

Challenges Facing Kenya-United States of America Partnership on Counterterrorism in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This reflection is an attempt to understand interstate partnership in bid to thwart global terrorism as a challenge in the post-cold war era. Terrorism attacks seem to have attracted global attention in the aftermath of 9/11 twin tower of the world trade center attack in the New York city. Global war on terror is a multi-dimensional, multi-faceted war led by USA with the main objective of protecting its interests globally. The horn of Africa is considered one of the safe havens for training and executing these attacks globally due to inherent prevailing circumstances in this region. Kenya has been a terrorist target due to its perceived closeness with the USA. The study used the social constructivist theory of international relations as propounded by Wendt. The study adopted a qualitative approach by integrating primary data with the secondary data on the subject to reach its logical conclusion. The geographical scope of the study is Kenya where the target population were diplomatic missions of the Horn of Africa states in Nairobi, USA embassy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade-Kenya, UN offices in Nairobi, and Security personnel in Kenya. The study found the following challenges unemployment, USA coordination from Nairobi, internal politics, prolonged and severe inter-state conflicts in the region, geography and proximity to the gulf are the main challenges facing these partners in counterterrorism. The study concludes that for counterterrorism to succeed there is need to address the challenges and forge a close and enduring partnership among all stakeholders to thwart terrorism menace in the globe.

Key words: inter-state partnership, counterterrorism challenges, national interest

INTRODUCTION

The history of terrorism can be traced back to the period during French revolution (the reign of terror) from September 5, 1793, to July 27, 1794 (9 Thermidor, year II). With civil war spreading from the Vand'ee and hostile armies surrounding France on all sides, the Revolutionary government decided to make "Terror" the order of the day (September 5 decree) and to take harsh measures against those suspected of being enemies of the Revolution (nobles, priests, and hoarders) ([www.http://:britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)). These events were confined to France and their effects could not be felt beyond its boundaries. Since then, however, the globe has evolved aided by effects of globalization to the extent that such occurrences in one state impact the entire globe hence necessitating concerted efforts to thwart it.

The terrorism impact of 11 September 2001 on WTO center marked a terrible day which changed the world perception on terrorism and how to counter it. The attacks claimed the lives of nearly three thousand

innocent people showed that terrorism had morphed into a global phenomenon that could cause massive pain and destruction anywhere (Smith, Undated). The magnitude of the attacks meant that no one could stand on the sidelines anymore. The fight had become global because the impact of terrorism was being felt everywhere.

Despite such impact, the definition of terrorism forms the base of a challenge which hinders analysis of terrorism and makes the conceptualization of terrorism controversial world over (Gibbs, 1989). There are many varying definitions due to political reasons usually in form of propaganda calling terrorist freedom fighters or *vis-vasa*. (Weinberg et al 2004). In addition, the UN Policies on counterterrorism has been hampered by member's lack of political will to implement. In this discourse, the study adopted the United Nations definition of terrorism as provided in the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, signed on 9 December 1999, which defines terrorism in its Article 2.1.b as "any . . . act intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to a civilian, or to any other person not taking an active part in the hostilities in a situation of armed conflict, when the purpose of such act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act."

In line with the above definition, United Nations has provided guidance and support in their endeavors, focusing on areas where it has a comparative advantage. As a leader in the global fight against terrorism, the organization has continued to press Governments to adopt comprehensive national strategies that balance hard-end security measures with social, economic, and community-driven policies that are grounded in the rule of law (<https://www.un.org/en/chronicle>). Due to inherent challenges of the United Nation, it has laid down the framework for its members on counterterrorism but the implementation part remains a challenge. USA and its allies have taken the lead on counterterrorism efforts globally. This has been achieved through strategic partnership which is anchored on issue specific international challenge for mutuality of interest (Tyshuka & Czechowka, 2019).

Strategic interstate partnership is a concept in international relations which is meant to cope with key systematic and issue specific international challenges for mutuality of interests (Tyshuka and Czechowska, 2019). Since Kenya attained her independence, it has had a cordial and enduring partnership with the United States of America (USA). In 2018, the relationship of these states was elevated to strategic partnership with the main focus being economic, defense and security and multilateral and regional issues (USDS, 2021). This affirms the US strategic interest in Kenya's security and stability, and that commitment is reflected in the partnership on regional and global security issue. The security ties cover areas on counterterrorism. Security of states in any region is always an interstate interest.

