

Status of Kenya's Counter-Terrorism Measures in Lamu County, Kenya¹

Josephat Nyandoro Omuria²

Abstract:

This study explored the status of Kenya's counter-terrorism in Lamu by looking at the effectiveness of security operations implemented by the Kenyan government in countering terrorism and the effectiveness of community engagement in countering terrorism in Lamu County. A descriptive research design was used. The target population was the residents of Lamu who had information regarding the topic under discourse as well as the various security agencies heads such as the Military and the Police. Their population was 87429 from which a total of 156 respondents who participated was drawn. The sample was selected through purposive sampling. The questionnaire used was researcher-administered. A structured questionnaire was used to obtain information from the residents while interview schedule guides were used to obtain information from Intelligence the heads of security agencies in the area of study. The questionnaire was administered to 156 residents. Hypotheses were tested using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (r) at $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance. The results obtained from Lamu County determined that there was a statistically significant effect of security operations and community engagement on countering terrorism. The findings also demonstrated the reasons for the negligible community engagement effect on countering terrorism.

Keywords:

Community Engagement, counterterrorism, security operations, terrorism, violent extremism

¹ DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59569/jceas.2023.3.4.224>

² Doctoral School of Public Administration, Ludovika University of Public Service, Budapest, Hungary; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-9518-9006>; omurian@gmail.com



1. Introduction

The history of counter-terrorism is marked by evolving strategies and responses to combat the persistent threat of terrorism. While counter-terrorism efforts have ancient roots, contemporary counter-terrorism has been shaped by significant events and changes in the modern world. Counter-terrorism gained prominence in the late 20th century with the rise of transnational terrorist organizations. The 1972 Munich Olympics massacre by the Palestinian group Black September and the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis were early examples that drew global attention (Costanz, Kilburn and Helms, 2018). The 9/11 attacks in 2001 transformed the landscape of counter-terrorism. The United States and its allies initiated the War on Terror, invading Afghanistan to dismantle Al-Qaeda and later toppling Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. This era saw an expansion of intelligence sharing, enhanced airport security, and the proliferation of counter-terrorism agencies worldwide. Counter-terrorism strategies shifted towards addressing root causes, such as poverty and political grievances, to reduce radicalization. Soft power, including diplomacy and international cooperation, became central in addition to military and intelligence efforts (Piombo, 2019).

The emergence of self-radicalized lone wolves and homegrown extremists presented new challenges. Governments focused on countering radicalization through community engagement and online monitoring. Community engagement involves collaborating with the local community in this case the residents of Lamu County to come up with local based solutions which they may think will help them counter violent extremism and terrorism in their respective localities and ecosystems. The residents come up with solutions that they think will best work for them in countering terrorism and violent extremism. The state can then enhance these suggestions in order to make them work so as to enhance security. In the 21st century, counter-terrorism also faced ethical dilemmas, such as mass surveillance and the balance between security and civil liberties. The fight against terrorism remains ongoing, with the threat evolving in the digital age. Cybersecurity and countering online propaganda are now integral parts of counter-terrorism. The field continues to adapt to emerging threats, emphasizing intelligence, international cooperation, and addressing underlying causes of terrorism while striving to protect societies from violence and instability (Greener-Barcham, 2012).

In North America, Islamist extremism has also had significant implications. While the frequency of Islamist-inspired terrorist attacks remains relatively low compared to other regions, the impact of such attacks has been substantial. Incidents like the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States have left lasting scars on society, leading to increased security measures, heightened surveillance, and debates over issues of immigration, religious freedom, and national security. The influence of Islamist extremist ideologies has also affected communities and individuals within these regions (Briggs, 2010; and Breidid, 2021).

Violent extremism has also been a growing concern in West Africa, particularly in countries like Nigeria, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Cameroon. This region has witnessed the emergence and activities of various extremist groups, including Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Boko Haram, founded in Nigeria in the early 2000s, has since become one of the deadliest terrorist organizations in the world (Sempijja, Brito and Moutaouakil, 2023). The group's initial objective was to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria, but its activities have expanded to neighboring countries (Onuoha, 2016). Boko Haram's tactics involve suicide bombings, mass killings, abductions, and attacks on security forces, resulting in significant human suffering and displacement of populations. ISWAP, an affiliate of the Islamic State, split from Boko Haram in 2016 and has also gained prominence in the region. It has carried out attacks against military forces and civilians, contributing to the deteriorating security situation in the Lake Chad Basin (Adesoji, 2010).

Scholars and policymakers have devoted significant attention to the status violent extremism measures worldwide, recognizing the pressing need to address these complex and evolving threats. A multitude of literature has emerged, offering insights into various aspects of counterterrorism strategies, including prevention, intervention, and response mechanisms. One common theme across the literature is the recognition of the global nature of terrorism and violent extremism, transcending national borders and affecting countries across different regions and continents (Terki, 2020).

Authors such as Wu, Tang & Wu, (2016) emphasize the interconnectedness of terrorist networks, the spread of extremist ideologies through digital platforms, and the potential for cross-border attacks, underscoring the importance of international cooperation and collaboration in addressing these threats. Moreover, Patel, and Koushik, (2017) highlight the multifaceted nature of terrorism and violent extremism, which encompass not only overt acts of violence but also the propagation of radical ideologies, recruitment and radicalization processes, and the exploitation of social, economic, and political grievances. This comprehensive understanding underscores the importance of adopting holistic approaches that address root causes, vulnerabilities, and risk factors associated with terrorism and extremism.

