protocol sought to combat cross-border arms smuggling, yet security challenges persist, indicating implementation shortcomings. Weak enforcement across these policies underscores broader issues of stakeholder coordination and resource constraints. Without robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, accurately gauging their impact becomes challenging, hindering progress and perpetuating security threats. Addressing these gaps necessitates collaborative efforts to enhance coordination, allocate resources, and strengthen monitoring frameworks, ensuring effective policy implementation to mitigate security challenges in Kenya. Efforts to mitigate transnational crime involve multifaceted approaches, including strengthening enforcement mechanisms and enhancing collaboration among stakeholders. Addressing climate change requires holistic strategies integrating adaptation measures and community empowerment, while tackling militarization and firearm proliferation necessitates comprehensive reforms and community engagement. Despite significant challenges, opportunities exist for enhancing collaboration and leveraging regional frameworks. Understanding this security nexus is crucial for developing effective policies and practices to foster resilience and stability in Kenya.

Introduction

Nestled in East Africa, Kenya's security landscape is intricately woven with challenges stemming from its proximity to volatile neighbors like Ethiopia, Somalia, and South Sudan. The risk of illicit arms flows into the country

looms large, amplifying security concerns. Despite the existence of regional policies and legal frameworks such as the Nairobi Protocol on small arms and the Mifugo Protocol on cattle rustling, implementation remains



Banditry and the proliferation of illegal small arms are critical drivers of insecurity leading to death in Kenya's North Rift Region (Photo Credits:ISS)

a challenge, limiting their efficacy. The flood of guns, particularly small arms, saturates much of East Africa and the Horn of Africa, with a significant spill-over effect into Kenya.

The militarization of society further compounds Kenya's security predicament. Faced with escalating insecurity and perceptions of inadequacy in government security provision, communities are increasingly taking matters into their own hands. Traditionally reliant on bows and arrows for protection, the shift towards modern firearms procurement reflects a growing sense of vulnerability and the need for enhanced self-defense mechanisms. In the northern border regions, incidents of armed cattle rustling, exacerbated by periods of drought, have sparked arms races between pastoralist communities, intensifying ethnic tensions and perpetuating cycles of violence.

Climate change amplifies vulnerabilities within Kenya's security landscape. Prolonged droughts and resource scarcity heighten tensions, particularly among pastoralist communities reliant on dwindling resources such as water and pastureland. These environmental stressors provide fertile ground for criminal exploitation, exacerbating

insecurity and fueling armed conflicts over scarce resources.

The proliferation of firearms, facilitated by porous borders with neighboring Ethiopia and Somalia, exacerbates Kenya's security challenges. Illegal firearms, often of military-grade, flow into the country, finding their way into the hands of criminal networks, armed groups, and civilians alike. This influx fuels conflicts, escalates violence, and undermines law and order efforts.

Against this backdrop, this article aims to deepen understanding and inform evidence-based strategies to address Kenya's evolving security threats.

Transnational Crime in Kenya

Transnational crime poses a significant threat to Kenya's security, encompassing various illicit activities that transcend national borders. Among the prevalent forms of transnational crime affecting Kenya are arms smuggling, terrorism, and human trafficking. Arms smuggling involves the illegal trafficking of weapons across borders, often facilitated by porous boundaries and weak law enforcement (Africa Center for Strategic Studies [ACSS], 2021). Terrorist activities, including recruitment, financing,

and attacks, pose a grave danger to Kenya's national security, with groups like Al-Shabaab operating across the porous border with Somalia. Human trafficking, on the other hand, exploits vulnerable populations, particularly women and children, for purposes such as forced labor and sexual exploitation, further undermining societal stability (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2019).

The evolution of transnational crime in Kenya has been influenced by various historical and contextual factors. Historically, Kenya's strategic location in East Africa has made it a transit point for illicit goods and activities. Additionally, internal conflicts and political instability in neighboring countries have contributed to the proliferation of transnational criminal networks operating within Kenya's borders (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2020). Over time, advancements in technology and communication have facilitated the globalization of crime, enabling criminal syndicates to coordinate activities across borders more efficiently. Moreover, socio-economic disparities and governance challenges have created fertile ground for the expansion of transnational criminal enterprises, exacerbating security threats within the country (Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime [GIATOC], 2017).

The impact of transnational crime on Kenya's national security and societal stability is profound and multifaceted. Not only does it undermine the rule of law and erode public trust in institutions (African Union [AU], 2019), but it also fuels violence, exacerbates conflicts, and hampers socio-economic development. The proliferation of illicit weapons contributes to intercommunal violence and exacerbates internal security challenges (UNODC, 2019). Moreover, terrorist attacks and activities destabilize communities, disrupt economic activities, and instill fear and insecurity among the populace (Boukhars & Kelly, 2022). Additionally, human trafficking not only violates human rights but also perpetuates cycles of exploitation and vulnerability, undermining efforts to build resilient and cohesive societies (ACSS, 2021).

Climate Change Impacts

Climate change presents profound challenges to Kenya's socio-economic fabric, exacerbating vulnerabilities across various sectors and communities. Prolonged droughts, erratic weather patterns, and resource scarcity constitute prominent manifestations of climate change in Kenya. These phenomena disrupt traditional weather

“The proliferation of firearms, facilitated by porous borders with neighboring Ethiopia and Somalia, exacerbates Kenya's security challenges. Illegal firearms, often of military-grade, flow into the country, finding their way into the hands of criminal networks, armed groups, and civilians alike

patterns, leading to increased frequency and severity of droughts, unpredictable rainfall, and dwindling water sources (Pacific Institute, 2022).

The impacts of climate change are particularly acute in key sectors such as agriculture, water resources, and livelihoods. In agriculture, changing rainfall patterns and water scarcity disrupt crop production, leading to decreased yields and food insecurity. Smallholder farmers, who rely heavily on rain-fed agriculture, are disproportionately affected, facing reduced incomes and increased vulnerability to poverty (Kusumawardani, 2017). Moreover, water resources are increasingly strained, exacerbating competition for limited supplies and heightening tensions among communities. Livelihoods dependent on natural resources, such as pastoralism, face significant challenges as grazing lands shrink and water sources become scarce, exacerbating conflicts over resources (Bolton et al., 2020).

The social, economic, and security implications of climate change in Kenya are far-reaching and multifaceted. Socially, climate-induced displacement exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, leading to internal migration, population displacement, and competition for resources. Economic sectors such as tourism and agriculture suffer losses due to climate-related disruptions, affecting livelihoods and exacerbating poverty levels. Additionally, climate change acts as a threat multiplier, exacerbating existing social tensions and conflicts over scarce resources. Insecurity and instability are heightened as communities compete for dwindling resources, leading to localized conflicts and exacerbating social fragmentation (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2022; King, 2023).

Militarization and Firearm Proliferation

The militarization trend in Kenyan society is a complex phenomenon marked by the increasing involvement

Transnational criminal networks exploit vulnerabilities exacerbated by climate change to facilitate illicit activities, while the militarization of society further complicates efforts to address these challenges

of security forces in civilian affairs and the widespread availability of firearms among the populace. This trend is fueled by various factors, including historical legacies of conflict, internal security challenges, and perceptions of inadequate state protection. Kenya's history of intercommunal violence, particularly in regions prone to cattle rustling and border disputes, has contributed to a culture of militarization, where communities feel compelled to arm themselves for self-defense (Makanda, 2019).

Factors contributing to firearm proliferation in Kenya are multifaceted and interconnected. Weak governance and porous borders facilitate the illegal flow of weapons into the country, with neighboring conflict zones such as Somalia and South Sudan serving as major sources of arms trafficking. Corruption within security forces and lax enforcement of firearms regulations further exacerbate the problem, allowing criminal networks and armed groups to acquire and traffic weapons with relative ease (Bartlett, 2020).

The role of militarization and firearm proliferation in exacerbating security challenges in Kenya cannot be overstated. The widespread availability of firearms amplifies violence, perpetuates cycles of conflict, and undermines efforts to maintain law and order. Armed criminal groups and militias exploit the proliferation of weapons to perpetrate crimes ranging from armed robbery to political violence, posing significant threats to public safety and stability (Cannon & Pkalya, 2019; Olsen, 2018). Moreover, the militarization of society, characterized by the increased use of force by security forces and the erosion of civilian oversight, raises concerns about human rights abuses, restricts civic freedoms, and undermines democratic governance (Flores-Macías & Zarkin, 2022).