Most studies have dwelt on; Peace and Security as Counterterrorism and interventions in Kenya (Bachman and Honk, 2009), Terrorism in HOA (USIP Special Report, 2004), and Counterterrorism in East Africa – US response (Ploch, 2010). Despite these numerous efforts and partnership, available studies indicate an academic gap underpinning Kenya – USA strategic partnership challenges on Counterterrorism and again the impact gap on the security of the Kenya arising from this relation. Due to lack of specific studies, this research sought to fill the study gap and the impact gap in lieu of Kenya – USA strategic partnership.

METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adopted a qualitative approach, the data collection tools were questionnaires and interview schedules. The data were presented using tables and findings analyzed thematically corroborating it with the available body of literature to arrive at a conclusive end. The scope of this study took the following dimensions; Geographically, the study focused on Nairobi Kenya. This study area was chosen because of its geo-political importance not only in the east African region but in the continental Africa and the entire

globe. First and foremost, it is a host of two UN offices-UN-Habitat and UNESCO. Secondly, it is a host of the largest USA embassy in the region and has a foreign population of over 30,000 people (USDS, 2021). Nairobi is considered an anchor and indispensable state in the horn of Africa region in counterterrorism (Cursons, 2005). Contextually, this study mainly dwelt on literature on counterterrorism, strategic partnership and the challenges encountered on securitization efforts by the two partners in efforts to thwart the terrorism menace. On time scope, the study attempts to examine the partnership of these two states in an historical perspective. However, much interest is on the period when there was an upsurge of terrorism attacks in Kenya commencing on the twin bombing of US embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-salaam in 2008.

The study target population was derived from the Horn of Africa ambassadorial missions in Nairobi and of some specific institutions working towards security. These target population therefore calls for a population that works to conclusively answer the research objectives. This population was purposely derived from institutions and organs such as; US missions, Horn of Africa regional states missions in Nairobi, IGAD secretariat in Nairobi, and the Ministry of Foreign affairs where a total of 311 population was targeted. Using Yamane (1968) formulae, a sample of 174 was used in this study.

In addition, the researcher used Non exponential discriminative snowball sampling technique for the security personnel. The researcher visited the anti-terrorist police unit in Eldoret town where the officer in charge after responding to the questionnaire referred the researcher to his colleagues at the head quarters office in Nairobi (Ruaraka). Also, the retired police and army officer's response was sought where the researcher found one of the retired officers of the rank of officer commanding police division (OCPD), whom in turn made referrals to his/he colleagues. This was replicated to retired armed force where the primary data source was a retired army officer in the rank of major who he made referral to his other colleagues. This was done until the point of saturation was reached. This technique was deemed appropriate because of the sensitivity of study.

Theoretical framework

This study is informed by social constructivist theory of international relations as propounded by Alexander Wendt (1992). In his theory Wendt propounds that anarchy is what state make of it. He further posits that anarchy is socially constructed by individual states, based on their identities which have created security dilemma. These identities arise out of the interactions between states and non-state actors which creates security dilemma.

In the aftermath of 9/11, the USA and its allies constructed that terrorism is a war against the west, making the then US president declare a military war against the terrorist groups globally. Kenya on its part is considers an anchor state and a close partner to the west and the US in particular being the only country in the region that host two UN headquarters offices in the region and a home of over 20,000 US citizens (USDS, 2022), compounded by the inherent vulnerabilities makes it easy target of terrorist groups (<http://www.nrp.org>). due to numerous attacks to Kenya's territory by terrorist attacks targeting foreigners, both Kenya and USA have a shared understanding of terrorism and the mutuality of interest of self-protection through the interpretation of terrorism as a security dilemma hence the need to counter it (Wendt, 1992).

CHALLENGES FACING KENYA-USA IN COUNTERTERRORISM

A number of challenges were identified in this context of counterterrorism and in reproduction of state power (Kenya-USA) (Felletti & Lynch, 2009) through bilateral and multilateral counterterrorism partnerships. The challenges included in summary economic, political and social with grave consequences which are discussed and backed by periodization of their occurrence.

In as much as the affected State bears much brunt of such, the nature of terrorism makes this security vice a universal misdemeanor hence having effects extending beyond the intended. Apart from the challenges on terrorism itself, there are myriad of challenges associated with counterterrorism efforts in the HOA which the field study was able to capture.

