An Examination of the Emerging Security Threats along Kenya-Somalia Border in Lamu East Sub- County, Lamu County- Kenya.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined emerging security threats along the Kenya–Somalia border in Lamu East Sub-County, Lamu County, Kenya. The study was motivated by the persistence of terrorism, cross-border criminal activities, illicit movements, and Al-Shabaab-related insecurity despite government efforts to strengthen border security. It was guided by Securitization Theory and adopted a concurrent mixed-methods research design. The target population comprised 12,375 adults in Lamu East Sub-County. Using Yamane's (1967) formula at a 10% margin of error, a sample of approximately 100 participants was established, comprising 75 questionnaire respondents and 25 targeted key informants. Of these, 54 questionnaires and 18 interviews were completed, representing an overall response rate of 72%. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, while qualitative data were analysed thematically and presented through narrative accounts and selected verbatim quotations. The findings indicated that terrorism associated with Al-Shabaab was the most prominent perceived security threat, identified by 37 of 54 questionnaire respondents (68.5%) and 15 of 18 key informants (83.3%). Land ownership and religious issues were identified by 10 questionnaire respondents (18.5%), while two (3.7%) cited instability in the Somali government. Furthermore, 63.9% of questionnaire respondents and 16 of 18 key informants (88.9%) acknowledged the role of local communities in security management. Most questionnaire respondents (79.6%) and key informants (77.8%) believed that emerging security threats could be eliminated or reduced. The study concludes that effective border security requires coordinated enforcement, community participation, Kenya–Somalia bilateral cooperation, intelligence sharing, and interventions addressing underlying socioeconomic and governance challenges. It recommends further research into the effectiveness of bilateral security cooperation in addressing emerging threats along the common border.

Keywords: Kenya–Somalia Border; Emerging Security Threats; Terrorism; Al-Shabaab; Border Security; Securitization Theory; Lamu East Sub-County.

INTRODUCTION

The Kenya–Somalia border remains an important security concern due to Somalia's prolonged political instability, porous borders, cross-border criminal activities, and the continued presence of *Al-Shabaab*. The collapse of Somalia's central government in 1991 contributed to prolonged conflict and weakened state institutions, creating conditions that facilitated the emergence and expansion of armed extremist groups. The resulting insecurity has generated significant spillover effects into Kenya, including terrorism, illicit cross-border movements, recruitment, and other forms of transnational insecurity (Lind, Mutahi, & Oosterom, 2015). Security challenges along the border are also influenced by the relationship between counter-terrorism measures and local communities. Lind, Mutahi, and Oosterom (2017) observe that Kenya's response to *Al-Shabaab* violence has frequently relied on hard-security approaches that can deepen tensions between state agencies and communities perceived to be associated with Somalia. Such approaches may undermine community trust and cooperation, which are essential for intelligence gathering and effective prevention of terrorist attacks. The problem is particularly significant in border communities where social, economic, and cultural interactions extend across national boundaries.

Lamu East Sub-County is especially important within this security environment because of its proximity to Somalia and exposure to cross-border militant activities. United Nations Security Council reports have documented Al-Shabaab-related attacks in Lamu County, including attacks involving improvised explosive

devices and attacks against security personnel (United Nations Security Council, 2021). In addition, Wario and Ras (2023) note that illicit cross-border networks continue to operate along the Kenya–Somalia border despite formal border controls. Consequently, examining emerging security threats in Lamu East Sub-County is important for understanding the changing nature of border insecurity and informing locally responsive strategies for border management, counter-terrorism, and community-based security.