Several authors such as Stephens, Sieckelinck and Boutellier (2021) converge on the importance of preventative measures and countering violent extremism (CVE) initiatives aimed at disrupting radicalization pathways and mitigating the drivers of extremism. These initiatives often involve community engagement, education, youth empowerment, and promoting alternative narratives to challenge extremist ideologies. Salyk-Virk, (2020) suggests that proactive CVE efforts can help build resilience within communities, reduce susceptibility to radicalization, and prevent individuals from embracing violent extremist beliefs and behaviors.

There is recognition of the significance of strategic communications and counter-narratives in undermining extremist propaganda and recruitment efforts (Meleagrou-



Hitchens, 2017). Scholars such as Smith, Blackwood and Thomas (2020) advocate for the development of nuanced messaging that addresses the grievances exploited by extremist groups while promoting values of tolerance, inclusion, and respect for human rights. Effective communication strategies, coupled with partnerships with civil society organizations, religious leaders, and local communities, can play a crucial role in countering extremist narratives and fostering social cohesion. Findings in the literature also highlight areas of contention and debate within the field of counterterrorism and CVE. One point of contention revolves around the balance between security-focused measures and human rights considerations (Bolhuis and Van Wijk, 2020). While some argue for robust counterterrorism measures, including surveillance, intelligence sharing, and law enforcement actions, others caution against the potential erosion of civil liberties and the stigmatization of marginalized communities in the name of national security (Feinberg, 2015).

There are also debates surrounding the effectiveness of military interventions and kinetic approaches in combating terrorism, particularly in conflict-affected regions. Critics argue that military interventions may exacerbate grievances, fuel radicalization, and inadvertently strengthen terrorist groups, highlighting the importance of addressing underlying political, social, and economic drivers of conflict and instability (Coccia, 2018). By extension, scholars like Kim and Sandler, (2020) disagree on the role of foreign policies, geopolitical dynamics, and socio-economic inequalities in contributing to the spread of terrorism and violent extremism. While some emphasize the role of external interventions, geopolitical rivalries, and regional instability in facilitating extremist activities, others focus on domestic factors, governance failures, and socio-economic disparities as primary drivers of radicalization and violence.

The history of counter-terrorism measures and violent extremism in Kenya reflects a complex interplay of domestic, regional, and international factors. Kenya, as a regional economic and political hub in East Africa, has faced significant challenges stemming from terrorism and violent extremism, particularly in recent decades (Kamau, 2021). One of the earliest instances of terrorism in Kenya dates back to the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, orchestrated by the terrorist group al-Qaeda (Adinoyi, 2016). These attacks, which resulted in hundreds of casualties, highlighted Kenya's vulnerability to transnational terrorism and underscored the need for robust counter-terrorism measures. Subsequently, Kenya has grappled with the emergence of various extremist groups, including Al-Shabaab, a Somalia-based militant organization with links to al-Qaeda (Cannon and Pkalya, 2019). Al-Shabaab's activities in Kenya have included high-profile attacks targeting civilian populations, government institutions, and security forces. Notable attacks include the 2013 Westgate shopping mall attack in Nairobi and the 2015 Garissa University College attack, which claimed scores of lives and underscored the persistent threat posed by terrorism in the country (Jirásek, 2023).

Many scholars have extensively researched the effectiveness of counterterrorism measures and strategies in addressing the threat of violent extremism around the world. They have analyzed various approaches, ranging from military interventions and law enforcement operations to preventive measures and community engagement initiatives. One common finding across the many works is the recognition that traditional security-focused approaches, such as military interventions and law enforcement actions, have limitations in effectively countering terrorism and violent extremism (Malet, 2021). While these measures may succeed in disrupting terrorist networks and preventing specific attacks in the short term, they often fail to address underlying grievances, root causes, and drivers of radicalization. Some scholars such as Kaltenthaler, Kruglanski and Knuppe, (2022) argue that heavy-handed security measures can inadvertently fuel resentment, alienation, and backlash within affected communities, potentially exacerbating the problem.

Lee, (2024) suggests that strategic communications and counter-narratives play a crucial role in countering extremist propaganda and recruitment efforts. Effective communication strategies involve crafting messages that challenge extremist narratives, promote alternative viewpoints, and offer positive alternatives to violence. By amplifying voices of moderation, tolerance, and resilience, policymakers can undermine the appeal of extremist ideologies and empower individuals to resist radicalization (Rees and Montasari, 2023).

Findings in the literature also highlight areas of contention regarding the effectiveness of different counterterrorism strategies. One point of contention revolves around the balance between security-focused measures and human rights considerations. While some argue for robust counterterrorism measures, including surveillance, intelligence sharing, and law enforcement actions, others caution against the potential erosion of civil liberties and the stigmatization of marginalized communities in the name of national security (Akbar, 2015). There are debates surrounding the effectiveness of military interventions and kinetic approaches in combating terrorism, particularly in conflict-affected regions (Patel, 2013). Critics argue that military interventions may exacerbate grievances, fuel radicalization, and inadvertently strengthen terrorist groups, highlighting the importance of addressing underlying political, social, and economic drivers of conflict and instability.

Nigeria has grappled with terrorism primarily in the form of Boko Haram, an extremist group founded in 2002. Boko Haram's insurgency escalated significantly around 2009, leading to widespread violence, kidnappings, and displacement (Eji, 2016). Nigerian security forces have engaged in both military operations and intelligence-driven efforts to combat the group (Ugwueze and Onuoha, 2020). International partnerships, including support from the United States and neighboring countries, have played a crucial role in these efforts. Additionally, Nigeria established a multi-agency Counter-Terrorism Center (CTC) to coordinate responses. The counter-



terrorism strategy has also involved community engagement and countering radicalization.