To understand the challenges of Kenya-USA partnership on counterterrorism, the researcher re-grouped the challenges into the following dimensions; bilateral and multilateral impacts which are shown in the following tables;

Table 1: Challenges of Kenya-US Bilateral partnership on counterterrorism

Type/ Dimension	Types of Challenges
1 Partners	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Youth unemployment 2. Kenya’s geographical location 3. Proximity to the gulf states

Source: Researcher, 2023

Table 2: Challenges of Kenya-US Multilateral partnership on counterterrorism

Type/ Dimension	Types of challenges
1 Coalition	1. Severe and prolonged intra-state conflicts
2 Charter	1. Neglect by international community
3 Club	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. USA coordination from Nairobi 2. External influence of Kenya’s politics

Source: Researcher, 2023

Bilateral challenges of counterterrorism emanating from Kenya-USAPartnership

This are the challenges which directly affects the bilateral strategic partnership of Kenya and USA in counterterrorism efforts in Kenya. The findings of the study as follows;

Youth Unemployment

Youth unemployment according to ILO has been defined as the proportion of the labor force that has not worked more than one hour during the short reference period and is actively looking for and is available for work (ILO, 2008). Thus, youths unemployed are those people aged between 15 and 24 who have not worked but who are available and actively seeking work. Barrie Anthony (2003) asserts that there are about 2.6 million unemployed youth who are high school middle-level collages and university graduates in Kenya alone. Every year, this number swells up by an approximated 600, 000 extra. In an interview with an officer in the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit noted that;

“Unemployment is a great challenge in counterterrorism not only in Kenya but the entire region. The unemployment makes the youth vulnerable to terrorist recruiters being promised lucrative pay, this has lured majority of youths to join Al-Shabab terrorist group. This youth because of their knowledge of Kenya geography become instrumental in organizing and execution terrorist activities within.

The above response is coherent with (Lin, 2012) who agrees that youth unemployment is a common phenomenon in many developing countries, this is often attributed to a stage of development where a country's success in reducing infant mortality inadequately compensates for its persistently high fertility rate. Without adequate development and job opportunities (Gaibullov & Sandler, 2019), a consequence of the youth bulge is high unemployment among youth who constitute a high percentage of the population. Furthermore, it leads to despair, nonproductive labor-market trajectories, and stunted economic growth.

The dire youth unemployment situation in less-developed countries (LDCs) is particularly troubling especially in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) which faces the highest of nearly level (70%), (ILO, 2011). Moreover, it is estimated that on average, of the 10 to 12 million youth entering the workforce, only 3.1 million jobs are created annually, leaving the vast majority unemployed either in informal employment or unemployed (ILO, 2022).

In IGAD countries, despite the recent economic growth rates and positive activities recorded in education and health; a higher rate of youth unemployment and the slow pace with which new jobs are created remain critical challenges in the region counterterrorism efforts where two-third of the total population is below the age of 25, and unemployment is the main macroeconomic problem in the region (Ahmed, 2017).

West (2005) agrees that unemployment rate is greatest in the Horn of Africa as well as in the continent. Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and the Sudan that constitute the Horn of Africa sub-region have become potential hostages to terrorism that may affect the security of the whole continent. Their largely unsecured territories provide a platform for terrorists, and their internal conflicts and weaknesses create potential breeding grounds for current and future terrorism. According to Collier (2003), the general weakness of African governments as well as the civil strife, which exists in several countries, makes parts of the continent highly susceptible to terrorist activity.

In the region, Somalia and Sudan are considered the epicenter of regional terrorism. Kenya and Uganda are seen to be most at risk because of the 'spillover effect. While recruitment and radicalization occur across the region, violent extremism can be a precursor to larger forms of violent conflict (IGAD, 2021).

This phenomenon has been made worse by social-economic and political instabilities in the region characterized by mass influx of refugees, harsh climatic conditions, regional rivalries, inter-communal conflicts exuberated by proliferation of small arms and light weapons. In addition, the presence of failed state of Somalia, political instabilities in Southern Sudan, Sudan, Somali, and Democratic Republic of Congo makes the region a safer haven for terrorist activities in the region.

For counterterrorism efforts to succeed, the issue of youth unemployment among the partners should be given a priority. A climate conducive for both local and international foreign investors should be created to tap on the youthful population in Kenya and the entire Horn of Africa.

Geographical location of Kenya in the Horn of Africa

The states within the Horn of Africa region are characterized by weak, ungoverned and failed-transition states, poverty, and persistent conflicts which creates a safe haven for terrorist activities. According to the Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) notes that “due to its

geographical location, persistence of conflict, absence of state structures, despair from the loss of hope and the growth of extremism, the IGAD region is considered to be the most vulnerable to terrorism of all regions in sub-Saharan Africa.” (Bashir, 2007).