Statement of the Problem

The Kenya–Somalia border continues to face complex and evolving security threats despite sustained government and regional efforts to strengthen border management and counter-terrorism. The persistence of *Al-Shabaab* attacks, cross-border infiltration, trafficking, illicit movement of goods, and the proliferation of improvised explosive devices demonstrate that existing security interventions have not fully addressed the underlying vulnerabilities of border communities. The United Nations Security Council, Counter-Terrorism Committee (2021) documented *Al-Shabaab* attacks and its capacity to operate across Somalia and Kenya, highlighting the transnational character of the threat. Lamu East Sub-County is particularly vulnerable because of its geographical proximity to Somalia, extensive coastal and border spaces, limited infrastructure in some areas, and patterns of cross-border movement. Security incidents in Lamu County have included attacks against security personnel and civilians, as well as the use of improvised explosive devices (United Nations Security Council, 2021). These threats have implications not only for human security but also for livelihoods, trade, mobility, and local development. These threats have implications not only for human security but also for livelihoods, trade, mobility, and local development.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of security responses is complicated by strained relations between security agencies and some border communities. Lind, Mutahi, and Oosterom (2015, 2017) argue that heavy-handed counter-terrorism measures can generate mistrust and discourage communities from sharing security information. Consequently, although considerable attention has been given to Kenya–Somalia border insecurity, limited empirical attention has specifically examined the emerging and changing security threats within Lamu East Sub-County. This study therefore sought to examine the nature, forms, and dynamics of emerging security threats in Lamu East and their implications for effective border security and management.

Objective of the Study

This study sought to examine emerging security threats along the Kenya–Somalia border in Lamu East Sub-County, Lamu County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Kenya–Somalia border remains a significant security concern because of Somalia's prolonged political instability, weak state institutions, cross-border mobility, and the continued presence of *Al-Shabaab*. The collapse of Somalia's central government in 1991 contributed to prolonged conflict and the fragmentation of state authority, creating conditions that enabled the emergence and expansion of armed groups. The security consequences have extended beyond Somalia, with Kenya experiencing terrorism, militant infiltration and illegal movements. According to Lind et al. (2015) *Al-Shabaab* violence in Kenya is part of wider political and social activities linking political instability in Somalia to Kenya's internal security dynamics.

The nature of the threat has evolved beyond conventional cross-border incursions to include improvised explosive devices (IEDs), attacks against security personnel and civilians, recruitment and radicalization, kidnapping, and attacks on critical infrastructure. According to the United Nations Security Council (2021), Al-Shabaab has maintained the capacity to conduct attacks along the Kenya–Somalia border, including in Lamu County. These attacks have been particularly pronounced in Lamu East Sub-County. The United Nations has also identified Lamu County as one of the Kenyan counties particularly exposed to recruitment and radicalisation activities associated with Al-Shabaab (United Nations Security Council, 2021).

Importantly, insecurity in the border region cannot be understood solely through military threats. Lind et al., (2017) demonstrate that Kenya's hard-security responses to *Al-Shabaab* have sometimes reinforced

perceptions of Somali and Muslim communities as security threats. Such approaches can deepen mistrust between communities and security agencies and potentially undermine the community cooperation required for effective intelligence gathering. Lamu East Sub-County's geographical location exposes it to various forms of transnational organised crime. Its proximity to Somalia and its extensive coastal and maritime spaces create opportunities for the movement of contraband goods, illicit firearms, human trafficking, illegal fishing, and other forms of illicit trade across the Kenya–Somalia border. Evidence from the Institute for Security Studies indicates that criminal networks operating within the wider Lamu area have exploited both land and maritime routes to facilitate illicit activities, while the presence of *Al-Shabaab* has further complicated the security environment (Daghar et al., 2022)

Consequently, emerging security threats along the Kenya–Somalia border are multidimensional, encompassing terrorism, transnational organised crime, illicit cross-border movements, and community-level vulnerabilities. In Lamu East Sub-County, these interconnected threats require security approaches that combine effective border control with intelligence sharing, community engagement, human-rights protection, and strengthened cooperation among security agencies.