Algeria's history with terrorism is rooted in the Algerian Civil War in the 1990s, marked by the conflict between the government and Islamist militant groups. The conflict resulted in significant loss of life and social disruption (Meijer et al. (2012). The government's counter-terrorism approach included military operations and a controversial policy of national reconciliation, which aimed to reintegrate former militants into society (Santos, 2011). By the mid-2000s, Algeria had largely quelled the violence, although isolated extremist incidents persisted. The government maintained strict security measures, while also addressing socio-economic grievances and political reforms.

Kenya's entry into the global fight against terrorism was catalyzed by the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. These attacks, orchestrated by Al-Qaeda, prompted Kenya to intensify counter-terrorism measures. Kenya's proximity to Somalia has made it vulnerable to the activities of Al-Shabaab, an extremist group (Schaefer, 2014). Al-Shabaab's attacks on Kenyan soil, notably the 2013 Westgate Mall attack and the 2015 Garissa University College massacre, led to significant losses and propelled Kenya's military involvement in Somalia as part of AMISOM (Onguny, 2020). Kenya has implemented security operations, border controls, and intelligence-driven efforts to counter-terrorism. The country established specialized anti-terrorism units and received international support for capacity-building (Magogo, 2017).

In response to the growing threat of terrorism and violent extremism, the Kenyan government has implemented a range of counter-terrorism measures. These measures have included enhancing security and intelligence capabilities, strengthening border controls, and cooperating with regional and international partners to disrupt terrorist networks and prevent attacks (Kamau, 2021). Additionally, Kenya has enacted legislation to combat terrorism, including the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2015, which provides a legal framework for prosecuting individuals involved in terrorist activities (Ponge, 2015). These laws criminalise terrorism, the funding of terrorist groups and the pursuit of terrorist suspects, and are aimed at preventing the country from becoming a sanctuary for terrorists (Kirima and Khayundi, 2024). They also have a symbolic value of showing the country's support of the fight against terrorism. Although Kenyan authorities were reluctant to enact a national anti-terrorism law because of concerns about the reaction of Muslims, pressure from the West, especially the US, forced them to rethink their position (Ngeno, 2019).

Kenya has experienced the impact of violent extremism, primarily associated with the Somalia-based extremist group Al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab has carried out numerous attacks within Kenya, particularly in the border regions near Somalia and in major cities like Nairobi and Mombasa. The group's activities have included bombings, shootings,

and kidnappings, leading to loss of life and creating a climate of fear. Scholars and experts have highlighted several factors contributing to the presence of violent extremism in Kenya. These factors include social, economic, and political grievances, marginalization of certain communities, and recruitment efforts by extremist groups. The porous border between Kenya and Somalia has allowed for the movement of individuals and weapons, facilitating the activities of extremist groups (Mutahi, 2011). In response, the Kenyan government has implemented various counterterrorism measures, including security operations, intelligence gathering, and community engagement efforts (Orodho, 2018).

International collaboration has also played a role, with Kenya cooperating with neighboring countries and international partners in intelligence sharing and capacity-building initiatives (Ndungu and Owuor, 2010). Efforts to address the root causes of violent extremism in Kenya involve promoting inclusive governance, socioeconomic development, and countering extremist narratives (Owiti, 2017). Community-led initiatives focusing on youth empowerment, education, and dialogue have also been implemented to prevent radicalization (Nyabola, 2008).

The Kenyan government, in collaboration with international partners, has implemented security operations to disrupt extremist networks and prevent attacks. Intelligence sharing and cooperation with neighboring countries, particularly Somalia, have been important in addressing the cross-border activities of extremist groups. Additionally, efforts have been made to promote community resilience and engagement. Community-led initiatives (joining members of anti-radicalization group in Garissa that focus on countering extremist narratives, fostering dialogue, and providing alternative pathways for vulnerable individuals have been implemented. These initiatives aim to address underlying grievances, promote social cohesion, and empower communities to reject violent extremism (Orodho, 2018).

Scholars in other parts of the world have highlighted various factors contributing to the rise of violent extremism. Socioeconomic factors, including poverty, unemployment, and marginalization, have made certain communities more vulnerable to recruitment (Chiricos, Padgett and Gertz, 2006). Weak governance, corruption, and limited state presence in certain areas have also created fertile ground for extremist groups to exploit grievances (Kudnani, 2014). Online radicalization has also become a significant concern in recent years. Social media platforms and the internet provide a space for the dissemination of extremist propaganda and recruitment (Berger, 2018). It became apparent to establish whether there could be a connection between socioeconomic factors and violent extremism in Kenya and if there is, to what degree, which was the concern of this paper.

Counter-terrorism efforts in Lamu, a coastal county in Kenya, have been significantly influenced by its proximity to Somalia, where Al-Shabaab, an extremist group, has been active. Over the years, Lamu has experienced multiple attacks, including



the targeting of security forces, residents, and infrastructure (Wanjiku, 2020). These attacks have disrupted daily life, caused loss of life, and threatened economic stability, particularly in the tourism sector (Simiyu, 2023). Lamu County's proximity to the Republic of Somalia and the expansive Boni Forest makes it ideal for Al-Shabaab to easily infiltrate into the area. The forest gives an ideal haven for surprise attacks and guerrilla warfare to thrive. This makes it difficult for the security agencies to stamp out terrorism. The proximity to Somalia and the open and porous borders makes it easy for the proliferation of small arms and light weapons which can be employed for various crimes. Hotspots for terrorism and counter terrorism in the area include but not limited to Pandanguo Basuba, Boni Forest, Pangani, Gamba, Milihoi, Bargoni, Mpeketoni, Amu, Witu, Kiunga, Faza, Pate, Siu and Dar es salaam Point.

