

Research Article

Analysing Kenya's Contemporary Peace and Security Issues and Challenges

Elly Musafiri^{1,*} , Elisa Mupenzi²

¹Center for Conflict Management, University of Rwanda, Kigali, Rwanda

²School of Business and Economics, Mount Kigali University, Kigali, Rwanda

Abstract

The article analyses contemporary peace and security challenges from the Kenyan perspective. The study was conducted in 10 counties out of 47 counties that make-up Kenya. Data was collected from primary and secondary sources through qualitative approach. Findings indicate multifaceted and intertwined security challenges related to climate change, terrorism and cyber security – all mostly related to inefficiency of the state institutions and high political leaders, high corruption, limited security infrastructures and limited capacity of state security officers in terms of training, equipment's and funding. While the issues of climate change and cyber security are global in nature; the issue of terrorism by Al-Shabab is particularly facing Kenya and Somalia and worsened by cooperation of Somali citizens and the Somalis of Kenyan origin as well as extremist Muslims both in Somalia and Kenya. Over the past years, Kenya has struggled with the above peace and security issues and challenges and there seems to be no robust national strategies, mechanism and policies to address this complicated peace and security environment. In particular, this violent extremism by Al-Shabab has led to attacks on civilians most in Nairobi, Northern Kenya and at the Coastal region and such terrorism and extremist ideas are increasingly flourishing in the above mentioned country regions. Hence, posing a significant challenge to Kenya's future.

Keywords

Contemporary, Peace, Security, Terrorism, Climate Change, Kenya

1. Introduction

Kenya, like some African countries, is facing contemporary security challenges like terrorism, human rights, climate change, human trafficking, food insecurity, banditry and cattle rustling, among others. Much of these challenges are result of failure by the Kenyan leadership at the national level – which is common across many African countries. Furthermore, the peace and security landscape in Kenya is faced by a variety of challenges either due to structural governance problems or due to the evolving global dynamics. These challenges in-

clude geopolitical shifts in terms of power dynamics leading to tensions and evolving alliances, economic uncertainties or trade wars, technological threats and related cyberwarfare, youth radicalization toward violent extremism, food and hunger, sovereign debt burdens and environmental or climate change challenges.

Most importantly, the ideology of neo-liberalism constitutes a serious impediment to the provision of social safety nets in Kenya and Africa as a whole [5]. The way the

*Corresponding author: yankra20@gmail.com (Elly Musafiri)

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neo-liberal agenda has played itself out in several African countries suggests a serious need to interrogate it as a fuel for human insecurity on the continent. The linkage between economic crisis, International Monetary Fund (IMF)/World Bank sponsored reforms and varying degrees of political violence in Africa has been noted [10]. Relatedly, imperialist interests by the super-power countries who continue to exploit the developing world through economic investments, military aid, diplomatic and cultural diversity and political alliances further compound these issues. Nonetheless, this current world order has brought opportunities and risks but risks outnumber opportunities. Risks include individualistic and nationalistic trade interests, hacking, data breaches and the weaponisation of technologies in the selfish interests of the respective actor(s). These challenges have far-reaching implications on peace, security and justice not only in Kenya but across Africa as well as at regional and international levels.

Such challenges make the Kenya's security and peace compromised, which significantly affects the country's economic prosperity. In addition, global crises continue to have direct impact on Africa's security and peace. For instance, the ongoing Russian-Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas wars heightened the pre-existing global geopolitical tensions and the implications they have on Africa as whole. These tensions often lead to competition between global actors and Africa becoming a simple subject. Also, the renewed attention by global powers has raised concerns about whether Africa can defend its interests while international relations are increasingly strained.

Therefore, sustainable peace and security is impossible without democracy, national regional and global social justice. This is largely due to the fact man is naturally violent. In this context, peace and security is elusive and conflict is bound to be with man. From a political and governance perspective, if the fundamentals of human existence are not met, there will always be conflicts or insecurity. To solve this quagmire, it requires the need to provide the fundamental needs to the citizens instead of investing the meagre resources in building the security architecture – hence, security should be looked at from political, social, economic and psychological perspectives because there is no security without peace from those diverse perspectives. Addressing structural problems helps to establish mechanisms that prevent the eruption of violent conflicts in any society, thereby creating negative peace, according to peace theory [4]. Therefore, removing the triggers of conflicts is what any society should look to other than resolving matters without addressing their causes.