Methodology

The methodology employed for this paper entailed a thorough desktop review of existing literature, policy documents, and scholarly articles pertaining to Kenya's

security landscape, with a focus on the interplay between transnational crime, climate change impacts, and militarization. Utilizing online databases, academic journals, and reputable sources, the review synthesized and analyzed relevant information to generate insights into the complexities of Kenya's security challenges. By employing a desktop review approach, the paper ensured a comprehensive examination of the subject matter while mitigating the limitations associated with primary data collection. This methodology facilitated the exploration of key themes, identification of trends, and formulation of informed conclusions and recommendations to address Kenya's evolving security dynamics.

Complex Interplay: Understanding the Nexus

The interplay between transnational crime, climate change, and militarization forms a complex nexus that amplifies security threats within Kenya. Transnational criminal networks exploit vulnerabilities exacerbated by climate change to facilitate illicit activities, while the militarization of society further complicates efforts to address these challenges. Understanding this nexus requires a nuanced analysis of how these factors intersect and influence each other, ultimately shaping Kenya's security landscape.

Transnational crime thrives in environments characterized by weak governance, porous borders, and socio-economic vulnerabilities exacerbated by climate change. Criminal networks exploit climate-induced disruptions, such as resource scarcity and population displacement, to expand their operations and evade law enforcement. For example, the proliferation of arms in conflict-prone regions exacerbates violence and perpetuates cycles of insecurity, undermining efforts to address climate-related conflicts (Olsen, 2018). Additionally, climate change-induced environmental stressors provide fertile ground for criminal activities such as illegal logging, poaching, and wildlife trafficking, further undermining conservation efforts and exacerbating security challenges (King, 2023).

The intersection of transnational crime, climate change, and militarization is evident in specific contexts within Kenya. In regions such as the Lake Turkana Basin, the convergence of climate change-induced droughts, resource scarcity, and intercommunal conflicts has facilitated the proliferation of small arms and exacerbated insecurity (Bolton et al., 2020). Similarly, in the coastal region, where illegal fishing and maritime piracy are prevalent, the militarization of maritime security forces has raised concerns about human rights abuses and undermined efforts to address transnational criminal activities (Christin Roby, 2018). Furthermore, the militarization of border regions, aimed at combating transnational crime and terrorism, has led to increased tensions with local communities and allegations of excessive use of force by security forces, exacerbating social grievances and perpetuating cycles of violence (Anderson & McKnight, 2015).

Policy and Legal Frameworks

Kenya has implemented several policies and legal frameworks to address pressing security challenges, encompassing issues such as transnational crime, climate change impacts, and militarization. One such policy is the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control, and Reduction of SALW in the Great Lakes Region and Horn of Africa (2004). The objective of this protocol was to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in the region, aiming to regulate arms brokering and civilian possession of firearms. However, despite its intentions, the proliferation of SALW and related security threats persists in the region, indicating shortcomings in the protocol's implementation and enforcement.

Similarly, the Mifugo Protocol on Cattle Rustling (2008) was introduced to address the rampant issue of livestock theft, particularly through traditional mechanisms such as branding and record-keeping. Despite its



Kenya's Interior Cabinet Secretary Prof. Kithure Kindiki, in Garissa County during the National Tree Planting Day/Green Holiday on November 14, 2023 (Photo Credit: Richard Kamau)



Mzee Ali Liban Guracho walks past dozens of cattle carcasses outside Garissa town, Kenya, exacerbated by climate change-induced drought (Photo Credit: Larry C. Price)

implementation, cattle rustling remains a significant security threat in Kenya, indicating a failure to effectively address the root causes of the problem. The protocol's objectives to provide legal recognition to traditional mechanisms have not translated into tangible reductions in cattle rustling incidents, highlighting gaps in its implementation and enforcement.

Additionally, the IGAD Transhumance Protocol on Cross-border Arms Smuggling aimed to regulate cross-border mobility of transhumant livestock and herders as an adaptation mechanism to climate change. Its objectives included harmonizing national laws, investing in pastoral regions, and strengthening cross-border measures to combat arms smuggling. However, despite these efforts, cross-border arms smuggling and related security challenges persist, suggesting limitations in the protocol's effectiveness. The protocol's objectives have not been fully realized, indicating a need for enhanced implementation and coordination among member states to address the underlying issues effectively.

The identified policies and legal frameworks aimed at addressing security challenges in Kenya demonstrate significant gaps in their implementation and effectiveness. Weak implementation is evident across various fronts, with policies such as the Nairobi Protocol and the Mifugo Protocol failing to effectively regulate arms proliferation

and cattle rustling, respectively. This lack of enforcement points to a broader issue of inadequate coordination among stakeholders. Despite initiatives like the IGAD Transhumance Protocol aiming to regulate cross-border arms smuggling, persistent security challenges suggest a lack of effective coordination among member states. Additionally, limited resources and capacity constraints hinder the full implementation of these policies, exacerbating the challenges posed by transnational crime, climate change impacts, and militarization. Without robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, accurately assessing the impact of these policies becomes challenging, hindering progress and perpetuating security threats in the region. Addressing these gaps requires collaborative efforts to enhance coordination, allocate sufficient resources, and strengthen monitoring and evaluation frameworks to ensure the effective implementation of policies aimed at mitigating security challenges in Kenya.

Mitigation Strategies and Initiatives

In response to the complex security challenges facing Kenya, several ongoing initiatives and interventions have been implemented to enhance security resilience, strengthen institutions, and promote sustainable practices. Efforts to mitigate transnational crime in Kenya necessitate a multifaceted approach that addresses

the root causes of criminal activities while enhancing collaboration and coordination among stakeholders. While existing initiatives such as the Nairobi Protocol and regional frameworks like the EAC Peace and Security Protocol provide a foundation for addressing transnational crime, there is a need to strengthen enforcement mechanisms and improve cross-border cooperation. Enhanced intelligence sharing, joint law enforcement operations, and capacity-building initiatives are essential to disrupt criminal networks and reduce the flow of illicit arms, drugs, and human trafficking across borders. Additionally, addressing socioeconomic disparities and governance challenges can help mitigate the drivers of transnational crime, fostering a more secure and stable environment in the region. (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2021; Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime [GIATOC], 2017).

Building resilience to climate change impacts requires a holistic approach that integrates adaptation strategies, sustainable resource management, and community empowerment. While policies such as the National Climate Change Framework Policy provide a framework for mainstreaming climate considerations into development planning, there is a need for more targeted interventions to address the specific vulnerabilities of different sectors and regions. Community-based initiatives, such as the IDDRSI, play a crucial role in enhancing resilience at the grassroots level by empowering local communities to identify risks, implement adaptation measures, and build adaptive capacity. Moreover, investing in sustainable agriculture, water resource management, and renewable energy can help mitigate the adverse effects of climate change while promoting long-term sustainability and resilience. (Pacific Institute, 2022; Médecins Sans Frontières, 2022).

Efforts to address militarization and firearm proliferation in Kenya require a comprehensive approach that combines institution strengthening, policy reforms, and community engagement. While policies such as the Nairobi Protocol aim to regulate the flow of small arms and light weapons, there is a need for greater enforcement and capacity-building initiatives to curb illicit arms trafficking and reduce the prevalence of armed violence. Strengthening institutional capacity within law enforcement agencies, enhancing border controls, and promoting responsible firearm ownership are essential steps to mitigate the security risks associated with militarization and firearm proliferation. Moreover, community-led initiatives

that promote peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and disarmament can contribute to creating a culture of non-violence and fostering a safer and more secure society for all citizens. (Boukhars & Kelly, 2022; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2021).

Challenges and Opportunities

Addressing the multifaceted security challenges in Kenya is fraught with various obstacles that hinder effective security governance. Transnational crime continues to thrive due to porous borders, weak enforcement mechanisms, and limited resources, exacerbating the proliferation of illicit arms and organized criminal activities. Moreover, climate change poses significant challenges to the country's resilience, leading to resource scarcity, conflict over natural resources, and heightened vulnerabilities, particularly in marginalized communities. Additionally, the militarization of society perpetuates cycles of violence, undermines trust in state institutions, and exacerbates intercommunal conflicts, further complicating efforts to maintain peace and stability. These challenges underscore the need for comprehensive strategies that address the root causes of insecurity while fostering collaboration and coordination among diverse stakeholders. (Anderson & McKnight, 2015; Pacific Institute, 2022).

Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities for enhancing collaboration and coordination among stakeholders to improve security governance in Kenya. Regional frameworks such as the EAC Peace and Security Protocol provide platforms for cooperation and information sharing, facilitating joint efforts to combat transnational crime and promote regional stability. Furthermore, initiatives like the IDDRSI offer opportunities for community-led resilience-building efforts, empowering local communities to address climate change impacts and reduce vulnerabilities.

Additionally, the Nairobi Protocol and other legal frameworks provide avenues for regulating firearm proliferation and enhancing law enforcement capacity, offering opportunities for strengthening security governance and promoting peace and stability in the region. By leveraging these opportunities and fostering strategic partnerships, Kenya can overcome its security challenges and build a more resilient and secure future for all its citizens. (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2021; Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2021).

Transnational crime, including arms smuggling, terrorism, and human trafficking, thrives due to porous borders and weak enforcement mechanisms, exacerbating security threats and undermining efforts to maintain law and order

Conclusion

The analysis of Kenya's security nexus reveals a complex interplay of transnational crime, climate change impacts, and militarization, which collectively pose significant challenges to national security and societal stability. Transnational crime, including arms smuggling, terrorism, and human trafficking, thrives due to porous borders and weak enforcement mechanisms, exacerbating security threats and undermining efforts to maintain law and order. Climate change further compounds these challenges, leading to resource scarcity, conflicts over natural resources, and heightened vulnerabilities, particularly in marginalized communities. Additionally, the militarization of society perpetuates cycles of violence, erodes trust in state institutions, and fuels intercommunal

conflicts, exacerbating security risks and hindering peacebuilding efforts.

These findings have significant implications for policy and practice in Kenya. Addressing the security nexus requires a holistic approach that integrates transnational crime prevention, climate change adaptation, and demilitarization efforts. Policy interventions should focus on strengthening border controls, enhancing law enforcement capacity, and promoting sustainable resource management to mitigate the drivers of insecurity. Moreover, fostering collaboration and coordination among stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, and local communities, is essential for effective security governance and resilience-building initiatives.

Recommendations for future research and action include further exploring the intersectionality of transnational crime, climate change, and militarization, particularly in specific contexts within Kenya. Additionally, there is a need for longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impacts of policy interventions and identify best practices for enhancing security resilience. Furthermore, investing in community-based initiatives, capacity-building programs, and technology upgrades can strengthen Kenya's capacity to address emerging security threats and promote sustainable peace and stability in the region.

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Mapping the Evolution of Violent Extremism in Kenya: Policy and Strategic Implication

By Mumtaza Musa

Abstract

Violent extremism has undergone notable changes, marked by shifts in recruitment methods, target demographics, funding mechanisms, and the integration of technology. This paper firstly, aims to provide a comprehensive mapping of this evolving nature of violent extremism (VE) between 2013 and 2023. The period in Kenya is pivotal due to the significant expansion of Al-Shabaab's presence. Secondly, considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to comprehending the factors that contribute to individuals' vulnerability to radicalization and involvement in violent extremist behaviors. However, while studies have acknowledged the importance of addressing multiple dimensions of identity and oppression, including race, gender, class, and religion, there is a gap in the literature when it comes to explicitly applying the framework of intersectionality in understanding Violent Extremism. Intersectionality, a concept originating from feminist research, recognizes that individuals' experiences of discrimination and marginalization are shaped by the intersection of multiple social identities. This paper aims to address the gap in the literature by studying Mpeketoni attack of 2014, through an intersectional framework, highlighting how factors such as, ethnic experiences of discrimination, and the intersection of socioeconomic status and religious identity contribute to VE. Lastly, the paper aims to espouse that despite the evolving nature of VE in Kenya, the governmental strategic and policy frameworks have remained static, persisting without substantial adaptation to address the evolving nature of the threat. Despite the National Strategy Countering Violent Extremism (NSCVE)'s emphasis on research as one of its core pillars, promoting evidence-based interventions and programs through research and surveys, it has fallen short in integrating novel research findings into its framework.

However, the evolving nature of VE demands a more dynamic and adaptive approach from government policy and strategy. Government policy should evolve to reflect the changing tactics and strategies employed by terrorists. Utilizing a conceptual and discursive methodological approach, primarily guided by quantitative and qualitative analysis of secondary data on the subject area, forms the foundation of this study. The findings of this study are expected to inform the development of targeted prevention and intervention strategies in countering violent extremism.

Background

Kenya's history is characterized by a plethora of tumultuous occurrences, encompassing instances of colonial subjugation and conflicts in the aftermath of gaining independence. The era of colonial rule, distinguished by the uprising of the Mau Mau movement against British authority, emerges as a period marked by heightened levels of aggression. The Mau Mau resistance fighters, also referred to as the Land and Freedom Army, rose up against discriminatory land policies, resulting in a harsh crackdown by the colonial administration (Wachira & Abdullah, 2018).

In the wake of gaining independence in 1963, Kenya experienced periods of political turmoil and unrest, often stemming from ethnic rivalries and struggles for authority. The killing of Tom Mboya in 1969 stands out as a striking illustration of the intentional violence directed towards influential individuals perceived as challengers to the governing establishment (African Studies Quarterly, 2009). Mboya, a notable statesman and advocate for national cohesion, was murdered in Nairobi, underscoring the vulnerability of Kenya's political domain and the readiness of specific factions to employ force in upholding control.



A Kenya Defence forces soldier walks and keeps virgil at the front entrance of Garissa University College on April 3, 2015 (Photo Credits: AFP/Getty Images)

The 1980s saw a rise in authoritarianism during President Daniel arap Moi's rule in Kenya, lasting for more than two decades.

The period was characterized by electoral violence and religious tensions, notably in the disputed 1988 elections plagued by widespread irregularities and violence and the 1992 clashes that erupted between the police and supporters of the Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK) in Mombasa. The IPK, an Islamic political party, faced repression from the government, leading to violent confrontations. The assassination of Pio Gama Pinto in 1965, a prominent government critic, also highlighted the dangers faced by those who challenged the established order (Gitau, 2013).

The decade of the 1990s saw a notable increase in ethnic confrontations and territorial disputes, especially in the Rift Valley area. The Rift Valley land conflicts, driven by long-standing grievances and the quest for resources, stood out among these clashes. Moreover, the killing of JM Kariuki in 1975, a vocal proponent of land restructuring, highlighted the deadly outcomes of confronting well-established powers (Kariuki, 2009). It was also the period when state sponsored violence was heightened. The

Wagalla massacre in Wajir in 1984 stands as one of the darkest episodes of state-sponsored violence in Kenya's history. Security forces brutally attacked and killed hundreds of ethnic Somali men in what was purportedly a crackdown on banditry. However, the massacre was later revealed to be a deliberate act of violence against the Somali community, highlighting the ethnic dimensions of state violence (Sheik, 2007).

The emergence of the Sabaot Land Defence Force in the Mount Elgon region in 2005 exemplified how marginalized communities resort to violence to assert their rights. This militia group, formed by the Sabaot community, engaged in clashes with other ethnic groups and the government over land ownership issues, resulting in significant casualties and displacement (Human rights watch, 2008).

The post-election violence that occurred in 2007-2008 stands out as a significant and troubling period in the history of Kenya, resulting in a considerable loss of life and the displacement of a large number of individuals. The contentious nature of the election outcomes triggered widespread demonstrations and acts of violence, laying bare profound underlying grievances and divisions along

ethnic lines. Furthermore, instances of extrajudicial killings and government-sanctioned oppression were widespread during this time (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism (VERLT).

The OSCE explains “radicalization that leads to terrorism” as “the dynamic process whereby an individual comes to accept terrorist violence as a possible, perhaps even legitimate, course of action. This may eventually, but not necessarily, lead this person to advocate, act in support of, or to engage in terrorism”. It involves the progression from extremist ideologies to acts of terrorism. VE encompasses beliefs and ideologies that advocate for or justify the use of violence to achieve political, religious, or ideological goals. This extremism may manifest in various forms, such as religious fundamentalism, ethnonationalism, or political extremism.