USIP, 2020 affirms that almost all countries in the Horn of Africa (Sudan, Southern Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia) have been victimized by terrorist acts, whether perpetrated by and against a country’s nationals for a domestic cause or focused on “extra-national or extra-regional targets, for example, Western targets (USIP, 2020). Most casualties from terrorism in Horn of Africa are not linked to international terrorism but to domestic insurgencies in the sub-region. In fact, most incidents of *international* terrorism, which has been the focus of the United Nations’ counterterrorism agenda, have targeted Westerners or Western-related assets, and this has led to the perception that terrorism is a predominantly Western concern (Shin, 2003).

Regardless of the type of terrorism, however, local communities in Africa have borne the brunt of the loss of life and property and other economic damage from the attacks; but in many ways, far more attention has been paid to the relatively few Western victims of terrorism in the sub region. This has complicated efforts by some governments in East Africa to support international counterterrorism efforts without being seen as pushing external interests (Lyman, P and Morris, S. 2004).

Felner *et al*, (2021) describe Somalia as ‘one of the most impoverished countries in the world, it is the forerunner of al-Shabab, and the incubator for many of its leaders, al-Ittihad al-Islam (AIAI, or “Unity of Islam”), a militant Salafi group that peaked in the 1990s, after the fall of Said Barre’s 1969–1991 regime and the outbreak of civil war. AIAI’s core was a band of Middle East–educated Somali extremists that was partly funded and armed by al-Qaeda’s chief, Osama bin Laden’. This shows the interconnectedness between the failed state of Somalia and the extremist terrorist group in the Middle East acting as a catalyst of terrorist attacks in the region.

Proximity to the Gulf States

The combination of state collapse, proximity to the Middle East and emerging political Islam makes Somalia and the entire Horn of Africa a predictable target (Menkhaus, 2004). There are some indicators that the Horn of African and Middle Eastern terrorism are interconnected. According to Mazrui (2002), international terrorism is one more area where the policies of the Middle East and the politics of Africa are interwoven.

Since 1991 there were protracted terrorist operations in the Horn of Africa region. Otenyo (2004) describes the chronology of terrorist attacks in the Horn of Africa in the following manner: In 1993, 8 American soldiers were killed in Mogadishu, Somalia. Five years later, terrorists struck the region again, bombing American Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. In November 2002, suicide terrorists attacked the Israeli-owned hotel in Mombasa, Kenya. Simultaneously, the attackers shot at an Arkia Airline taking off from Mombasa International Airport for Israel.

There are different external views regarding factors, which have placed Africa as a target of international terrorism. To Shinn (2004), radical Islamic religion/fundamentalists play an important role in the politics of Africa in general and the Horn of Africa in particular. Wahhabism embodies a fundamentalist philosophy whose adherents are more likely to be attracted to terrorism and Jihad. According to West (2005), “Wahabism is a stream of Islam native to Saudi Arabia that links religion and political action. Furthermore, West claims that Wahabism is expansionist and the most intolerant and inflexible version of Islam.”

Shinn (2004) asserts that Saudi and Gulf state funding has been able to penetrate East Africa and the Horn. “Saudi Institutions had trained 28 Kenyans in Wahhabi ideas by 1982 and the number tripled by 1995. In the

early 1990s, The National Union of Kenyan Muslims requested assistance from Saudi Arabia to establish an Islamic University on the Kenyan coast”. The intention might be to create a conducive situation for the terrorists.

Kinfe (1998) suggests that the denial of freedom of worship has historically led to religious intolerance leading to politicization of religion for strategic, economic and political control as in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict of the Middle East, which has persisted for over half a century. Whether it is denial of freedom of worship or interpretation of denial of freedom of worship, the fact remains that it becomes politicized in due course of time as in the case of Hindu-Moslem conflict in the Indian sub-continent and the North-South conflict in Sudan. In a different context, the United States Institute of Peace (2002) substantiated this view by claiming that the EPLF in Eritrea rejected Islam as a social identity, which prompted Muslims in Eritrea to participate in Eritrean Islamic Jihad movement – EIJM.

Others have different views concerning the sources of terrorism in general and in the context of Africa in particular. For instance, Rice (2001) states that: Africa, its poor, young, disaffected, unhealthy, uneducated populations often had no stake in government, no faith in the future, and an easily exploitable discontent with the status quo. And, perhaps, that is part of the reason why we have seen an increase in recent years in the number of African nationals engaged in international terrorism.