Based on this, peace and security are socially and politically constructed in Africa, according to the constructivist theory whereas peace and security are based on the balance of power in developed countries, as per to the realist theory [6]. Therefore, understanding peace and security is a contentious academic and policy issue from the above theories. This is why security issues related ISIS, Al-Shabaab among many others, are explained in relation to the constructivist and re-

alism theories by certain analysts [6, 10]. Based on these realities, there is a need to explore the available opportunities that are currently on the African continent to resolve the insecurities and make the Africa more resilient. This can include legal frameworks, multilateral and bilateral agreements that promote peace and security in Africa, trade agreements through multilateral and bilateral agreements, and cooperation in dealing with African challenges vis the global imperialistic interests.

This way, the study's main objective was to access which major peace and security contemporary challenges that Kenya is currently facing. To assess this, three major questions came-up: What are the contemporary peace and security challenges in Kenya? What are the effects on human existence, humanity, national level or beyond? What can be done to solve such challenges and by which actors? To address these major research questions, both primary and secondary data were collected, as explained in the following sections.

2. Contemporary Peace and Security Challenges: A Review

The nexus between security and economic prospects have been a source of insecurity across many African countries since 1990s and around the world [11]. This period marked an increase in conflicts between states and conflicts or disputes started to emerge within states due to poor governance and/or based on resource conflicts between state citizens [7]. This has been a critical moment in the African history and its peoples – even to date [13]. This had a fundamental paradigm shift on national, regional and international levels as indicated in different Human Development Reports [13]. In the same period, the term “security” started to be not structured around the state only but also to its citizens - human security [13]. This, in many African countries was different, for example, in Kenya, post-independence regimes continued to toe to the North/South security alliance without embarking on their national, regional contemporary security challenges like food insecurity, terrorism and the global climate change challenge [6, 8].

Within this post-independence framework, Kenya failed to meet its national and regional security needs. Unfortunately, these security threats hardly had decisive strategies in shaping Kenya's future, which is currently, grappled by terrorism, climate change and cyber security challenges, like many African countries and beyond [6]. While Kenya has not experienced rebel movements since independence, citizens have faced State repression, human rights violations, massive corruption, geo-political rivalry, among others, and these challenges have contributed to security challenges both to its sovereignty by Al Shabab terrorist group and to the country's citizens [8]. The biggest challenge is that all post-independence presidents continue to personify themselves as state, including the current President, William Ruto

and a paradigm across many African States [8]. While many African leaders perceive domestic opposition as “threats” to “national security” but the sitting Presidents are the main security threats to their countries due to their dictatorship, corruption and governance inefficiency [8]. This is termed by some scholars as ‘institutionalized’ repression in Africa than external aggression or external interests that are largely described as Western interests [11].

This way, Wilkin [15] explains, “rather than providing security for their citizens, states are frequently the instruments that destroy the security of their populations”. What is pity is that, it continues to be unchallenged in many academic circles but Kenyans increasingly do it on social media and some academics have partially started to bridge the current fore by reconceptualize their contemporary security challenges in relation to the global system. In relation to this, Kenya, like other African countries have started to realize that some security threats are not related to war and they do result into human insecurity, which poses a threat to politicians [7]. This attempt of understanding contemporary security challenges is also redefining African international relations with the Western world because human security is increasingly being entrenched to the international relations mainstream. Therefore, this partially explains the nexus between security and economic challenges in Africa, which in turn opens new opportunities but also “new fault lines” within African countries [3]. In this context, some scholars have explained this nexus in terms of structural adjustment programs through the instrumentality programs of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank [10].