The study was anchored in Securitization Theory which provided a useful framework for understanding how security threats along the Kenya–Somalia border are identified, constructed, and addressed by state authorities. Developed by the Copenhagen School, the theory argues that issues become security concerns when political actors successfully present them as existential threats requiring extraordinary measures beyond normal political processes (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998). In the context of this study, terrorism, violent extremism, cross-border crime, illegal migration in Lamu East Sub-County was seen to be securitized when government and security institutions portrayed them as threats to national security and public safety.

The theory was particularly relevant to the Kenya–Somalia border because *Al-Shabaab* has been framed by Kenyan government as a major national security threat, prompting enhanced surveillance, military operations, border controls, and counter-terrorism measures. Lind et al., (2017) demonstrate that Kenya's security responses to *Al-Shabaab* have sometimes produced tensions between state agencies and local communities. From a securitization perspective, this illustrates how the designation of particular actors as security threats can influence policy responses and community–state relations. The theory therefore helped this study examine not only the nature of emerging security threats in Lamu East Sub-County but also demonstrated how these threats are defined, prioritized, and responded to by relevant security actors.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a concurrent mixed-methods design which allows researchers to collect data from multiple sources at the same time rather than sequentially. This approach is beneficial in studies requiring real-time analysis of complex social issues such as border security management, where both statistical data and qualitative narratives are essential. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010), concurrent research designs are particularly useful in addressing multidimensional problems by capturing diverse perspectives, which enhances the validity and reliability of findings. The target population comprised adult residents of Lamu East Sub-County and selected key informants from relevant security and administrative agencies. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2019), Lamu East Sub-County has a total adult population of 12,375.

The study targeted all the adults' residents of in Lamu East Sub-County, making a total intended sample of 100 which was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula. Given a target population of 12,375 adults in Lamu East Sub-County and using a 10% margin of error, the formula yielded a sample size of 100 participants. The 10% margin of error was considered appropriate given the security challenges prevailing in the study area during the data collection period. At the time of the study, an active security operation was underway in Lamu East Sub-County, which posed practical challenges to accessibility, respondents' availability, and data collection. The decision to adopt a 10% margin of error therefore reflected the need to balance methodological

considerations with the prevailing security constraints. The choice of a 10% precision level reflected the practical constraints of conducting field research in an area affected by insecurity, including accessibility, participant availability, and fieldwork limitations.

Table 1: Administrative Units of Lamu East Sub - county

Sub-County	Divisions	Locations	Administrative Officers
Lamu East	Kiunga,Basuba,Kizingitini, Faza	Basuba, Faza, Siyu, Patte, Kiunga, Kizingiti, Ndau	1 Deputy County Commissioner (DCC), 4 Assistant County Commissioners (ACCs), 7 Chiefs

Source: Researcher, (2026) based on records obtained from the Deputy County Commissioner's Office, Lamu East Sub-County

After determining the sample size, the study employed stratified, purposive and random sampling techniques to ensure comprehensive and representative data collection. Stratified sampling was used to ensure proportional representation of respondents across different administrative locations in Lamu East. The seven administrative locations of Lamu East Sub-County comprising of Basuba, Faza, Siyu, Pate, Kiunga, Kizingitini, and Ndau served as the sampling strata. Adult residents aged 18 years and above constituted the unit of analysis and respondents were selected through simple random sampling within each location. The selection of key informants was done purposively guided by the qualitative sampling principles proposed by Creswell (1998), who suggests that between five and twenty-five interviews may be appropriate for qualitative inquiry, depending on the nature and homogeneity of the study population. Similarly, Kuzel (1992) indicates that approximately six to eight interviews may provide adequate information when participants constitute a relatively homogeneous group. Based on these considerations and the institutional structure of border security management in Lamu East, the study targeted 25 key informants. These comprised the Deputy County Commissioner (DCC), four Assistant County Commissioners (ACCs), three Immigration officials, five Ministry of Defence officials, and five National Police Service officers. The purposive selection of these officials was intended to obtain diverse institutional perspectives on the emerging security threats, security responses, and border-management challenges affecting Lamu East Sub-County. The data was collected using questionnaires administered to the selected adults and interviewing the key informants.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The study targeted a total of 100 participants, comprising 75 adult respondents for the questionnaire survey and 25 key informants to participate in interviews. Of the 75 questionnaires administered, 54 were duly completed and returned, representing a questionnaire response rate of 72%. Similarly, 18 out of the 25 targeted key informants were successfully interviewed, representing an interview response rate of 72%. The study obtained responses from 72 out of the 100 targeted participants, resulting in an overall response rate of 72%.