Another factor is land disputes pitting several groups of residents in Lamu County. These are; The young people versus the older generation and the indigeneous versus the non-indigenous community. These disputes makes the parties that feel aggrieved to resort to violent extremism in order to evict other parties. In this case the young generation and the indigenous people engage in violence in order to disposses the older generation and the non-indigenous community off their lands. These incidences have been witnessed in Amu, Witu, Kiunga, Faza and Pate.

Settlement tensions due to land conflicts in Lamu are closely linked to religion in the area. The County like its neighbours such as Garissa, Mandera and Wajir all of which boarder the Republic of Somalia are Muslim majority counties. However, migration of non indigeneous people who are majorly non-muslim have led to religious diversity in Lamu. Areas like Gamba, Faza and Mpeketoni have witnessed religious intolerance and rise in violent extremist and terrorist incidences. Terror attacks by Al Shabaab and other terror groups target Lamu because of its importance in the tourism circuit in Kenya. It has some of the top beaches in Amu and Pate islands. The beaches have rich marine ecology, terrestrial wildlife and sports such as water surfing and cultural and food festivals. As such it's a magnet for international tourists from western states making it a prime target for terrorism.

The importance of studying the status of Kenya's counter-terrorism in Lamu is evident for several reasons: The well-being and safety of Lamu's residents and visitors are paramount. A comprehensive study can assess the effectiveness of security measures in the region, ensuring a safer environment. Lamu's porous border with Somalia requires a focus on border security to prevent illegal crossings and smuggling, making it vital to assess security efforts. The recurring attacks have had economic consequences, impacting sectors such as tourism and agriculture. Understanding these impacts is crucial for economic stability. The examination of community engagement and resilience-building is vital for empowering local populations to participate in counter-terrorism efforts, gather intelligence, and prevent radicalization (Langat and Handa, 2023). In light of the above considerations, it is evident that the effectiveness of security operations and community engagement are intertwined, and an in-depth study is required to

comprehensively address the ongoing challenges of terrorism in Lamu County. This research will contribute to the development of evidence-based strategies for enhancing security, community resilience, and overall peace and stability in the region of Lamu.

1.1. Objectives and Hypothesis of the Study

The study aimed to determine the status of Kenya's counter-terrorism measures in Lamu. The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To assess the effectiveness of security operations implemented by the Kenyan government in countering terrorism in Lamu County.
- ii. To examine the effectiveness of community engagement in countering terrorism in Lamu County.

1.2. Research Hypotheses

- i. H01 There is no statistically significant effect of security operations implemented by the Kenyan government in countering terrorism in Lamu County
- ii. H02 There is no statistically significant effectiveness of community engagement in countering terrorism in Lamu County.

2. Methodology

Descriptive research design was employed in this study. The study was conducted in Lamu County- Kenya. The target population was the residents of Lamu who had information regarding the topic under discourse as well as the various security agencies heads such as the Military and the Police. Their population was 87429 from which a total of 156 respondents who participated was drawn. The sample was selected through purposive sampling. The questionnaire used was researcher-administered by employing in person interviews where the participants were easily reachable due to factors such as good roads and nearness to towns in the study area. For areas that were far flung and not easily accessible by road phone interviews were conducted. The presence of strong mobile telephone network coverage in the area made it easier to conduct the phone interviews and seek clarifications where possible. A structured questionnaire was used to obtain information from the residents while interview schedule guides were used to obtain information from Intelligence the heads of security agencies in the area of study. The questionnaire was administered to 156 residents. The questionnaire contained 2 items (indicators of security operation and community engagement) and 1 item (indicators of countering terrorism). The residents were asked whether or not they

agreed with the statements under each indicator by ticking Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Not Sure, Agree, and Strongly Agree in the boxes that were provided.

As some experts highlighted “Turkey's involvement in Somalia dramatically increased from humanitarian to economic, developmental, and political and security dimensions” (Abdi, 2021). In this study we would like to focus now on the security dimension between the two countries.

3. Results

The following questions and hypotheses were answered and tested respectively:

3.1. The Existence of Security Operations Affects Countering Terrorism

It was determined that 79% of the respondents alluded that incessant security operations countered terrorism in Lamu while 21% on the other hand were of the contrary opinion. This implies that the majority thought that security operations mounted in the area were indeed effective in countering terrorism.

Kenya’s Anti-Terrorist Police Unit (ATPU) and Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) have led the government’s response at home to al-Shabaab. Their deployment in the county along major roads, towns and villages gave the residents a sense of security and overall incidences of terror and violent extremism dropped significantly. Patrols and collaborations from local and community leaders show that security has improved. This is evidenced by a decrease in the amount of terrorism and violent extremism crimes being witnessed in the area. Although the security status has improved it is also alleged that ATPU is responsible for extra-judicial killings and the disappearance of suspected militants as well as Islamic activists in Kenya.