In this context, Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE) [1] observes, nonentity can be a greater threat to security than being left out from life supporting economic or development activities. According to the Commission on Human Security, [3] such deprivation leads to tensions, violence and conflicts. Relatedly, the political and environmental challenges in Kenya are reasonable grounds of the current critical security challenges in the country, alongside dwindling state resources by state and county leaders across the country [2]. This is exacerbated by marginalization of some ethnic groups in Kenya mainly from the Coastal and Northern regions who are increasingly being recruited into Al Shabab to reclaim their identity rights in terms of political and religious dimensions [8].

For most Kenyans, they have a feeling of insecurity that arises from political climate, environmental challenges and the dread of cataclysmic world governance (...). This is affirmed by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that “for most people, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world event”. This is because security, for them, is about safety and protection “from the threat of disease, terrorism, hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression and environmental hazards” [13]. This is because the concept of security is about human life and not only about

national security. This is why Jinadu [5] posits that “the problem of peace and security in Africa is bound up with the nature and character of the modern state and its role and position in national and international society”. Therefore, the Kenyan government have the responsibility to create an enabling environment for the state and human security to enable citizenry and national actualization by enabling citizens’ protection from life-threatening and ubiquitous threats [2].

In this context, it means that citizens should play a leading role in political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and military systems for them to own violent and non-violent security threats [3]. This necessitates fighting human insecurity as a source of state oppression and deprivations because once citizens are involved they are empowered to make their state accountable and make right choices, which is a strong development and human security component in the modern world and not the military might and machinery [3]. Once realized, it enhances collective economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security [13]. Nonetheless, this ostensible all-inclusiveness generates difficulties in efforts to distinguish it from the contemporary security concepts such as climate change, human security, human development and human rights, among others [9]. Nonetheless, this centeredness connects human and national security, which is analyzed in the contemporary security challenges or in sustainable human development literature across the North and the South [2].

3. Methodology

The study's data which illustrate different contemporary peace and security challenges in Kenya.

There were seventy-five participants in the study. The survey was carried out in Nairobi, Mombasa, Kajiado, Machakos, Kiambu, Kilifi, Garisa, Baringo, Turkana and Uasin Gishu, some of the Kenyan counties that face insecurity related to climate change effects, terrorism of ISIS and Al Shabab, banditry and cattle rustling, hunger and poverty, among others. Purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents and all interviews were done individually using semi-structured questions.

Respondents included common citizens, public servants working in security related institutions and in environment protection and blue economy entities. Since some of the questions were sensitive, an investigative approach was used to uncover some of the challenges herein.

In addition, this paper uses an integrative literature review approach to examine peace and security challenges in Kenya and beyond. According to Whittemore and Knafl [14], an integrative literature review is “a specific review method that summarizes past empirical or theoretical literature to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a particular phenomenon or problem.” Furthermore, integrative literature evaluations create “new perspectives on key issues in the

field" by rearranging the body of current information [12]. In order to have a comprehensive grasp of the institutional, political, regional and international factors that contribute to the contemporary security, this study drew on earlier research in the areas of peace and security, terrorism, cyber-attacks and crimes, to mention but a few.

4. Study Findings

4.1. Climate Change and Its Implications for Kenya's Security and Development

The interlinkage of climate change and human security is no longer a contentious issue either within academics or within policy makers. Notably, in Kenya, since 2000, global warming started to be a threat to human existence and humanity [2]. Nonetheless, respondents argued that climate change is man-made challenge that is based on the growth of industrialization across the globe which emit gas in the ozone layer and eventually negatively affect it – making it a security threat to humanity. Therefore, climate change is not an illusion – it is a reality. Climate change has consequences like eruption of some diseases in certain regions, floods, sea level rising and drought.

Respondents argued that it requires mitigation and adoption policies by implementing the Paris agreement on climate change to inform national policies in the Kenyan context-specific challenges. However, some underlined the need to build resilience of African nations and connect it to their respective national security infrastructures. This is because effects of climate change automatically affect security of citizens. Depending on the past years, many Kenyans have started to think that climate change is reality and not a hoax as many Kenyans believed in the last one decade. Relatedly, one participant emphasized that the "success must depend on the planning process which must involve a variety of stakeholders". In this context, some few respondents also argued that where there are problems there might be opportunities of solutions but majority Kenyan policy makers do not perceive it this way. The cited reasons are corruption, resistance to change and limited knowledge to address such issues.