Demographic Characteristics

The age distribution of the study participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

31-40	22	30.6
41-50	27	37.5
51 and above	13	18.1
Total	72	100

Source: Field data (2026)

The age distribution of the participants indicates that the largest proportion were aged 41–50 years, comprising 27 respondents (37.5%). This was followed by respondents aged 31–40 years, who accounted for 22 respondents (30.6%). Those aged 51 years and above constituted 13 respondents (18.1%), while respondents aged 20–30 years represented the smallest proportion, with 10 respondents (13.9%). The study participants were predominantly middle-aged, with 68.1% aged between 31 and 50 years which demonstrates that the study captured the perspectives of respondents with considerable experience relevant to the study.

Emerging Security Threats along Kenya-Somalia Border

When the respondents were asked to name the emerging security threats in Kenya - Somalia border relations, the findings indicate that terrorism associated with *Al-Shabaab* was the most prominent emerging security threat in Kenya–Somalia border relations. Quantitatively, 37 out of 54 respondents (68.5%) identified terrorism as a major security concern. Similarly, 15 out of 18 key informants (83.3%) identified the threat, demonstrating convergence between the quantitative and qualitative findings. This suggests that *Al-Shabaab's* activities remain a central concern for border security, particularly because of their implications for public safety, cross-border movement, trade and regional stability. The high proportion of respondents identifying terrorism demonstrates that violent extremism constitutes a major security concern among residents of Lamu East Sub-County. The finding further suggests that terrorism is more strongly perceived as a security threat than other forms of cross-border insecurity.

From the perspective of Securitization Theory, developed by Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde (1998), terrorism becomes a security priority when influential actors present it as an existential threat requiring urgent intervention. The prominence of *Al-Shabaab* in the present findings illustrates the perceived urgency of protecting national sovereignty, territorial integrity and public safety. This framing can legitimise military operations, intelligence sharing, surveillance and tighter border controls.

Land ownership and religious issues, identified by 18.5% of questionnaire respondents, suggest that local grievances also contribute to perceptions of insecurity. Instability in the Somali government, reported by 3.7% of respondents, further highlights concerns about institutional capacity. These findings support a broader application of Securitization Theory that considers the political and socioeconomic conditions surrounding security threats rather than focusing exclusively on military responses.

Human trafficking was identified by two respondents (3.7%), while illegal trade and smuggling and maritime insecurity were each identified by one respondent (1.9%). Organised crime was also reported by one questionnaire respondent (1.9%) and one key informant (5.6%). Although these figures indicate that organised crime received less attention than terrorism, its identification across both datasets suggests that participants recognised the wider criminal dimensions of border insecurity. Organised criminal networks may intersect with illicit trade, trafficking and smuggling, complicating the work of border enforcement agencies. Nevertheless, the findings do not establish the extent of these connections in the study area.

Ikanda, Muhumad, and Kuhnt (2025) caution that securitizing Somali populations can reinforce suspicion and restrictive policies, potentially undermining community relations. This reinforces the importance of distinguishing *Al-Shabaab* and organised criminal networks from Somali communities general.

The qualitative findings from the 18 key informants provided further insight into the causes of emerging security threats along the Kenya–Somalia border in Lamu East Sub-County. The findings revealed a strong consensus among the key informants, with 16 out of the 18 key informants (88.9%) identifying terrorism as the major cause of emerging security threats in the area. The informants associated *Al-Shabaab* with terrorism, militant infiltration, recruitment and radicalization, attacks on security personnel and civilians, and the movement of suspected militants across the border. The high proportion of key informants identifying *Al-Shabaab* demonstrates the centrality of violent extremism in shaping the security environment along the Kenya–Somalia border.