The information is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Table showing whether the existence of security operations affects countering terrorism

Relationship exists	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	123	79
No	33	21
Total	156	100

3.2. The Existence of Community Engagement Affects Countering Terrorism

It was determined that 54% of the respondents alluded that community engagement countered terrorism in Lamu while 46% on the other hand were of the contrary opinion. Community engagement involves collaborating with the local community in this case the residents of Lamu County to come up with local based solutions which they may think will help them counter violent extremism and terrorism in their respective localities and ecosystems. This implies that those who disagreed with the statement were almost a match in number as those who agreed. This necessitated the need to look at the question why?

Several forms of community engagement have been established as a measure to mitigate terrorism and violent extremism in Lamu County. The county commissioner's office has supported engagement with youth through football tournaments, engaged them in committees and worked with groups such as the Kenyan Muslim Alliance and the Muslim Youth Alliance on events and projects. These events aim to identify talents among youths so that they can use such talents to earn decent living and dissuade them from joining terror groups or engaging in violent extremist activities. Most projects focus on building resilience of communities, countering extremist messages, engaging with young people and dealing with broader inter-community grievances. Some believe their work on alternative livelihoods has been useful, while others feel that their work in schools has had a measurable impact on changing attitudes.

The information is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Table showing whether the existence of community engagement affects countering terrorism

Relationship exists	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	84	54
No	72	46
Total	156	100

Table 3

There is no statistically significant effect of security operations implemented by the Kenyan government in countering terrorism in Lamu County

Area of Study	Security Operations	Countering terrorism	Pearson Correlation Coefficient Value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Lamu County			.691*	.002

* - Means significant at 5% level

Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (r) of the variables i.e., income inequality and violent extremism is .691 and a significant level of .002 which is less than .05. This means that there is a statistically significant relationship between security operations and countering terrorism. The coefficient (r) is a strong positive correlation which means that as security operations increase so does countering terrorism. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 4

There is no statistically significant effectiveness of community engagement in countering terrorism in Lamu County.

Area of Study	Community engagement	Countering terrorism	Pearson Correlation Coefficient Value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Lamu County			.153*	.004

* - Means significant at 5% level

Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (r) of the variables i.e., social exclusion and violent extremism is .153 and a significant level of .004 which is less than .05. This means that there is a statistically significant relationship between community engagement and countering. The coefficient (r) is a very weak positive correlation which means that as community engagements increase so does countering terrorism but in a very negligible sense. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected.

3.3. Reasons for the Weak Correlation between Community Engagement and Countering Terrorism

To better understand the views concerning the reasons for the correlation between community engagement and countering terrorism, interviews were done with the heads of security agencies. The correlation is deemed weak because the locals feel that there was unfair targeting of particular sections of the community in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. These include what the locals consider as biased targeting of the unemployed youths, motorcycle riders, as well as youths who are not in formal employment. Thus the security agencies in the area are viewed as agents of the state who are after innocent victims in the fight against terrorism. Arbitrary and targeted arrests as well as long periods of detentions of suspected terror militants without being presented in the courts of law have also led to weakening ties between the government security agencies and the residents. Although the security status has improved it is also alleged that ATPU is responsible for extra-judicial killings and the disappearance of suspected militants as well as Islamic activists in Kenya. This has led to weakening collaboration as the community feels targeted without any judicial help to the victims.

When asked about their weaknesses, many participants gave their respective opinions as can be noted from the following statements:

There is a lack of trust between the community and the security agencies. If there is a long history of mistrust between the local community and the government or security forces, it can be challenging to establish a productive dialogue. Without trust, community members may be hesitant to share information or cooperate with authorities [ATPU 1_Male_August, 2023_KII].

The majority of the community members fear retaliation. In areas where terrorist groups have a strong presence or influence, community members may fear retaliation from these groups if they collaborate with security forces. This fear can deter people from actively engaging with authorities [Military 1_Male_July, 2023_KII].

In some cases, some members of the community have sympathies or ideological alignment with the terrorist groups. In such situations, community engagement efforts are not sufficient to change their beliefs or motivations [GSU_Male_August, 2023_KII].



Communities are divided along religious, or political lines, making it difficult to foster a unified approach to counter-terrorism efforts. These divisions hinder community engagement [RBPU_Female_September, 2023_KII].

Some community members in Lamu do not fully understand the nature and risks of terrorism. Because they do not recognize the threat, they are less motivated to engage in counter-terrorism efforts. This has been a huge drawback [Military 2_Male_July, 2023_KII].

In regions with ongoing insurgencies like Lamu, specifically in Manda, terrorist groups exert significant control over the population, making community engagement challenging or even dangerous [ATPU 2_Male_September, 2023_KII].

The interviews revealed some deep seated issues which need to be addressed in order to strengthen ties between security agencies in the fight against counter terrorism and violent extremism in the area. It came out that the behaviour of some of the security personnel was wanting because they generalised the entire community. Majority of the having been raised in christian dominant in the Kenyan hinterland and thus treated everyone as a suspect in the muslim majority Lamu County. Therefore, ethnic and religious difference overlaid with inequality has created fertile ground for violent rebellion.

Further, social economic injustices in the area whereby non indigeneous people get employed at the behest of the indigeneous people has resulted in increase in number of youths joining violent extremist groups as a protest to the government. Ideological factors such as the need to believe and fight for something has also led to people joining terror groups. Individual factors like drug-use, troubled families, and bad role models demonstrated that radicalisation is most strongly predicted by psychological determinants, above all historically troubled social relations, and process-oriented factors, particularly high levels of religiosity and exposure to radical networks.