When individuals or groups espousing extremist ideologies resort to violence to further their agendas, it can escalate into terrorism. Terrorism involves the deliberate use of violence or threats of violence against civilians or non-combatants to instill fear, coerce governments, or achieve political, religious, or ideological aims. The transition from VE to terrorism often occurs when extremist groups or individuals engage in acts of violence, such as bombings, shootings, or kidnappings, targeting civilians or symbolic targets. This progression is fueled by factors such as radicalization, socio-political grievances, and the presence of conducive environments for extremist activities. This also shows how various factors may intersect to lead radicalization and terrorism.

Exploring Intersectionality in VE

The concept of intersectionality has emerged as a crucial framework in understanding the complex dynamics of social inequality and oppression. Coined by feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality recognizes that individuals can experience multiple forms of discrimination and marginalization simultaneously, resulting from the intersection of various social identities such as race, gender, class, sexuality, and religion. This recognition challenges traditional approaches that tend to analyze social issues in isolation, neglecting the interconnectedness of different systems of oppression.

One area where the application of intersectionality has not gained significant attention is in the study of

VE. VE is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by a range of factors, including socio-economic conditions, political grievances, ideological beliefs, and identity-based marginalization. By adopting an intersectional lens, researchers and practitioners can gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between various forms of oppression and their contribution to the radicalization process.

The intersectional approach to studying violent extremism recognizes that individuals at the intersections of multiple marginalized identities may be particularly vulnerable to extremist ideologies. For example, individuals who belong to racial or ethnic minority groups and also face gender-based discrimination may experience compounded marginalization, making them more susceptible to recruitment by extremist groups that promise empowerment and a sense of belonging. By acknowledging the unique experiences and vulnerabilities of individuals at these intersections, interventions and prevention strategies can be tailored to address their specific needs and address the root causes of radicalization.

Mpeketoni

The Mpeketoni terror attacks of June 15, 2014, revealed a complex interplay of intersecting factors, underscoring the significance of an intersectionality lens in understanding violent extremism. Rooted in colonial legacies and post-colonial resettlement policies, the attacks exposed underlying tensions stemming from ethnic grievances, socio-economic disparities, and geopolitical vulnerabilities. The influx of displaced Kikuyu and other migrant groups altered the demographic composition of Mpeketoni, disrupting established power structures and exacerbating ethnic tensions. This demographic transition intersected with broader struggles over resources and political representation, deepening marginalization and fueling resentment among indigenous communities.

“The Mpeketoni terror attacks of June 15, 2014, revealed a complex interplay of intersecting factors, underscoring the significance of an intersectionality lens in understanding violent extremism

The motivations for joining Al-Shabaab vary, ranging from seeking personal gain to religious zealotry, highlighting the complex and multifaceted nature of the recruitment process. Paradoxically, the predominant recruits for Al-Shabaab are Kenyans, not Somalis

Furthermore, Mpeketoni strategic location near Somalia made it susceptible to external threats, highlighting the intersection of local and regional dynamics in shaping security vulnerabilities. The attacks targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure, reflecting the intersection of internal grievances and external influences, such as Kenya's involvement in Somalia. The aftermath of the attacks revealed complex socio-political dynamics, including resistance to external control and demands for greater autonomy. In sum, the Mpeketoni attacks underscored the interconnected nature of identity-based grievances, socio-economic disparities, and geopolitical vulnerabilities, emphasizing the importance of adopting an intersectional approach to address the multifaceted challenges of violent extremism.

Expanding research to explore intersectionality in other attacks can provide valuable insights into the nuanced dynamics of violent extremism. By applying an intersectional lens, scholars can analyze how various factors intersect and interact differently across diverse contexts, shaping individuals' pathways into extremism. For example, examining attacks like the Westgate Mall siege in 2013 or the Garissa University massacre in 2015 through an intersectional framework can reveal how identities such as ethnicity, religion, gender, and socio-economic status intersect to influence perpetrators and victims' experiences.

Evolution in Recruitment, Targets, Tactics, Financing and use of Technology

According to EUAA country guidance report 2023, Recruitment by Al-Shabaab has undergone significant evolution, adapting to changing circumstances and exploiting various social, economic, and political factors. Originally concentrated in urban centers, recruitment shifted to rural areas after Al-Shabaab lost territory in urban centers in 2012 and 2015. Despite this, the group managed to increase its active fighters from an estimated 2,000-3,000 in 2017 to 5,000-7,000 in 2020. Recruitment strategies often capitalize on clan conflicts, with up to

40% of rank-and-file members recruited from specific regions and clans experiencing marginalization.

The recruitment process encompasses a wide range of individuals, including men, women, and no ethnic somalis, each influenced by factors such as economic prospects, grievances against authorities, and religious beliefs. Al-Shabaab's recruitment strategies have evolved to include not only fighters but also administrative staff, financiers, and informants, utilizing coercion, financial incentives, and ideological indoctrination. Forced recruitment is employed in situations where the group needs to replenish its ranks or maintain a continuous supply of new recruits. The motivations for joining Al-Shabaab vary, ranging from seeking personal gain to religious zealotry, highlighting the complex and multifaceted nature of the recruitment process. Paradoxically, the predominant recruits for Al-Shabaab are Kenyans, not Somalis. Kenya's National Intelligence Service pointed out a Kenyan of Kikuyu ethnicity as the mastermind behind the terror assaults in Lamu and Tana River in 2014 (Lind, Mutahi, and Oosterom, 2017). In the attack on the Dusit Hotel complex in Nairobi in 2019, three of the five terrorists were Kenyan (Breidlid, 2019).

Furthermore, according to US national counter terrorism center, attacks have been on various targets including US and foreign military personnel, Somali Government and security forces, as well as civilian locations like hotels, malls, universities, and busy streets. While the group has carried out devastating attacks resulting in mass casualties in countries like Kenya, Somalia, and Uganda, it has not yet executed any attacks beyond the East African region. Al-Shabaab's tactics typically involve sophisticated operations featuring the detonation of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) or vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIEDs), followed by small-arms fire. Additionally, the group employs tactics such as ambushes, military-style assaults, kidnappings, and targeted assassinations (US, NCTC, 20221).

The financing methods for violent extremism have diversified over time. While initial recruitment relied on limited resources and community support, Counterterrorism experts assert that al-Shabaab has derived income from various sources over time, including other terrorist organizations, piracy, kidnappings, and extortion of local businesses, farmers, and aid groups. According to the U.S. Treasury Department, these avenues collectively generate approximately \$100 million annually for the group, with around one-quarter of this revenue allocated towards procuring weapons and explosives. Somalia analyst Abdirashid Hashi notes that in recent years, al-Shabaab has managed to extract funds from numerous businesses in Mogadishu and beyond, indicating a notable degree of financial stability rather than being in a state of retreat. The group has established an elaborate racketeering network involving tolls at checkpoints, taxes on imports, and zakat, an obligatory religious tax. While al-Shabaab previously profited significantly from taxing illegally traded charcoal (cite).

Technology has emerged as a potent tool for violent extremists, enabling them to conduct surveillance,

communication, and attacks with unparalleled ease and efficiency. Al-Shabaab's utilization of drones allows them to gather strategic information on potential targets, assess enemy forces' presence and strength, identify sensitive infrastructure, and locate vulnerable locations. This integration of drones into their operational strategies represents a departure from conventional tactics and highlights the group's technological advancements for instance, during a recent assault on a military outpost in Sirari, security forces eliminated a suspected suicide bomber and intercepted a drone being used by al-Shabaab militants for reconnaissance prior to the attack. This incident underscores the group's utilization of off-the-shelf unmanned aerial vehicles (ADF, 2023).

Furthermore, VEOs like al-Shabaab utilize drones to disseminate propaganda effectively. By capturing high-quality aerial footage, they can amplify their messages and reach a broader audience through social media and other platforms. This strategic use of technology enhances their communication campaigns and facilitates mass access to their extremist ideologies (Aguilera, 2023).



Some of the police vans burnt and destroyed during the Mpeketoni attack in Lamu. (Photo Credits: Laban Walloga/ Nation Media Group)

Table 1 illustrates Evolution in Recruitment, Targets, Tactics, Financing and use of Technology by Al-Shabab from 2013-2023.