One Key Informant explained that:

> *Terrorism promoted by Al-Shabaab remains the greatest security challenge because the group takes advantage of the porous border and the movement of people between Somalia and Kenya to infiltrate the area and facilitate attacks. (KI-II*)

Similarly, another Key Informant observed:

> *Most of the security incidents we experience in this area are linked to terrorism Al-Shabaab. The group recruits vulnerable youth, spreads extremist ideas and uses remote areas along the border to move and organize its activities. (KI-VI)*

The views expressed by the key informants indicate that terrorism associated with *Al-Shabaab* is perceived not only as a direct source of terrorist attacks but also as a broader security threat that exploits local vulnerabilities and cross-border mobility. These findings complement the quantitative results, which similarly identified terrorism as the most prominent emerging security threat in the study area. However, the qualitative findings provide greater explanatory depth by illustrating how *Al-Shabaab* exploits porous borders, local vulnerabilities, and the movement of people across the Kenya–Somalia border to facilitate insecurity. Thus, while the quantitative findings establish the prominence of terrorism as an emerging security threat, the qualitative evidence explains the mechanisms through which *Al-Shabaab* contributes to insecurity in Lamu East Sub-County. This finding is consistent with Securitization Theory, which holds that issues become constructed as security threats when they are framed as existential threats requiring exceptional measures beyond normal political processes (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998).

In the context of Kenya's northeastern border with Somalia, terrorism has been frequently highlighted in political and public discourse, particularly after high-profile attacks such as those on Westgate Mall and Garissa University (Allison, 2015). The framing of terrorism as an emerging security threat has legitimized extraordinary state responses, such as the erection of border barriers, enhanced surveillance, and restrictive refugee policies (Golunov, 2014). The low number of respondents identifying illegal cross-border trade as a key threat may suggest that such issues, while significant in terms of economic and regulatory concerns, are less visible or less dramatized in the public sphere. According to Babatola (2015), many cross-border activities, including smuggling and informal trade, often escape the securitization lens despite their impact on national security and economic stability. The findings resonate with the opinion of Chonka (2019) who held the opinion that smuggling of contraband goods, illegal weapons, and illegal immigrants pose substantial security threats trans-border management.

Al-Shabaab as a Major Driver of Emerging Security Threats

When respondents were asked to identify the principal causes of emerging security threats along the Kenya–Somalia border, terrorism associated with *Al-Shabaab* emerged as the most frequently reported concern. Quantitatively, 37 of the 54 questionnaire respondents (68.5%) identified terrorism associated with *Al-Shabaab*. Land ownership and religious issues were identified by 10 respondents (18.5%), while two respondents (3.7%) cited instability in the Somali government. Human trafficking was also identified by two respondents (3.7%), whereas illegal trade and smuggling, maritime insecurity, and organised crime were each identified by one respondent (1.9%). The findings therefore indicate that *Al-Shabaab* was the most prominent perceived cause of emerging security threats along the Kenya–Somalia border, although land ownership and religious issues, as well as instability within the Somali government, were also identified as contributing factors. The table below show responses on Causes of Emerging Security Threats Along the Kenya–Somalia Border.

Table 3: Causes of Emerging Security Threats

Causes of emerging security threats	Quantitative (n=54)	Quantitative (%)	Qualitative (n=18)	Qualitative (%)
Terrorism associated with Al-Shabaab	37	68.5	15	83.3
Land ownership and religious issues	10	18.5	1	5.6
Instability of the Somali government	2	3.7	1	5.6

Human trafficking	2	3.7	0	0
Illegal trade and smuggling	1	1.9	0	0
Maritime insecurity	1	1.9	0	0
Organised crime	1	1.9	1	5.6
Total responses	**54**	**100.0***	**18**	**100**

Source: Field, Data (2026)

Although terrorism associated with *Al-Shabaab* emerged as the dominant perceived security threat in Lamu East Sub-County, the security environment should not be understood exclusively through the lens of violent extremism. Cross-border trafficking, illicit trade, organised criminal networks, and maritime insecurity may also affect border governance, community livelihoods, and the capacity of state institutions to control movement across land and coastal spaces. Chonka (2019) highlights the relationship between security and development in Kenya's borderlands, suggesting the importance of examining border insecurity alongside local governance and socio-economic conditions.