A new dynamic of US operations is lack of public information and, consequently, lack of public accountability. Chandler (2006) argues that Western states are increasingly seeking to ‘deny the power they wield’ in the non-Western world, in what he labels ‘empire in denial’. By focusing on ‘partnership’ and by employing surrogates, the US downplays its political role. Chandler (2006) calls this method ‘the politics of the evasion of responsibility’. The problem in Somalia’s case is that this evasion perpetuates suspicion, and violent extremists can easily manipulate the ensuing confusion. For example, Somalis almost fully associate the US with the Ethiopian invasion. However, believed US concealment may actually incite anger because accountability has thus been removed. Alternatively, transparency would at least undercut confusion about US intentions. Most importantly, it could better position the US to show clear leadership, expanding the International Contact Group for Somalia and uniting regional actors (Cooke & Henek, 2007).

Nevertheless, another predicament involves US use of state building as a tactic for counter-terrorism. Washington’s role in the overthrow of the UIC, associated with stability by many Somalis, has deepened resentment. Moreover, persisting to defend the TFG without condition will likely continue to fuel conflict in the short term (Menkhaus 2006). Without substantive transformation, the TFG will continue to disillusion Hawiye individuals, making them easy allies for former UIC militants.

Although Washington fears leaving a security vacuum, it must set and enforce clear conditions for its support for the TFG (Cooke & Henek 2007:4). Processes of power sharing among not only the rivaling clans but also the various political groups are essential if the TFG is ever to be a credible governing body (International Crisis Group 2005a:18). In fact, as the next chapter explains, these processes should probably precede establishing a comprehensive central government. The rigid and rushed insistence on the Westphalia model puts constraints on reconciliation (Murithi 2005).

Multilateral challenges of counterterrorism emanating from Kenya-USA Partnership

Multilateralism means that there is relationship of more than three state or a state and supra-national organization (Keohane, 1954). In this study the multilateral challenges in counterterrorism efforts by Kenya and United States of America partnership means that the challenge transcends the bilateral relations to affect other states and state organizations. The study findings are discussed below;

Neglect by International Community

This challenge received the highest response by demography at 23%. Bado (2011) defines international community as a group of sovereign states coming together to address a particular international problem. This research uses this term to mean international state organization, which takes the form of regional, extra-regional and supra-national organizations. One of the interviewees working at the Somalia embassy in Kenya narrated how Somalia has been neglected in the following words;

“We are only depending on God and ourselves, nobody even the neighboring states come to help us, it is survival for the fittest for the young and the adult alike, food, clothing, shelter etc are not available”.

Another interviewee added that;

“Our neighbours see us as if we are lesser beings, being harassed and detained by security personnel. We only hear of neighbours but we don't see their importance in stabilizing our country.”

From the two voices, it is evident that Somalia has been neglected by international community. The sentiments also corroborate with Moller (2009) who agrees that international community both at regional (AU) and global level (UN). For instance, the first ever UNOSOM-1 (United Nations Operation in Somalia-1) deployed in 1991 failed because of delay and logistical issues. The second was effectively a unilateral but (US mandated) US intervention called UNITAF (United Task Force in Somalia) which declared war on one war lord changing the mission mandate to manhunt.

Even though, the respondents insinuate neglect which is also a reality in international politics since isolation and collaboration are common themes. Collaboration and cooperation in International Relations are premised on; shared interests, willingness, latent cost benefit analysis, threats and risks involved, and the prevailing security ecology.

On the part of international community, dealing with counterterrorism is the operational challenge; the AU union lacks a clear-cut definition separating a peace support operation from counterterrorism and counter-insurgency operations. In practice, the AU and regional actors have used these concepts in an analogous manner, without clear differentiation between them. A reason for this conflation of peace support operations, counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency is the absence of a multilaterally accepted definition of terrorism (ISS, 2019).

Furthermore, the UN which is a supra-national organization has not been able to agree on a definition. Thus, AU is guided by the 1999 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, which provides a definition of ‘terrorist acts’. However, this convention is focused on preserving state security because it assumes that terrorism is limited to violations of criminal laws as defined by a state party.

Another challenge facing AU emanates from the strategic level where the AU and regional actors have mandated or authorized operations such as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), MNJTF and G5 Sahel Joint Force as peace operations in accordance with Article 13 of the 2002 Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the AU (www.peaceau.org). At an operational level, often the strategic tactics the AU has deployed to degrade the capacity of terrorist groups is synonymous with counter-insurgency tactics.

International community has largely given up on the country because of the unsuccessful UN peacekeeping force led by the US military (UNOSOM), an involvement which resulted in U.S. casualties convinced the

U.S. military and the American civilians that any involvement in Somalia is not a matter of national interest (RI, 2004). Notwithstanding the global importance of the HoA, it has received less attention of the international community (Osman, 2019).