Aspect	Former Methods	Evolution
Targets	Focused primarily on establishing an Islamic caliphate in Somalia. Attacked government institutions, engaged in guerrilla warfare against Ethiopian and African Union forces.	Expanded its targets to include attacks on neighboring countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Djibouti, and Ethiopia. Targets now include civilian populations, the military, government institutions, public spaces, hotels, restaurants, universities, and international interests. Engages in high-profile attacks to gain media attention and spread fear.
Funding	Relied on external donations, fundraising within Somalia. Engaged in extortion, taxation, and control of economic sectors in areas under its control.	Continues to rely on external contributions, but has expanded fundraising efforts globally. Involved in illegal activities such as extortion, kidnapping for ransom, and trafficking to generate revenue. Receives financial support from Al-Qaeda and other extremist groups. Exploits businesses, charities, and diaspora communities for funding.
Dissemination of Ideology	Used traditional media, mosques, and word-of-mouth to spread its ideology. Focused on the establishment of an Islamic Emirate in Somalia.	Utilizes sophisticated propaganda, social media, and extremist rhetoric to spread its ideology globally. Emphasizes the need for international jihad and the establishment of a global caliphate. Targets disaffected individuals and marginalized communities online. Utilizes technology to reach a wider audience and inspire attacks.
Recruitment	Primarily recruited from within Somalia. Leveraged networks of extremist mosques, madrassas, and radical clerics for recruitment. Ethnic Somalis only.	Indoctrination, financial incentive and conscription by force as recruitment strategies Non ethnic Somalis, Women and Children
Radicalization	Used radical clerics, extremist propaganda, and training camps to radicalize individuals.	Use enticement to radicalize impoverished jobless young men, individuals with limited islamic knowledge, Combatants are promised family support, those who reject labeled as infidels, Individuals threatened or killed for refusal, Elders pressured to comply, Women recruited through marriage, Women coerced by family into joining
Ideological Inclination & Leadership	Initially followed a Salafist/Wahhabist interpretation of Islam under leaders like Ahmed Abdi Godane(deceased).	Embraced a more radical and extremist interpretation of Islam, influenced by Al-Qaeda's global jihadist ideology, under subsequent leaders like Mohamed Mire, Yasir Jiis, Yusuf Ahmed Hajji Nurow, Mustaf 'Ato Mohamoud, Abdi Aden. Promoted takfiri beliefs, legitimizing violence against perceived enemies, including Muslims deemed apostates.

Aspect	Former Methods	Evolution
Tactics	Utilized guerrilla warfare, suicide bombings, and ambushes.	Evolved to include more sophisticated tactics such as complex coordinated attacks, hostage-taking, and use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Employed tactics to disrupt peacekeeping efforts and undermine government control. Adapted to security measures by employing asymmetrical warfare tactics and exploiting vulnerabilities in security infrastructure.

Source: Literature Reviewed.

Mapping VE Attacks, Trends and Patterns

In 2024, Kenya achieved a Global Terrorist Index score of 5.616, securing 18th position in the index. This score reflects a comprehensive assessment based on various factors including the total number of terrorist incidents, fatalities, injuries, and property damage caused by terrorism in the country throughout the year (GTI, 2024). The report further indicates that, incidence of terrorist attacks in Sub-Sahara Africa, decreased to 1,205 in 2023, as opposed to 1,368 in the previous year, reflecting a 12 percent decline. Even though there was a reduction in the frequency of attacks, the fatality count witnessed a surge of 21 percent in 2023, reaching 4,916 compared to 4,066 in the preceding year, indicating a heightened lethality level attacks throughout the region. Table 2 shows Kenya's GTI score relative to other Sub-Saharan African countries.

... incidence of terrorist attacks in Sub-Sahara Africa, decreased to 1,205 in 2023, as opposed to 1,368 in the previous year, reflecting a 12 percent decline

Figure 1: Sub-Saharan Africa GTI score, rank and change in score, 2013-2023

Country	Overall Score	Overall Rank	Change 2013-2023	Change 2022-2023
Burkina Faso	8.571	1	-8.571	0.410
Mali	7.998	3	2.943	0.015
Somalia	7.814	7	0.527	-0.233
Nigeria	7.575	8	-0.322	-0.005
Niger	7.274	10	-4.585	0.221
Cameroon	6.980	12	5.099	0.230
Democratic Republic of the Congo	6.514	13	1.648	0.324
Mozambique	6.267	15	4.420	-0.461
Kenya	5.616	18	-0.686	0.196
Chad	4.987	21	4.820	-0.375
Benin	4.898	24	4.898	0.693
Togo	4.670	25	4.670	0.749
Uganda	4.377	27	1.524	1.931
Burundi	2.434	40	-0.596	-0.654
Tanzania	2.267	42	1.547	-0.685
Angola	2.254	43	1.622	2.224
Côte d'Ivoire	2.060	46	-0.804	-0.660
Djibouti	2.035	48	2.035	-0.630

Source: GTI, 2024

Mapping Attacks and Fatalities from 2013-2023

Al-Shabaab, a Salafist militant faction operating in East Africa, has been responsible for numerous attacks in Somalia and Kenya since its emergence from a conflict in Somalia's capital in 2006. Affiliated with Al Qaeda, Al-Shabaab aims to establish an Islamist state in Somalia. The group's

estimated membership ranges from 7,000 to 9,000 fighters, and it has been actively combated by the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) since 2007, with support from the United States and the United Nations (UN).

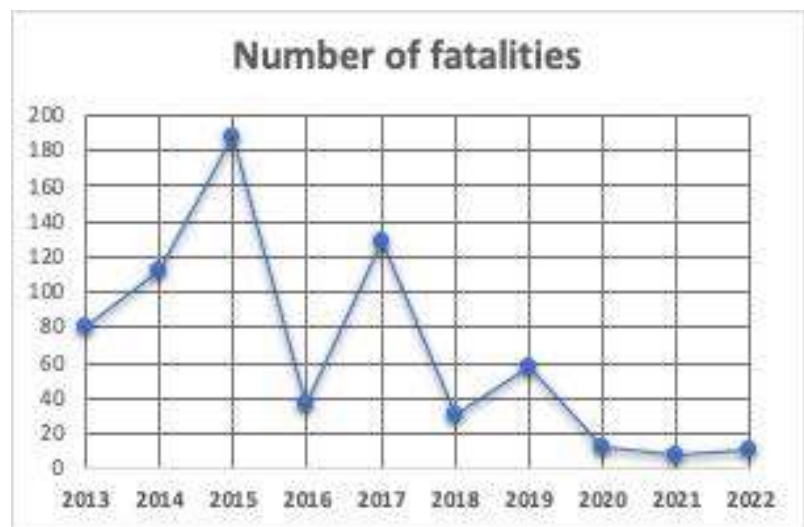
In 2022, the Somali government launched a military offensive against Al-Shabaab, reclaiming territories held by the group. However, by late 2023, challenges arose, leading to a request for an extension on the withdrawal of African Union peacekeepers. Al-Shabaab-related deaths decreased to 499 in 2023, with most occurring in Somalia and Kenya.

In Kenya, Al-Shabaab was responsible for 70 deaths in 2023, the highest toll since 2019. Increased infiltration into Kenya is linked to anti-extremism operations in Somalia and porous border security. Changes in Kenya's security leadership exacerbated the situation, resulting in a security vacuum exploited by militants. The number of Al-Shabaab attacks decreased to 227 incidents in 2023. The Global Terrorism Index 2024 noted a rise in Al-Shabaab-related deaths in Kenya, with Lamu, Garissa, and Mandera counties being heavily affected. The deadliest attacks involved roadside bombings targeting soldiers and police, with Al-Shabaab primarily targeting the military and civilians using bombings and armed assaults.