The quantitative findings were further supported by the qualitative evidence obtained from the 18 key informant interviews. Of the 18 key informants, 15 (83.3%) identified *Al-Shabaab* as a major cause of emerging security threats in the study area. The overwhelming identification of *Al-Shabaab* among the key informants reinforces the quantitative finding that the group was perceived as the leading cause of insecurity along the Kenya–Somalia border. The qualitative accounts further revealed that the threat posed by *Al-Shabaab* extends beyond direct terrorist attacks to include the exploitation of porous border areas, local vulnerabilities, and cross-border movements. KI-IX explained that *Al-Shabaab* takes advantage of the porous Kenya–Somalia border to facilitate the movement of its operatives and sustain its activities within border communities:

> *Al-Shabaab exploits the porous border to move its members and supplies, making it difficult for security agencies to completely control movements across the Kenya–Somalia border. KI-IX*

Similarly, KI-XV emphasized the group's exploitation of vulnerable local populations and the socio-economic conditions prevailing in border communities:

> *The insecurity is largely linked to Al-Shabaab, which takes advantage of vulnerable communities and cross-border movements to recruit, obtain support and facilitate its operations. KI-XV*

These accounts demonstrate that *Al-Shabaab* contributes to insecurity through multiple interconnected mechanisms, including exploitation of border porosity, population mobility, local vulnerabilities, recruitment, and logistical support. The convergence of the quantitative and qualitative findings therefore strengthens the conclusion that *Al-Shabaab* is a significant driver of emerging security threats along the Kenya–Somalia border in Lamu East Sub-County. While the quantitative findings establish the extent of respondents' perceptions, the qualitative evidence provides deeper explanations of the mechanisms through which *Al-Shabaab* sustains and contributes to insecurity in the study area.

The findings demonstrate that *Al-Shabaab* remains the most significant perceived driver of emerging security threats along the Kenya–Somalia border. Quantitatively, *Al-Shabaab* was identified by 37 of the 54 respondents (68.5%), while qualitatively, 15 of the 18 key informants (83.3%) similarly identified the group as a major cause of insecurity. This convergence strengthens the credibility of the findings and demonstrates a shared perception across both respondent categories. The qualitative accounts by KI-IX and KI-XV further explain that *Al-Shabaab* exploits the porous border, population mobility, and vulnerabilities within border communities to facilitate its activities. This finding is consistent with Chome (2016), who observes that the group exploits ethnic, religious, and socio-economic vulnerabilities among marginalized communities to support radicalization and recruitment. Land ownership and religious issues, identified by 15 respondents (27.8%), further demonstrate the role of local grievances in shaping insecurity. The instability of the Somali government, identified by 2 respondents (3.7%), also reflects the broader governance challenges that facilitate cross-border insecurity.

The prominence of terrorism in respondents' accounts suggests that *Al-Shabaab* has become the principal reference point through which border insecurity is understood in Lamu East Sub-County. This finding is consistent with Lind et al. (2017), whose analysis highlights the consequences of Kenya's security responses to *Al-Shabaa*b violence and the tensions that may arise between security agencies and local communities. From the perspective of Securitization Theory, the prominence of terrorism illustrates how a particular threat can

dominate security priorities and legitimise exceptional state interventions (Buzan et al., 1998). However, the dominance of terrorism in respondents' perceptions should not be interpreted as evidence that other forms of insecurity are insignificant. The relatively limited identification of illegal cross-border trade may reflect differences in the visibility of threats or the way security concerns are framed and prioritised. This interpretation underscores the need for border-security policies that address terrorism while also recognising transnational crime, community vulnerabilities, and the importance of public trust in security institutions.