Knowing what security and insecurity is globally, it is very undeserving to insinuate as RI opines that the international community can give up on a State because of her internal insecurity. This argument is largely linked to the stipulations of Buzan and Weaver theory of interconnectedness of threats in geographically connected States such that what looks like a neglect introduces more complex security scenario even beyond terrorism itself.

Prolonged and Severe Intra- and Interstate Conflict

This response received the second largest in terms of demography with 15.5% of the respondents citing it as a challenge in counterterrorism efforts by Kenya- United States partnership. An interview with one of the respondents in the South Sudan embassy in Nairobi narrated the following;

“Nearly all countries in the Horn of Africa have experienced prolonged intra-state conflicts. Those of us in Sudan have been experiencing conflicts since independence. It is only Kenya and Uganda that have enjoyed relative peace in comparison to the rest of the countries in the Horn of Africa”.

From the interview with one of the interviewees in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade-Kenya the Horn of Africa Division said;

“The Horn of Africa is the most conflicted zone in the continent resulting to refugees, proliferation of small and light weapons arms (SALW) which further destabilizes peace in the host country. These conflicts have been catalyzed by harsh climatic conditions and unstable governments.”

The arguments by the respondent about Kenya and Uganda being relatively peaceful would be correct when used from the perspective of the respondent. However, in a more critical observation, all these are states facing security fragilities with similar characteristics with varying intensities. In a marked agreement with the respondent from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade – Kenya, the issue of SALW proliferation and refugee menace is made more real with the kind of insecurity in the HOA which is partly contributed to by terrorism. Counterterrorism hence becomes a strategy and a method to deal with such insecurity.

A telephone interview with IGAD official narrates;

“The conflicts in the horn of Africa are unique in that it transverses the international boundaries due to the fact that the borders are pores, several communities at the borders are of the same nation, and poor governance.”

This sentiment corroborates with Kentark (2018) who asserts that the horn of Africa sub-region has been described as the most conflicted region in the sub-Sahara Africa, in addition the region has experienced prolonged and severe intra- and interstate conflict, leading to instability, poverty, and political isolation that make it vulnerable to terrorist exploitation. For instance, the ongoing conflicts between Ethiopia and Eritrea (1998-2000) which centered on a border dispute, in which Ethiopia charges that Eritrea is providing support to religious extremist groups with links to al-Qaida to further Asmara’s military objectives led to the deaths of thousands, the repression of opposition movements, significant numbers of reported human rights violations, and Eritrea’s withdrawal from IGAD (McLure, 2007).

Insurgent groups in Uganda, such as the Lord's Resistance Army and the Alliance of Democratic Forces, have employed brutal tactics, which have reportedly led to the deaths of over 5,000 people across that country and in turn helped to increase public tolerance of measures against others under suspicion (Long, 2007).

Moreover, the prolonged instability in Somalia, which has been without a fully functioning national government since 1991 has been a catalyzed and an important factor fueling the spread of radicalism and terrorism in the Horn of Africa region. Thomas Dempsey, an Africa expert at the US Army War College, notes that,

“Various terrorist groups have operated in Somalia since it experienced state collapse in the early 1990s. The most prominent of these include Al-Ittihad al-Islamiyyaa (AIAI), Al-Qa’eda itself, and a small, recently emerged, extremely violent jihadist cell led by Aden Hashi ‘Ayro. AIAI seems to have acted as a terrorist hub for other groups active in Ethiopia, while the ‘Ayro group has operated as a terrorist node in the evolved two-cell network model. Al-Qa’eda has demonstrated and suspected links to AIAI and ‘Ayro, and appears to have developed Somalia as a key hub for attacks throughout East Africa” (Dampsay, 2006).

In the last two decades, the situation in Somalia has deteriorated even further with the growth of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC), a group believed to have terrorist ties, which defeated a coalition of US-backed warlords in 2006. The subsequent US-backed Ethiopian invasion and occupation of Somalia briefly dislodged the UIC, but a festering insurgency has complicated efforts by Ethiopia, the Transitional Federal Government, and the African Union (AU) to bring stability to the country and may have in some ways strengthened the hand of hard-liner Islamists fighting for control of the country (Bloomfield, 2007).

Despite the ongoing conflict in Somalia, states neighboring Somalia with better developed communications, transportation, and financial infrastructures—but weak institutions and long stretches of unsecured border territory—may in fact be considered by terrorists to have a more conducive environment for their operations (<http://ctc.usma.edu/aq/aqII.asp>).