From 2013 to 2023, Kenya encountered an unrelenting barrage of extremist attacks primarily orchestrated by al-Shabaab, as per information from the US Department of State. In 2013, the Westgate onslaught in Nairobi rattled the nation, establishing a bleak atmosphere for subsequent years. The ensuing year, 2014, observed a series of significant assaults, including armed attacks and bus seizures, all attributed to al-Shabaab. The terror heightened in 2015 with the tragic raid on Garissa University

College, leaving a devastating path of fatalities and wreckage, highlighting Kenya's susceptibility to radicalism, particularly in frontier regions with Somalia. The ensuing years witnessed a continuation of brutality. In 2016, major urban centers like Mombasa and Nairobi encountered numerous extremist occurrences, showcasing the extensive influence of extremist groups. By 2017, al-Shabaab heightened attacks against Kenyan security forces along the border, encompassing a synchronized assault on a KDF encampment resulting in casualties on both ends. The hostility persisted in 2018, focusing on security forces in areas such as Wajir, Lamu, and Mandera Counties. In 2019, assaults endured with alarming consistency, targeting both security forces and civilians in diverse regions, further unsettling the nation. The year 2020 denoted a notable escalation with al-Shabaab's strike on Camp Simba at Manda Bay, culminating in the deaths of three Americans. This was accompanied by assaults in Kamuthe, Garissa County, and Mandera County, as well as a bus assault in Mandera. By 2021, the violence displayed no indications of diminishing, with al-Shabaab initiating attacks on settlements and buses in Mandera County, causing casualties and extensive devastation. In 2022, the pattern persisted incessantly with a sequence of extremist occurrences, including detonations and armed assaults in Mandera and Lamu Counties. Despite an absence of official statistics in 2023 from the US State Department, alternative sources like CHRIPS offered perspectives, indicating a continual menace.

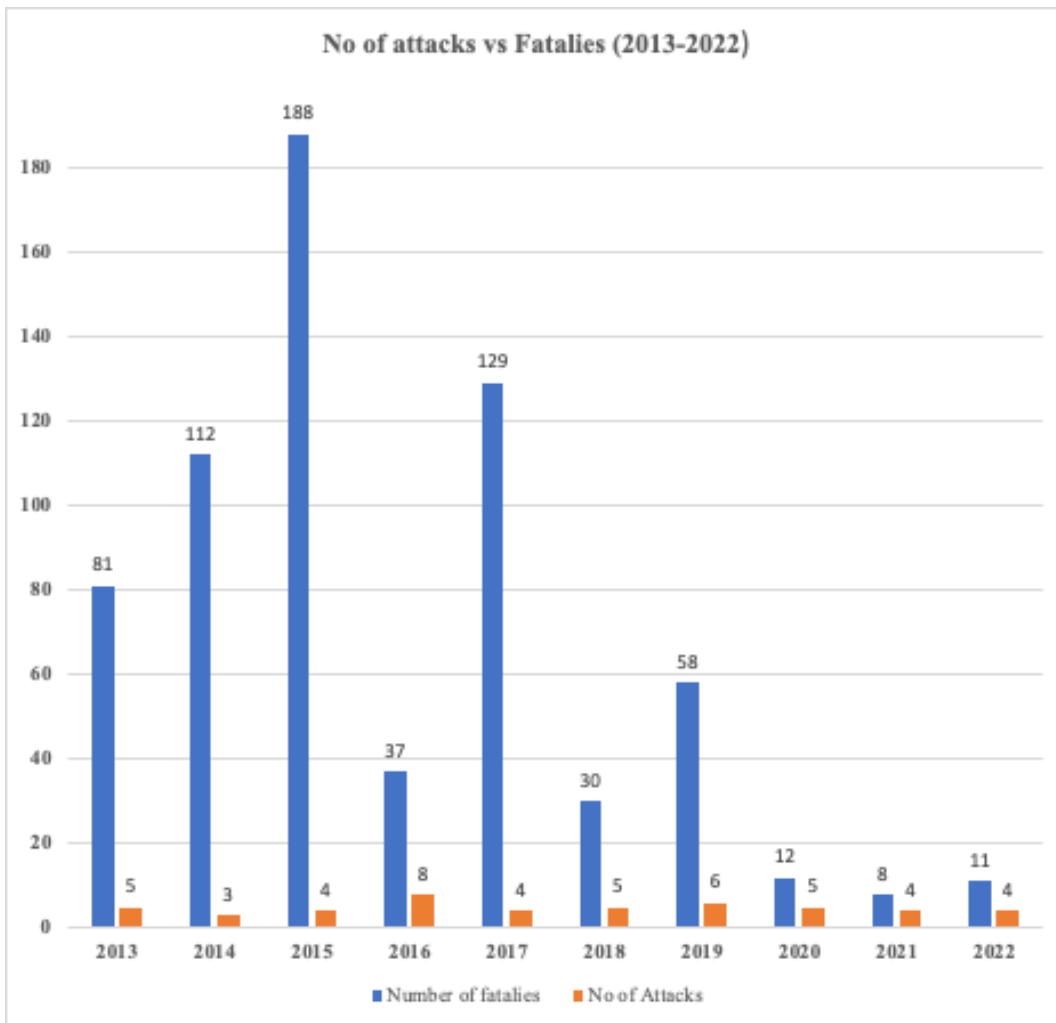
Figure 1: Number of fatalities over the years.



Source: Own derivation from US State department data.

The decrease in fatalities attributed to Al-Shabaab over time could be attributed to improved counterterrorism efforts, these factors collectively have disrupted Al-Shabaab's activities, reduced their ability to carry out attacks, and contributed to the overall decline in fatalities associated with the group.

Figure 2: Number of fatalities and number of attacks 2013-2022



It shows that number of attacks decreasing but fatalities are increasing, therefore lethality of attacks is increasing.

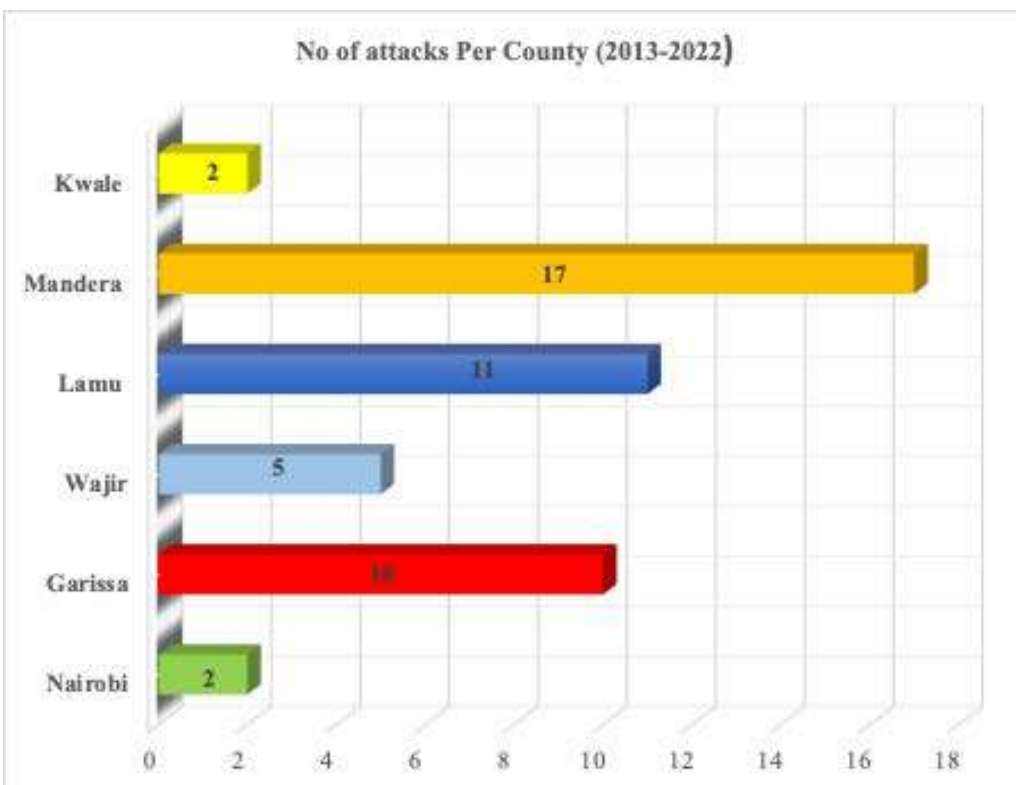


Figure 3: Number of counties indicating Hotspot areas

Border towns in Kenya like Lamu, Garissa, and Mandera face increased vulnerability to attacks due to their proximity to conflict zones in Somalia and porous borders. Ethnic and religious diversity, socio-economic challenges, and historical grievances have been cited as drivers that create an environment where extremist

groups like Al-Shabaab can exploit vulnerabilities and carry out attacks with relative ease.