The Role of Communities Living Along the Borderlines in Security Management

When respondents were asked whether local communities living along the Kenya–Somalia border play a role in security management, the quantitative findings from the 54 duly completed questionnaires (n=54) indicated that 34.7% agreed and 29.2% strongly agreed, giving a combined 63.9% who affirmed the role of local communities in security management. This suggests that a majority of respondents perceived border communities not merely as passive observers but as active stakeholders in addressing security threats. Conversely, 9.7% strongly disagreed and 6.9% disagreed, representing a combined 16.6%, while 19.4% remained neutral, indicating some uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of community participation in security management.

The quantitative findings were further supported by the qualitative evidence obtained from 18 key informant interviews. Of the 18 key informants, 16 (88.9%) acknowledged that local communities play an important role in security management along the border. The key informants emphasized that communities possess valuable local knowledge and are often able to identify unusual movements, suspicious individuals, and emerging security concerns before such information reaches formal security agencies. For instance, KI-IX observed that:

> *Local communities are important because they understand the border environment and can identify unfamiliar people and activities that may pose a security threat. (KI-IX)*

Similarly, KI-XV stated:

> *Security agencies cannot work effectively without the cooperation of the local people. Communities provide information on suspicious activities and movements that security officers may not easily detect. (KI-XV)*

The convergence between the quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrates a strong recognition of the role of border communities in security management. The qualitative evidence provides further explanation of the quantitative results by demonstrating that community participation is particularly important for information sharing, early warning, surveillance, and conflict prevention. This finding is consistent with Mogire et al., (2011), who argues that local communities possess intimate knowledge of their environments and can detect suspicious activities more rapidly than external security actors. However, effective community participation depends on trust and constructive relationships between security agencies and local populations. Lind et al., (2015) note that heavy-handed security approaches may discourage information sharing and generate fear or resentment among communities. The 16.6% of quantitative respondents who disagreed may therefore reflect concerns regarding distrust of security agencies and the perceived risks associated with sharing security information.

From the perspective of Securitization Theory, the involvement of local communities is important because security threats are not defined and addressed solely by political elites or state security institutions. Communities living in affected areas form an important audience whose acceptance, participation, and cooperation can influence the success of securitizing measures. Border residents therefore function as both recipients and contributors to security efforts. The findings indicate a broad consensus, supported by both

quantitative and qualitative evidence, that local communities are important actors in managing emerging security threats along the Kenya–Somalia border. Strengthening community–security agency relations through trust-building, participatory approaches, and effective information-sharing mechanisms could consequently enhance early warning, prevention, and border security.

Possibility of Eliminating Security Threats along the Kenya-Somalia Border

The findings of this study reveal a strong sense of optimism among respondents regarding the possibility of eliminating security threats along the Kenya–Somalia border. The quantitative findings show that 43 of the 54 respondents (79.6%) believed that it is possible to eliminate the emerging security threats, while 11 respondents (20.4%) were skeptical about this possibility. This optimistic perception reflects confidence in the capacity of the Kenyan government and its security agencies to effectively manage and eventually overcome threats posed by terrorism, particularly *Al-Shabaab*, as well as other forms of cross-border insecurity. The table below shows the responses on the possibility of eliminating emerging security threats.