Furthermore, many Kenyans castigated the Kenyan government for failure to implement simple policies that may assist in fighting climate change. They cited the failure to ban plastic bags and adapt alternative packaging solutions, relocating industries from swampy areas to a designated industrial zone, to restore water resources and reduce pollution in habitable areas, and the protection of riverbanks to prevent floods as well as water resources pollution. Nonetheless, some Kenyans argued that actions and policy implementation is unequally different in their respective counties that make up the country. In this regard, some respondents were of the view that despite the fact that their counties not pollute at the same level, they share same effects. Therefore, implementation of

policies requires a win-win solution not win-lose solution. Hence, all counties need to do their part in implementing relevant policies and programs and promoting the need to have clean energy.

Respondents in North Western and North Eastern Kenya that are largely semi-arid explained that the failure to plant trees and increased deforestation is accelerating climate change effects, for example, lack of water and it is causing insecurity within the communities. Indeed, conflicts can emerge due to limited resources. This is why there is need for proper exploitation of resources and putting recycling mechanism at hand. It is about educating, engaging and involving a variety of stakeholders and citizens in the process [9].

The only way to win the war on climate change is for African governments, citizens, and actors to work together to increase public understanding of environmental protection and management. Planning and environmental systems are critical to the future. Once more, because security, biodiversity, and climate change are intertwined, increasing climate change resilience is equally critical. Complementary resilience ecosystems can aid with climate change adaptation and climate change shock response.

4.2. Terrorism by Al Shabab: Threats and Challenges

In the past, Northern Kenya, Nairobi and some parts of the Coastal region has become a victim of Al Shabab terrorists, despite Somalia being the hub of these terrorists where they are both indigenous and external armed group. To make it complicated, respondents underlined that some Somalis of the Kenyan origin and extremist Muslims both in Kenya and Somalia are part of this terrorist group and are increasingly internalizing the conflict and the government is doing little to avert it either in terms of the barrel of the gun or through political means. This makes it a proliferation of armed conflict in Somalia and Kenya through local and foreign sponsorships.

To eradicate this, it requires political will of Kenya, Somalia and the foreign sponsors. However, subsequent summits have agreed to clear this armed group but there has been no political will across Somalia and Kenya due to pursuing different political agendas on both national governments. To respondents, since the group is fanatically and religious oriented but with inhuman ideology, there is a need for a comprehensive conflict analysis to inform military operations and other approaches to eradicate this group. There has been lack of collaborative efforts and political will to combat this terrorist group. However, Kenya have tried to ensure that the country is safe before pursuing the group collaboratively with Somalia but unfortunately the internal operationalization is not that sufficient due to three major reasons: insufficient funding and training for the army, limited political will and collaboration of Kenyan Somalis with the terrorist group.

In addition to the above, there is inefficient Joint Verifica-

tion Mechanisms, no joint intelligence centre, no joint follow-up mechanism that do exist between the two countries to eliminate the group. Again, these remains wanting mainly due to lack of political will despite the consent of the two states to do so - fulfilling the pledges remains a problem due to complications on the political front and trans-nationality challenge. Indeed, asymmetric warfare nature makes it necessary to adapt the fight methods and not relying solely on conventional methods due to multi-disciplinarily of different players. Relatedly, either this armed group do exploit natural resources in an illegal way in Somalia or in Kenya and it is sometimes done with the collaboration of citizens or security actors.

Thus, it is necessary to examine how radicalization occurs, who is committing the radicalization, who the targets-also known as the target audience-are, how social networks and internet use contribute to radicalization, and the function of religious leaders and institutions and their consequences. In citizens' views Al Shabab intends to create an Islamic State in Northern Kenya and in the coastal region – the two parts of the country whose majority population are Muslims.

4.3. Cyber Security: A National Security Imperative

The study findings indicate that Kenya, like other countries, is either facing cyber security challenges from internally or externally – making it a national security threat beyond any doubt. This means that cyber threats in Africa are no different from other countries of the globe, henceforth, a global issue. Along with increased access to Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) technologies, cyber security has been compromised every year across the globe. Notably, Kenya is not at the needed stage like the western world and no adequate security that comes with that technological innovation. The fact is that the more you adopt technology, the more the associated technological risks.