4. Discussion

The findings of our study align with previous research conducted by (Ploch, 2017) and confirm that security operations have played a significant role in mitigating the terrorism threat in many parts of the world. Through a combination of intelligence gathering, enhanced patrols, and rapid response units, security forces have successfully disrupted terrorist networks and thwarted potential attacks. Their proactive measures have

significantly reduced the number of terrorist incidents, ultimately leading to an increased sense of safety among local communities.

Consistent with the work of (Gatuiku, 2016), our research underscores the importance of community engagement in countering terrorism. Community engagement initiatives, including outreach programs, awareness campaigns, and dialogues, have contributed to building trust and cooperation between government authorities and the local population. By involving respected community leaders and religious figures, these programs have been instrumental in addressing ideological sympathies and preventing radicalization.

Conversely, there is growing consensus on the importance of adopting holistic, multi-sectoral approaches that address the socio-economic, political, and ideological factors driving radicalization and violent extremism. Adnan, (2023) advocate for preventive strategies that focus on building community resilience, promoting social cohesion, and addressing grievances through inclusive governance, economic development, and social inclusion initiatives. These approaches aim to tackle root causes of radicalization, empower communities to reject extremist ideologies, and address structural inequalities that contribute to vulnerability to violent extremism.

Prislan, Borovec and Mraović, (2020) suggests that effective counterterrorism efforts require meaningful engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including civil society organizations, religious leaders, youth groups, and marginalized communities. Involving these stakeholders in the design, implementation, and evaluation of counterterrorism initiatives, policymakers can build trust, foster cooperation, and ensure that interventions are contextually appropriate and sensitive to local dynamics. Lee, (2024) also emphasize the importance of strategic communications and counter-narratives in countering extremist propaganda and recruitment efforts. Effective communication strategies involve crafting messages that challenge extremist narratives, promote alternative viewpoints, and offer positive alternatives to violence. By amplifying voices of moderation, tolerance, and resilience, policymakers can undermine the appeal of extremist ideologies and empower individuals to resist radicalization.

It is also noted that findings in the literature also highlight areas of contention and debate regarding the effectiveness of counterterrorism measures and strategies. Some scholars like Ahmed, Belanger and Szmania, (2018) question the impact of certain preventive interventions, such as deradicalization programs and community engagement initiatives, citing challenges in measuring their outcomes and assessing their long-term effectiveness. Additionally, there are concerns about potential unintended consequences, such as the stigmatization of communities perceived as at-risk or the diversion of resources from other pressing social issues. There is also ongoing debate about the role of military interventions and kinetic approaches in countering terrorism, particularly in conflict-affected regions. While some argue that military force is necessary to degrade terrorist capabilities and dismantle networks, others caution against over-



reliance on military solutions, which may exacerbate violence, civilian casualties, and instability, while failing to address underlying grievances (Barry, 2016).

Various studies have examined approaches spanning from traditional security-focused measures to preventive interventions, community engagement initiatives, and ideological counter-narratives. One common theme across the literature is the importance of adopting a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach to counterterrorism. Authors such as Jensen, Seate, and James, (2020) emphasize the need to address not only the symptoms of terrorism, such as attacks and violence, but also the underlying drivers and root causes of radicalization and extremism. This holistic approach recognizes the interconnectedness of social, economic, political, and ideological factors that contribute to the spread of violent extremism.

Allan et al, (2015) highlight the significance of preventive strategies aimed at disrupting radicalization pathways and mitigating the appeal of extremist ideologies. Preventive measures often involve community engagement, education, youth empowerment, and promoting alternative narratives to challenge extremist propaganda. By empowering communities to reject violent extremism and address underlying grievances, preventive interventions aim to build resilience and reduce vulnerability to radicalization. Further, there is growing recognition of the importance of addressing structural inequalities, social injustices, and governance failures that contribute to feelings of marginalization and alienation, which can make individuals susceptible to radicalization. Ozer and Bertelsen, (2019) advocate for inclusive governance, economic development, and social inclusion initiatives that address underlying grievances and promote social cohesion. Addressing root causes of radicalization, these strategies aim to create more resilient societies less susceptible to extremist ideologies.

While this study acknowledges the overall effectiveness of security operations and community engagement, it also highlights some critical challenges. The historical lack of trust between the government and the local community, as noted by (Nathanson, 2015), remains a formidable obstacle. To address this issue, we recommend sustained efforts to build trust, promote transparency, and involve community leaders in decision-making processes. Additionally, allocating more resources to community engagement programs, as proposed by (Hartley, 2021), will enhance their reach and impact in resource-constrained areas like Lamu County.

In summary, our study supports the assertion that the Kenyan government's security operations and community engagement initiatives have been effective in countering terrorism in Lamu County. These efforts have resulted in a reduced threat of terrorism, enhanced community cooperation, and an overall safer environment. However, to further improve the counter-terrorism strategy, it is essential to address the existing challenges and implement the recommendations mentioned in this study.

5. Recommendation

Encourage closer collaboration and information sharing between security forces and community engagement initiatives to create a more comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy. Develop joint training programs for security personnel and community liaisons to foster a unified approach.

Prioritize trust-building measures between the government, security forces, and local communities to address the lack of trust. Regularly engage in dialogue with community leaders, religious figures, and tribal authorities to build trust and confidence in government initiatives.

Develop and communicate clear procedures for ensuring the safety and anonymity of community members who cooperate with security forces to address the fear of retaliation. Establish witness protection programs and mechanisms for reporting threats or acts of retaliation.