Major Attacks

The Westgate Mall attack in 2013 and the Garissa University College attack in 2015 were among Kenya's deadliest terrorist incidents, attributed to Al-Shabaab militants. The Westgate siege resulted in numerous casualties, exposing lapses in intelligence and emergency response coordination. The Garissa massacre, targeting non-Muslim students, claimed 148 lives, highlighting the vulnerability of educational institutions to terrorism. In

2019, the DusitD2 complex attack in Nairobi showcased Al-Shabaab's persistent threat. Despite efforts to combat extremism, Kenya faced another wave of attacks in 2022. An IED attack in Manderu killed seven and injured 13, followed by an assault in Lamu resulting in four deaths.

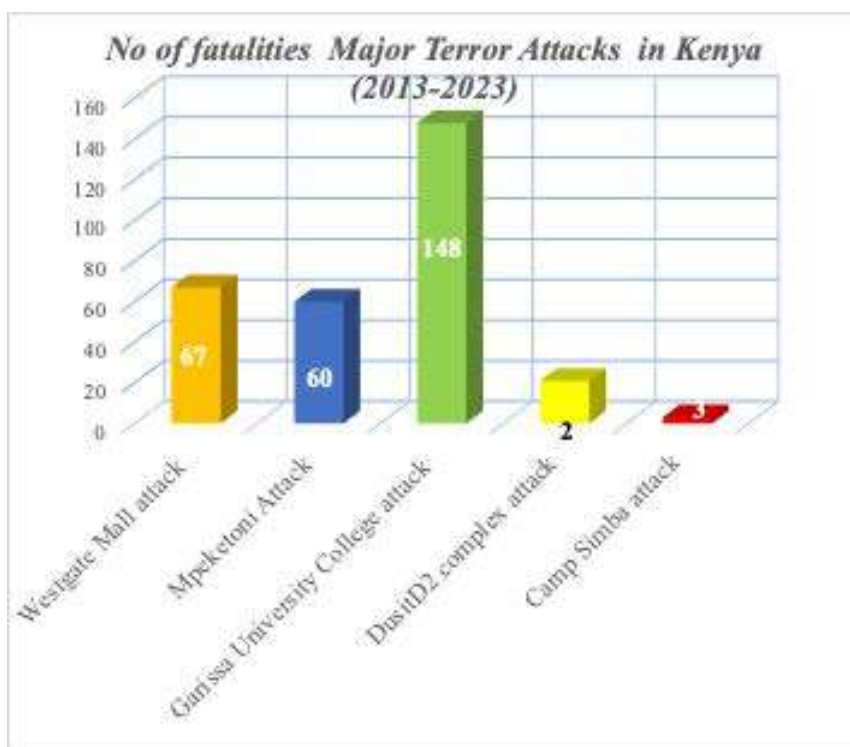
In August, an attack on a police base wounded three officers, and in October, suspected militants struck a pub in Lamu. These incidents underscored the ongoing threat from Al-Shabaab and emphasized the need for heightened vigilance and security measures in Kenya.

Table 3 highlights major incidents with location dates and fatalities.

Major Incidence	Location of Attack	Number of Deaths	Date of Attack
Westgate Mall attack (September 21, 2013)	Nairobi, Kenya	67	September 21, 2013
Garissa University College attack (April 2, 2015)	Garissa, Kenya	148	April 2, 2015
DusitD2 complex attack (January 15, 2019)	Nairobi, Kenya	21	January 15, 2019
Al-Shabaab IED attack (January 31, 2022)	Mandera County, Kenya	7	January 31, 2022
Al-Shabaab assault (March 11, 2022)	Lamu County, Kenya	4	March 11, 2022
Attack on police base (August 1, 2022)	Mandera County, Kenya	0	August 1, 2022
Attack on pub (October 8, 2022)	Lamu County, Kenya	0	October 8, 2022

Source: (Kibe & Ngari, 2024).

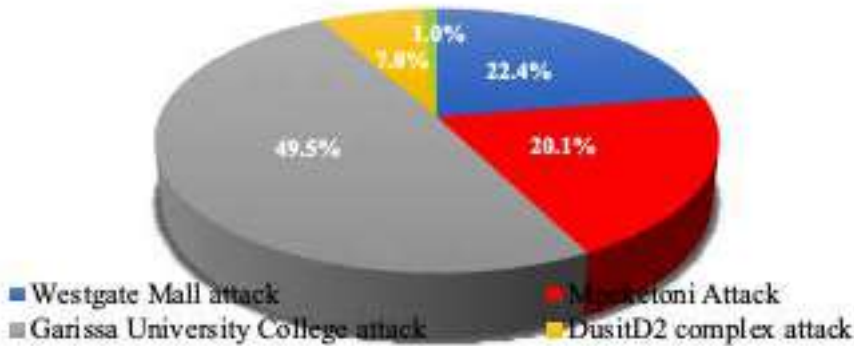
Figure 4: Fatalities from major attacks.



Source: Own derivation from US state department data.

Figure 5: Percentage share of fatalities in major attacks.

Number of fatalities in Major Terror Attacks in Kenya(2013-2023 in %)



Garissa University had most number of deaths followed by Westgate followed by Mpeketoni attacks.

Source: Own derivation from data from US State Department

Garissa attacks had almost half of the total number of fatalities from major attacks.

Strategic and Policy Implication

In addition to the identified weaknesses in Kenya's National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism (NSCVE) of limited awareness and comprehension among the target audience and its failure to adequately address related crimes: (Sang, 2023) these papers findings underscore two additional areas for improvement.

Firstly, the research findings suggest that VE is undergoing a process of evolution, as evidenced by the changing tactics, targets, recruitment strategies, and utilization of technology observed among extremist organizations like al-Shabaab. However, national strategies to counter it are not evolving at the same pace to effectively address these rapid changes. This discrepancy underscores several instances where the NSCVE has demonstrated inadequacy in keeping abreast of the evolving nature of extremism and policy recommendations to solve it.

NSCVE appears to lack adaptability to technological advances, which are increasingly shaping the landscape of violent extremism. Despite the rapid evolution of technology and its significant impact on the methods and tactics of extremist groups, the NSCVE does not seem to adequately address this aspect.

One notable aspect where technological adaptability is lacking is in the realm of online extremism. Extremist groups have increasingly utilized social media platforms, encrypted messaging apps, and other digital channels to spread propaganda, recruit new members, and coordinate attacks. However, the NSCVE's approach

to countering online extremism seems outdated and insufficient. There appears to be a lack of comprehensive strategies for monitoring and combating extremist content on the internet, as well as limited efforts to engage with online communities and influencers to counter extremist narratives effectively.

Policy Recommendations I

Enhanced Social Media Monitoring and Analysis: Implement advanced social media monitoring tools equipped with artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms. These tools can scan online platforms for extremist content, identify patterns of radicalization, and provide real-time alerts to relevant authorities. Solutions like IBM Watson or Palantir Gotham offer comprehensive social media analysis capabilities.

Digital Counter-Narrative Campaigns: Develop and deploy interactive online platforms and mobile applications aimed at promoting counter-narratives to extremist ideologies. These platforms can leverage gamification and user-generated content to engage youth and dissuade them from radicalization. Examples include the "Sawab" app launched by the UAE government, which features interactive games and educational content to counter extremist narratives.

Community Engagement Platforms: Create mobile applications that facilitate communication and collaboration between communities, civil society organizations, and local authorities. These platforms

can serve as hubs for reporting suspicious activities, accessing resources for community resilience, and organizing grassroots initiatives against extremism. A customized solution akin to the “SAFE” app developed in Nigeria, which enables citizens to report security incidents anonymously, could be adapted for Kenyan communities.

Advanced Data Analytics for Threat Assessment:

Invest in data analytics platforms that integrate various sources of information, including social media feeds, law enforcement databases, and open-source intelligence. These platforms can analyze vast amounts of data to identify emerging threats, predict potential radicalization hotspots, and allocate resources more effectively. Utilizing solutions like Splunk or Palantir Foundry can provide actionable insights for proactive intervention strategies.