Table 4: Responses on the Possibility of Eliminating Emerging Security Threats

Perception on Possibility of Eliminating Security Threats	Quantitative (n=54)	Quantitative (%)	Qualitative (n=18)	Qualitative (%)
Possible to eliminate/reduce security threats	43	79.6	14	77.8
Not possible/difficult to eliminate security threats	11	20.4	4	22.2
Total	**54**	**100**	**18**	**100**

Source: Field Data, (2026)

The quantitative findings were further supported by the qualitative evidence obtained from the 18 key informant interviews (n=18). The majority of key informants, 14 (77.8%), expressed the view that emerging security threats along the Kenya–Somalia border could be significantly reduced or eliminated if appropriate security measures were strengthened. The informants particularly emphasized increased deployment of security personnel and enhanced cooperation between Kenya and Somalia as critical measures for addressing cross-border insecurity. KI-IX noted that increasing the number of security personnel along the border would strengthen surveillance and enable security agencies to respond more effectively to emerging threats. Similarly, KI-XV emphasized the importance of bilateral cooperation, arguing that greater collaboration between Kenya and Somalia would enhance intelligence sharing, coordination, and joint responses to security threats.

However, 4 key informants (22.2%) expressed contrary views, arguing that the complete elimination of security threats may not be realistic. KI-VI observed that security threats could persist despite increased deployment of security personnel because of the porous nature of the border and the ability of armed groups to adapt their tactics. Likewise, KI-XVII argued that insecurity is influenced by broader socio-economic and political challenges within border communities, making it difficult to eliminate the threats through security measures alone. The qualitative findings therefore reveal a predominantly optimistic perception, with 14 of the 18 key informants (77.8%) believing that the threats can be reduced or eliminated, while the views of the 4 informants (22.2%) highlight the limitations of relying solely on conventional security interventions. This suggests that sustainable management of border insecurity requires a combination of strengthened security measures, bilateral cooperation, community participation, and interventions addressing the underlying socio-economic and political drivers of insecurity.

This perception aligns with the literature reviewed in this study, which emphasizes the importance of strong governance, regional cooperation, and strategic security interventions in mitigating security threats. For instance, Newman (2007) argue that state failure, such as that witnessed in Somalia, creates a fertile ground for terrorism. Therefore, efforts aimed at state-building, strengthening border control, and fostering bilateral cooperation between Kenya and Somalia was seen by this study as key in providing a pathway for eliminating

such threats and this was corroborated by a majority of respondents who were of the view of the need of an increased cooperation between Kenya and Somalia. Additionally, Guéhenno (2015) suggests that geopolitical conflicts provide safe havens for terrorists.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that emerging security threats along the Kenya–Somalia border in Lamu East Sub-County are predominantly driven by terrorism associated with *Al-Shabaab*, although land ownership and religious issues, cross-border activities, and instability in Somalia also contribute to insecurity.The study established that terrorism associated with *Al-Shabaab* was the most prominent perceived emerging security threat along the Kenya–Somalia border in Lamu East Sub-County. The convergence of questionnaire and interview findings highlights the centrality of violent extremism in local understandings of border insecurity. However, the findings also identify land ownership and religious issues, cross-border activities, and instability in Somalia as additional factors requiring consideration.

The study further demonstrates the importance of community participation in security management and the need for cooperation between Kenya and Somalia. Nevertheless, the prominence of terrorism in respondents' perceptions should not obscure other forms of insecurity, including trafficking, illicit trade, maritime insecurity, and organised crime. These threats warrant attention in border-management policy and future empirical research. Effective security management requires coordinated enforcement, intelligence sharing, community engagement, and responses to underlying socio-economic and governance challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that the governments of Kenya and Somalia strengthen bilateral security cooperation through joint border patrols, intelligence sharing, and coordinated security operations. The Government of Kenya should also enhance border surveillance by increasing security personnel and improving border-control infrastructure to address terrorism, illegal cross-border activities, and infiltration. In addition, local communities should be actively involved in security management through community policing, early-warning systems, peace committees, and information-sharing mechanisms, given their knowledge of the border environment. The study further recommends addressing underlying socio-economic and political grievances, including land disputes, religious tensions and youth vulnerability, which may create conditions for radicalization and recruitment. For further research, the study recommends that future scholars examine the effectiveness of Kenya–Somalia bilateral security cooperation in addressing emerging security threats along the common border.

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