Expand efforts to counter extremist narratives and ideologies within the community by engaging religious leaders, educators, and local influencers. Support programs that challenge extremist propaganda and offer alternative narratives.

Continue and expand awareness campaigns to educate communities about the nature of terrorism, its risks, and the importance of countering it. Include educational institutions and local media as key vehicles for disseminating information.

6. Conclusion

There exists a relationship between security operations and countering terrorism. Security operations implemented contribute to countering terrorism as the coefficient (r) was a strong positive correlation which meant that as security operations increase so does countering terrorism. Community engagement contributes to countering terrorism even though the coefficient (r) was a weak positive correlation which meant that as community engagements increase so does countering terrorism but in a very negligible manner. Community engagement is weak in countering terrorism because of various challenges such as lack of trust, fear of retaliation, ideological sympathies, limited awareness, and insurgency dynamics among others.

Conflict of Interest

The author hereby declares that they have no financial interest in this manuscript.



Notes on Contributor

Josephat Nyandoro Omuria is a PhD candidate at the Doctoral School of Public Administration, Ludovika University of Public Service, Hungary. He is also a guest lecturer at Mathias Corvinus Collegium. His research interests include Public Policy and Administration, Terrorism, Counter Terrorism and Violent Extremism.

Bibliography

- Adesoji, A. (2010) 'The Boko Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria / Die Boko-Haram-Unruhen und die Wiederbelebung des Islam in Nigeria', *Africa Spectrum*, 45(2), pp. 95-108. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/000203971004500205>, ISSN 0002-0397
- Adinoyi, J. A. (2016) *Impact of Terrorism on Human Rights in Africa: The Case Study of Counter Terrorism in Kenya, 1998-2014*. PhD Thesis. University of Nairobi. Available at <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/99474> (Accessed: 27 May 2024)
- Adnan, M. (2023) 'Pakistan's Policy of Social Inclusion for Making a Resilient Society to Violent Extremism', *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, 7(1), pp. 89-96. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2023\(7-1\)09](https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2023(7-1)09), ISSN 2708-6453
- Akbar, A. A. (2015) 'National Security's Broken Windows', *Ohio State Public Law Working Paper*, 291 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2591986>
- Allan, H., Glazzard, A., Jespersen, S. T., Reddy-Tumu, S. and Winterbotham, E. (2015) *Drivers of Violent Extremism: Hypotheses and Literature Review*. Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a0899d40f0b64974000192/Drivers_of_Radicalisation_Literature_Review.pdf, ISSN 2708-6453
- Barry, B. (2016) 'Military Capability, Tactics and Operations', *Adelphi Series*, 56(461), pp. 73-110. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19445571.2016.1285593>, ISSN 1944-5571
- Bolhuis, M. P. and Wijk, J. v. (2020) 'Citizenship Deprivation as a Counterterrorism Measure in Europe; Possible Follow-Up Scenarios, Human Rights Infringements and the Effect on Counterterrorism', *European Journal of Migration and Law*, 22(3), pp. 338-365. ISSN 1571-8166
- Breidlid, T. (2021) 'Countering or Contributing to Radicalisation and Violent Extremism in Kenya?: A Critical Case Study', *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 14(2), pp. 225–246. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2021.1902613>, ISSN 1753-9153
- Briggs, R. (2010) 'Community Engagement for Counterterrorism: Lessons from the United Kingdom', *International Affairs*, 86(4), pp. 971-981. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2010.00923.x>, ISSN 0020-5850

- Cannon, B. J. and Ruto Pkalya, D. (2019) 'Why al-Shabaab Attacks Kenya: Questioning the Narrative Paradigm', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 31(4), pp. 836-852. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2017.1290607>, ISSN 0954-6553
- Coccia, M. (2018) 'The Relation between Terrorism and High Population Growth', *Journal of Economics and Political Economy*, 5(1), pp. 84-104. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1453/jepe.v5i1.1575>, ISSN 2148-8347
- Eji, E. (2016) 'Rethinking Nigeria's Counter-Terrorism Strategy', *The International Journal of Intelligence, Security, and Public Affairs*, 18(3), 198-220. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23800992.2016.1242278>, ISSN 2380-100X
- Feinberg, M. (2015) 'International Counterterrorism–National Security and Human Rights: Conflicts of Norms or Checks and Balances?', *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 19(4), pp. 388-407. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2015.1027053>, ISSN 1364-2987
- Gatuiku, P. V. (2016) *Countering Terrorism in the Horn of Africa: A Case Study of Kenya*. PhD Thesis, University of Nairobi. Available at: <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke:8080/handle/11295/99276> (Accessed: 27 May 2024)
- Greener-Barcham, B. K. (2002) 'Before September: A History of Counter-Terrorism', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 37(3), 509-524. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1036114021000026382>, ISSN 1036-1146
- Hartley, J. (2021) *Counter-Terrorism Community Engagement: Pitfalls and Opportunities*. Abingdon, New York: Routledge. Routledge Series in Countering Violent Extremism. ISBN 978-0-68078-7
- Jirásek, D. (2023) 'Response of Kenya Security Forces to Terrorist Attacks in the Post-Westgate Period', *Obrana a Strategie*, 23(2), pp. 3-21. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3849/1802-7199.23.2023.02.003-021>, ISSN 1802-7199
- Kaltenthaler, K., Kruglanski, A. W. and Knuppe, A. J. (2022) 'The Paradox of the Heavy-Handed Insurgent: Public Support for the Taliban among Afghan Pashtuns', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, pp. 1-25. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2022.2055008>, ISSN 1057-610X
- Kamau, J. W. (2021) 'Is Counter-Terrorism Counterproductive?: A Case Study of Kenya's Response to Terrorism, 1998-2020', *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 28(2), pp. 203-231. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10220461.2021.1924252>, ISSN 1022-0461
- Langat, P. K., and Handa, S. (2023) 'Counter-Terrorism Measures and Personal Security in Lamu County, Kenya', *Reviewed Journal of Social Science & Humanities*, 4(1), pp. 124-141. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61426/rjssh.v4i1.73>, ISSN 2663-127X
- Lee, B. (2024) 'Counter-Narratives and Strategic Communications, Offline and Online', in Busher, J, Malkki, L. and Mardsen, S. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook on*