US Co-ordination from Nairobi

This response received the third majority of response at 14.9%. This response may imply that due to insecurity in the region the United States of America and its partners coordinates their Horn regional affair from Nairobi. This response clearly indicates that United States of America presence is lacking in the most troubled country in the horn of Africa-Somalia. The United States Department of State (2022), affirms that United States of America closed its embassy in Somalia in 1991, however, in December 2018, the USA reopened a permanent diplomatic mission in Mogadishu but it is not fully operational relying on the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi's consular section which has been providing coverage for Somalia (USDS, 2022). During an interview session, one of the Somalia embassy representatives in Nairobi noted that;

We have been isolated by the globe especially developed nations. For instance, anything we need in Somalia from them has to originate from United States of America and be requested from Nairobi. This does not only apply to America but also the Western State's presence in Somalia is lacking, one may wonder if we do exist or we are of no value to the globe.

Such response depicts the magnitude of abandonment by Americans. The American policy of “limited foot print” on counterterrorism efforts in further complicates the counterterrorism efforts in the region (www.fpri.org).

Another theme that repeatedly emerged in the study, and which has posed a serious challenge on Kenya-United States of America partnership on counterterrorism efforts in the Horn of Africa is closely tied up with the reality of the lack of good U.S. intelligence to the low level of U.S. diplomatic support in the Horn of Africa. In the form of consulates, rather than full-scale missions, inadequate numbers of embassy personnel (for example, Djibouti and, Somalia). Indeed, the absence of strong American representation in these places greatly hinders the U.S. ability to assess terrorist threats and to understand the inner workings of complicated groups and important ethnic factions, let alone the international networks that are so important to terrorist financing and recruitment. Another key respondent in this study revealed that;

“The terrorist target us (Kenya) majorly because we host majority of western nationals especially the Americans, the international organizations/institutions and seemed favoritism from the west. This war could not be ours”.

This may imply that Kenya and Djibouti due to their geographical location have attracted USA interest in the region. USA residents in Kenya are estimated at 36,000 persons, host of the US largest embassy in the region, signed joined military trainings on counterterrorism (USDS, 2020). On the other hand, Djibouti is a United States Naval Expeditionary Base and home to the combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) of the U.S Africa Command (USAFRICOM).

Furthermore, despite counterterrorism being a major priority for developed donor countries such as the US, the focus of much of this assistance has been imbalanced in both its geographic scope (certain countries have received substantial amounts of assistance [e.g., Kenya and Djibouti], while others very little) and its temporal perspective, i.e., it has primarily emphasized short- and medium-term measures, aimed at catching and bringing terrorists to justice and strengthening national counterterrorism infrastructures. Much of this assistance has emphasized training military, intelligence, criminal justice, and border security officials and pushing for more robust counterterrorism legislation (Menkhaus, 2006). To a certain extent, UN counterterrorism efforts in the sub-region have followed this path with their emphasis on joining and implementing the international counterterrorism instruments, adopting and implementing comprehensive counterterrorism laws, training criminal justice officials, and generally encouraging countries in East Africa to enhance their operational counterterrorism capacity.

Kenya, with a large international population and a significant tourist sector, or Djibouti, which hosts US and western European troops, offer international terrorists more “high value” and Western-related targets. The impact of the situation in Somalia on neighboring states is significant. For example, northeastern Kenya has been severely affected by the near absence of state control in Somalia, where inter clan rivalry and banditry have further weakened border security and created additional space and income (through the illegal sale and transit of commodities, mainly livestock and grain) for criminal and terrorist elements to operate (Chikwanha, 2007).

To complicate matters further, the poor response to the rise in expectations for better socioeconomic conditions and wider democratic space has contributed to the frustration and even radicalization of some sectors of the youth segment of society. Sweeping and radical solutions to the unacceptable state of affairs appeared to be the way out, making it easier to justify violence. The introduction of extremist religious ideology into what essentially was a combustible mix of frustrations and contradictions has contributed further to the radicalization of susceptible groups and the ready acceptance of violence. In view of the fact that much of the region is populated by people of different faiths, the growth in religious assertiveness has resulted in further tensions and created an enabling environment for the resort to terrorist violence.

External Influence on Kenya’s Politics

This response received the fourth score by majority with 14.4%. This implies that there are international

political variables which pause a challenge in counterterrorism efforts.

Kenyan in the entire region has had strong historical ties with the western states. Historically, the relations have been cordial and conflictual at equal measure depending on states interests. For instance, during the Cold War years Western interests paid very little attention to the human rights situation, it focused on the containment of socialism. However, after the Cold War era the cooperation between the Kenyan Security Service and the FBI and Mossad has given rise to some misgivings among sections of the Kenyan intelligentsia (Banie and Anthony, 2006).