Cybersecurity Training and Capacity Building:

Offer specialized training programs and workshops to law enforcement agencies, government officials, and community leaders on cybersecurity best practices and digital forensics. Equip them with the skills to investigate online radicalization networks, identify cyber threats, and secure critical infrastructure against cyber-attacks. Collaborate with cybersecurity firms like Cisco or Fortinet to develop tailored training modules and resources.

Secondly, in providing a critical review of NSCVE, the paper highlights that the strategy adopts a fragmented approach to addressing the root causes of violent extremism. While non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the community level in Kenya have been instrumental in VE prevention and deterrence, the strategy fails to fully integrate their insights and approaches. These NGOs leverage their local knowledge to collaborate with marginalized factions, addressing grievances and building trust between communities and governmental bodies. Additionally, they highlight alternative forms of violence and insecurity, such as gang-

related activities, police misconduct, ethnically driven conflicts, social exclusion, prejudice, and gender-based violence, which the strategy overlooks. By neglecting these manifestations, the framework misses crucial drivers of extremism and inhibits comprehensive community resilience (Badurdeen, 2023).

Furthermore, scholars like Badurdeen et al. (2021) argue against adopting a Western epistemological definition of violent extremism, citing its ambiguity and political connotations. They stress the importance of contextualizing the definition and strategies within local perspectives and experiences of violence and insecurity. For instance, the National Counter-Terrorism Center’s (NCTC) definition of radicalization focuses primarily on ideological, racial, ethnic, sectarian, and religious criteria, neglecting factors such as marginalization, discrimination, poverty, or state violence. This approach, according to Breidlid (2021), reinforces the link between radicalization and Islam, fueling further radicalization in the country.

This paper proposes that, integrating an intersectionality lens into countering violent extremism could offer a solution. Despite evidence of Al-Shabaab’s infiltration into Kenya, exploiting internal stressors like inequality, land issues, marginalization, and state violence, current CVE discourse and strategies lack a comprehensive approach in addressing intersecting factors shaping individuals’ vulnerabilities to extremism (Hansen, Lid, & Okwany, 2019; Speckhard & Shajkovci, 2019; Lind, Mutahi, & Oosterom, 2017). Failing to incorporate intersectionality may overlook critical drivers of radicalization, hindering effective prevention and intervention efforts, as evidenced by incidents like the Mpeketoni attacks.

Policy Recommendations II

Empowerment of Marginalized Groups:

Intersectionality highlights how individuals may experience multiple layers of marginalization based on their intersecting identities, such as gender, ethnicity, age, and socioeconomic status. For example, women from minority ethnic groups or youth from economically disadvantaged backgrounds may face compounded barriers to participation in decision-making processes and accessing resources compared to other groups. Therefore, PCVE policies should recognize and address these intersecting forms of marginalization by providing tailored support and opportunities for empowerment to marginalized groups, ensuring that their diverse needs and experiences are taken into account.



Participatory Design of PCVE Interventions:

Intersectionality underscores the importance of recognizing the diverse perspectives and priorities within communities. PCVE interventions must acknowledge the intersecting identities and experiences of community members to effectively address the root causes of violent extremism. By adopting participatory approaches that include voices from various marginalized groups, policies can be designed to address the unique challenges faced by different communities and ensure that interventions are contextually relevant and inclusive.

Building Trust and Relationships:

Intersectionality emphasizes the complex dynamics of power and privilege that shape relationships between government institutions, security agencies, and communities. Individuals from marginalized backgrounds may have historically strained relationships with authorities due to experiences of discrimination and marginalization.

Therefore, efforts to build trust must consider the intersecting factors of identity and power dynamics, prioritizing transparent communication, accountability, and meaningful engagement that address the specific concerns and needs of marginalized communities.

Conclusion

In summary, Kenya's NSCVE demonstrates shortcomings in addressing evolving extremism and leveraging technology. Recommendations include enhancing social media monitoring, launching digital counter-narrative campaigns, creating community engagement platforms, investing in advanced data analytics, and providing cybersecurity training. Integrating an intersectionality lens is vital for addressing diverse experiences of marginalized groups. By implementing these measures, Kenya can bolster its efforts to counter violent extremism, foster community resilience, and adapt to the dynamic landscape of extremism and technology.

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About the Authors

Mariah Faridah Muli

Mariah Faridah Muli is an Advocate for Women Rights and a Researcher. She holds a Masters of Arts in Diplomacy from University of Nairobi (Kenya) and a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from University of Nairobi (Kenya) her areas of interest include Women Advocacy, International Relations, Diplomacy, SDGs and Law, Gender, Environment and Climate Change, Conflict Management, Peace and Security and Geopolitics

Faridah can be reached at faridah.henry@gmail.com

Mumo Nzau, Ph.D.

Dr. Mumo Nzau holds an MA and PhD in Political Science from the State University of New York at Buffalo. He is a Consultant Researcher, Policy Advisor and Strategist on National Security, Defence & Foreign Relations, Conflict Analysis and Governance. Dr. Nzau has served as a Visiting Research Fellow and Advisor in a number of leading national, regional and international Think Tanks. Currently, he is the Head of Programmes at the National Defence College (National Defence University-Kenya: NDU-K). He has 6 Authored and/or Co-Authored Books and at least 60 Book Chapters and Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles; over and above supervision of Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations. Dr. Nzau is the author *Transitional Justice and After: Kenya's Experience with IDP Resettlement and Peacebuilding since the 2007/2008 PEV* (2016); co-editor *The Changing Dynamics of Terrorism and Violent Extremism* (2018) and editor of *Taking Stock of Devolution in Kenya* (2021).

Dr. Mumo can be reached at mumonzau@yahoo.com

Stanley Wagunya Simon

Stanley W. Simon is the Director of Goodit International Limited, a leading research firm in Kenya, and also serves as Director of Armistice Security International Consult, a prominent security and intelligence firm. Stanley holds a BSc. in Applied Statistics from Moi University, and is currently pursuing an MA in Monitoring and Evaluation. With over 12 years of extensive experience in research, Stanley has made significant contributions as a consultant for esteemed organizations including Malaika Foundation, Lega Ugaidi, and the Ministry of Interior. Stanley combines analytical prowess with strategic insights to drive innovation and excellence in both research and security intelligence domains. "

Stanley can be reached at smuriu60@gmail.com

Mumtaza Musa

Mumtaza Musa is a researcher, strategist, and policy analyst with profound commitment to addressing pressing development challenges in Kenya and beyond. Currently pursuing a doctoral degree in development at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Mumtaza brings a wealth of academic expertise to her work. She holds a Master's degree in International Relations and a Bachelor's degree in International Relations from the United States International University Africa which, gives her a solid foundation in understanding global issues and dynamics. Currently, she works as a researcher at the Kenya School of Governments' Security Management Institute, leveraging her vast knowledge and experience in development and humanitarian affairs. Her professional background includes working with both governmental and non-governmental organizations, providing her with valuable insights into the complexities of development interventions and policy formulation processes. Mumtaza's research interests encompass a wide spectrum of topics, including security, technology, and development, as well as policy analysis, advocacy, and strategic planning.

Musa can be reached at musa.mumtaz7.mm@gmail.com

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 +254 732 322 396/732 322 396  info@horninstitute.org

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Radicalization into Violent Extremism in Coastal Kenya Genesis, Impact and Responses

The book by prominent scholars on Islamist groups and ideology, explores the connection between increased number of killings in some coastal counties in the rise of political Islam in Kenya and some Muslim youth who had returned from Somalia; the impact of such killings on affected families; and the challenging relationship between security agencies and the community as well as the development of County Action Plans for countering violent extremism.



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📍 Durham Road, Kileleshwa
P. O. Box 25632-00100
Nairobi – Kenya

☎ +254 720 323 896
☎ +254 735 323 896

✉ info@horninstitute.org
🌐 www.horninstitute.org

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The HORN International Institute for Strategic Studies is a non-profit, applied research, and policy think-do tank based in Nairobi, Kenya. Its vision is a progressive Horn of Africa and the African continent, served by informed, evidence-based and problem-solving policy research and analysis. Its mission is to contribute to informed, objective, definitive research and analytical inquiry that positively informs policies of governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and spaces.

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+254 720 323 896

+254 735 323 896

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