Radicalisation and Countering Radicalisation. Abingdon, News York: Routledge, pp. 431-445. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003035848>, ISBN 978-1-032-57380-9

Magogo, S. (2017) *The Effectiveness of Counter-Terrorism Strategies in Kenya: A Case Study of Eastleigh Location, Nairobi County*. PhD Thesis. University of Nairobi. Available at <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/101927> (Accessed: 27 May 2024)

Malet, D. (2021) 'Countering Violent Extremism: Assessment in Theory and Practice', *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, 16(1), pp. 58-74. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/18335330.2021.1889017>, ISSN 1833-5330

Meijer, R., Hasan, N., Hendriks, B. and Janssen, F. (2012) *Counter-Terrorism Strategies in Indonesia, Algeria and Saudi Arabia*. Clingendael Netherlands Institute of International Relations: The Hague. Available at https://repository.wodc.nl/bitstream/handle/20.500.12832/1796/1806-volledige-tekst_tcm28-70796.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y (Accessed: 27 May 2024)

Meleagrou-Hitchens, A. (2017) 'The Challenges and Limitations of Online Counter-Narratives in the Fight against ISIS Recruitment in Europe and North America', *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 18(3), pp. 95-104. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/gia.2017.0041>, ISSN 1526-0054

Nathanson, D. (2005) *Security and Stability Operations Measures of Effectiveness*. Newport, RI: Naval War College. Available at: <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA464303.pdf> (Accessed: 27 May 2024)

Onguny, P. (2020) 'Framing the Fight against Terrorism in Kenya: Perspectives on the Attacks at Westgate Mall and Garissa University', *African Journal of Terrorism and Insurgency Research*, 1(1), 77-101. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31920/2732-5008/2020/S1n1a5>, ISSN 2732-4990

Onuoha, F. C. (2016) 'Boko Haram: Assessing Counterterrorism Strategies in Nigeria', *African Security*, 11(1), pp. 1-8. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15664/jtr.832>, ISSN 2064-8014

Patel, F. (ed.) (2013) *Domestic Intelligence: Our Rights and Safety*. New York: Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law.

Piombo, J. R. (2007) 'Terrorism and US Counter-Terrorism Programs in Africa: An Overview', *Strategic insights*, 6(1), pp. 1-11. ISSN 2200-1956

Ploch, L. (2011) *Countering terrorism in East Africa: The US Response*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service. Vol. 3. ISBN 978-1-437-94301-6

Prislan, K., Borovec, K. and Cajner M. I. (2020) 'The Role of Civil Society and Communities in Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation', *Policija i sigurnost*, 29(3/2020.), pp. 223-245. ISSN 1848-428X

Salyk-Virk, M. J. (2020) Building Community Resilience? Community Perspectives of the Countering Violent Extremism Pilot Program in Minneapolis/St. Paul', *Studies in*

Conflict & Terrorism, 43(11), pp. 1011-1042. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2018.1514054>, ISSN 1057-610X

Santos, D. N., (2011) 'Counterterrorism v. Counterinsurgency: Lessons from Algeria and Afghanistan', *Small Wars Journal*, pp. 1-15. ISSN 2156-227X. Available at <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA546493.pdf> (Accessed: 27 May 2024)

Schaefer, T. M. (2003) 'Framing the US Embassy Bombings and September 11 Attacks in African and US Newspapers', in Norris, P., Kern, M. and Just, M. (eds.) *Framing Terrorism: The News, the Media the Government and the Public*. New York, London: Routledge, pp. 93-112. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203484845>, ISBN 978-0-203-48484-5

Sempijja, N., Brito, M. P. and Moutaouakil, Z. (2023) 'Countering the Islamic State in the Lake Chad Basin: A Case for a Security-Development-Governance Nexus?', *Cogent Social Sciences*, 9(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2209988>, ISSN 2331-1886

Simiyu, J. K. (2023) 'The Effectiveness of Multi-Agency Operation Leadership in Mitigating Insecurity in Lamu County, Kenya', *Path of Science*, 9(1), pp. 3031-3036. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22178/pos.89-27>, ISSN 2413-9009

Stephens, W., Sieckelinck, S. and Boutellier, H. (2021) 'Preventing Violent Extremism: A Review of the Literature', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 44(4), pp. 346-361. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2018.1543144>, ISSN 1057-610X

Ugwueze, M. I., and Onuoha, F. C. (2020) 'Hard versus Soft Measures to Security: Explaining the Failure of Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Nigeria', *Journal of Applied Security Research*, 15(4), pp. 547-567. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19361610.2020.1811936>, ISSN 1936-1610

Wanjiku, J. W. (2020) *Effectiveness of Counter-Terrorism Strategies in the Horn of Africa Region: A Case Study of Lamu County*. PhD Thesis. University of Nairobi. <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/153812>