Though not common in Kenyan military, the country's military have suffered cyber-attack in their ICT department but unfortunately, offensive cyber is not yet made an integral part of states' weaponry. A respondent said, the suffered cyber-attacks aimed at embarrassing, data disorganization, harm on data, stealing intelligence data. He deplored the fact that cyber-attack is growing quickly while the cyber defense is running too slowly, on the other side. Another respondent added that Kenya need to build ICT capabilities in dealing with these cyber-attacks. He also suggested adoption of a reactive approach and establishment of more strong protection systems to the current defensive infrastructure, which is not enough.

Furthermore, interviewed security personnel underlined that strategies to fight cyber-attacks should be inclusive of all stakeholders both from the government and from private sector. In addition, civil societies are not immune to this phenomenon because every sector is forced to operate in a data driven economy. Governments need to establish safety

measures to safeguard the users of information technologies. Security solutions need a strategized assessment and analysis to come up with ICT solutions to fight cyber-attacks. It is necessary to establish a command center to control information. This is relevant to national security. Therefore, cyber security is relevant to contemporary national security. The internet and ICT infrastructure is key power to security, socio-development and national security.

In respondent's views, there is need to embrace the desire for technological innovations as we embrace technological security to counter security risks. On a policy level, interviewees proposed the following needs to be done: security by design, need to invest in building capacities and capabilities, building cooperation in countering security risks, designing regulations and policies to promote and protect technological innovations. However, there are four categories of technological challenges: cyber-crimes organized in groups and sometimes transnational, critical infrastructure, espionage in defense and economic perspective and military capabilities faced with cyber wars, which are a major threat to national security. In this case, the need for defense system to deal with these attacks is fundamental in the national security system.

Many respondents underlined that there are no shortcuts to technological security and the need to address these technological gaps requires continuous development in skills and awareness of the threats. In addition, same respondents added that upgrading security systems in Kenya's technological equipment is another dimension that cannot be ignored in the face of new technological development. Furthermore, a lot needs to be done in building technological standards and audit mechanisms of various firms operating in the country. The security sector needs to adopt or embrace technology as enabler and force multiplier. Cyber has peculiar asymmetries and people need to pay special attentions to such risks. An interviewee in Nairobi County said, "Everything is a threat until it is not".

Though there is a growing culture of technological adaption in Kenya, the deficits in technological capacity remain a tangible challenge. Many interviewees underlined the nexus between digital security and the conventional national security not only in Kenya but also across developing countries. However, limited knowledge to counterattack cyber issues and lack of effective regulation and oversight in the field may open more opportunities for technological abuse by cyber criminals.

Again, respondents recommended the importance of strengthening cybersecurity measures and increased investment in cybersecurity technologies by the public, private and civil society entities. Furthermore, designing and enhancement of related legislation should urgently be introduced as this is a serious issue across the African continent. Despite much vulnerability in combating cybersecurity attacks, there is a promising sign in skills development and political and technical will to overcome this threat in the near future.

5. Conclusion

Kenya continue to face the issues of terrorism, cyber-security, and climate change like other African countries. These contemporary security challenges not only affect the political and economic landscape of Kenya but also citizens in general. This requires national inter-agency collaboration and coordination mechanisms to attain sustainable peace, security and development in Kenya. However, this cannot be possible without strong and visionary leadership, strong state institutions, accountability, transparency and fighting corruption in Kenya's governance. National security is a key pillar of state building, and development. Indeed, the concept of security entails human security, physical security, ecological security, combatting insurgency and understanding terrorism.

Dealing with contemporary security threats is natural right that must involve institutions and citizens in defining the nation's priorities in achieving sustainable peace, security and development. Therefore, inter-agency cooperation is a do or die - by working together, agencies increase their effectiveness and efficiency and that coordination minimizes costs of peace, security and development.

Abbreviations

ACODE	Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment
ed	Editor
eds	Editors
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
UR	University of Rwanda
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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