An interview with one of the scholars pointed out that;

“The war on terror is for western interests, we are being used as proxies to safeguard the interests of western states. Terrorist attacks are targeted towards the west but since they are hardly found, the citizens and the government become the target.”

This situation among the Kenyan intelligentsia in general and among Kenyan Muslims in particular has created uncertainty and distrust among the Kenyan elite and may become an even bigger problem by strengthening the roots of international terrorism in the country.

Kenya supports of US initiatives to eliminate Libya’s Muammer Gaddafi, then strong opponent of Zionism and its cooperation with Israeli attacks on the Entebbe airport has pitted the country against anti-western terrorists coupled with security weaknesses of the Kenyan government have contributed to the success of terrorist’s activities in Kenya. Otenyo (2004) has argued that Kenya also found itself out of favor with those who came to be known as religious fundamentalist.

During the Cold War period, the country’s decision to enter into military agreement with the then USA President Carter for the exclusive use of Mombasa in its Indian Ocean-Gulf region strategic endeavors and the presence of US military in Mombasa may well have been perceived by the local residents (Muslim majority) as reoccupation of their territory and indirect colonization of their country by foreigners (Otenyo, 2004). Although the use of international diplomacy to help create an international coalition against terror is one aspect of the way states respond to international terrorism, US-Kenya relations, unfortunately, provided clear targets for anti- American terrorists in Kenya.

The large contingent of American citizens at the US Embassy in Nairobi may well have been one factor that made the Embassy a target priority (Pkalya and Brendon, 2017). Another consideration in relation to Kenya’s vulnerability to international terrorism is that other sections of the Kenyan elite have often tried to defend Kenya’s image as a western-style democracy and this has placed the elite at variance with the public in general and with Kenyan Muslims in particular. In recent international relations, Kenya is perceived to be a close ally of Israel and it is known (Otenyo, 2004) that powerful members of the government of Kenya have had business connections with Israeli nationals. Kenya continued to maintain an open-door policy towards Israel when African countries shut their doors in the late 1960s and 1970s.

In brief Kenya-Israeli relations has been cordial at government level thereby causing considerable discomfort to local Muslim groups. For example, the influential Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims, in September 2001, issued a statement calling for an end to diplomatic links between Kenya and Israel. According to Pkalya and Brendon (2017) such trends may lead to a situation that increases the likelihood of terrorist attacks continuing as long as the US continues its intervention in Kenya’s domestic affairs.

Another dimension of Kenya’s international politics is on refugees. According to Otenyo (2004), Kenya hosts a huge number of refugees originating from neighboring countries like Somalia and Sudan. As Barrie

and Anthony (2006) documented, in the 1990s, Somalis were ordered by the Kenyan Government to carry special identity cards. Human Rights Watch reported that Kenyan authorities treated thousands of Somalis in refugee camps inhumanely, a number of Somalis in the camps were suspected of being agents of Islamic fundamentalist groups. The reports suggest that the Dadaab refugee camp hosted close to 120,000 Somalis. Kenyan government security briefings were concerned that illegal firearms, other weapons, and a variety of telecommunications equipment were sold in refugee camps. Obviously, terrorists seek to recruit refugees where government with lax border immigration control exists. Thus, this situation may be one reason for Kenya's vulnerability to international terrorism.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The above discussed challenges in CT efforts by Kenya-United States of America partnership largely contributed by internal variables prevailing in Kenya which are both bilateral and multilateral in nature. For instance, the geographical location, proximity to the Gulf States, and youth unemployment are the three challenges which are bilateral in nature. While the severe and prolonged inter-state and intra-state conflicts, international politics of Kenya, neglect by international community, and USA coordination from Nairobi are challenges which emanate from the multilateral partnership between Kenya and USA in counterterrorism. The above discussed challenges can be understood through the lenses social constructivists theory whose proponents are Wendt and Onuf (1992). They hold that human consciousness is important in interpretation of international affairs. The interpretation of terrorism as a security threat depends on thought and ideas which informs the change in international relations system (Eendt, 1992). The shared understanding of terrorism and its impacts leads to mutuality interest to counter it among the state powers in international relations.

This study concludes that for counterterrorism challenges facing the Kenya-USA partnership are largely multilateral than bilateral in nature. For these efforts to succeed there is need for all stakeholders especially the neighbouring states in the horn of Africa to have a unity of purpose to thwart terrorist groups in the region.

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