

Border Security Management and State Security: a Case Study of Kenya and Somalia Border Relations (1991-2017)

Akenga Reuben ¹, Morumbasi Kigen ², Handa Stephen ¹

¹ *Kenyatta University*

P. O. Box 43844-00100, Nairobi, Kenya

² *Strathmore University*

Ole Sangale Road, off Langata Road, Madaraka Estate, Nairobi, Kenya

DOI: [10.22178/pos.75-2](https://doi.org/10.22178/pos.75-2)

JEL Classification: [K40](#)

Received 21.09.2021

Accepted 25.10.2021

Published online 31.10.2021

Corresponding Author:

Akenga Reuben

atingareuben@gmail.com

© 2021 The Authors. This article is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License](#) 

Abstract. The porous border of Kenya-Somalia has always been problematic to the Kenyan government, ever since the Somali government's fall in 1991. This study was based along the Kenya-Somalia boundary in Mandera County. The study examined border security management and state security between Kenya-Somalia from 1991-2017. One specific objective guided it: To, identified cross-border security threats along with the Kenya-Somalia border. The study applied theories of structural realism and border security theory/ psychoanalytic theory.

The study was guided by descriptive survey research design and experimental research designs. This research used several sampling strategies: convenience, systematic, snowball, random sampling, and purposive techniques. The researcher selected a sample size of 398 that comprised heads of families.

Further, 85 critical informants of private and public responders were chosen from the two case studies. Primary information was gathered using FGDs, survey tools such as questionnaires and observations and interviews. On the other hand, secondary data is retrieved through relevant articles and publication content analysis. Descriptive and inferential statistics proved vital in analyzing preliminary information, while content analysis was utilized when analyzing qualitative data. Tables and figures presented the data analyzed. The study established that 70% of the respondents stated that terrorism was a critical security threat along the Kenya-Somalia border. The researcher was informed of a newly emerging strategy employed in terrorism, through which the beasts of burden(donkey) has made the war against terror more complex. The donkey, a domesticated animal, is used by man as a helper; however, the latest creative (mis) use of the beast of burden for terrorism has emerged as a critical concern to the security apparatus.

Keywords: border; border security management; state security; terrorism; structural realism; border security theory; securitization.

INTRODUCTION

The Kenya-Somalia border is an arena that encounters a wide array of security threats. The security-based approach employed at the Kenya-Somalia border has faced numerous wide-ranging threats, including the frosty historical relations among the two neighbours. On various occasions, security agencies from the Kenyan side have been accused of using brute force on civilians from Somalia [1]. While border surveillance is paramount for protecting borders, the guard in this context entails gathering information about criminals by security agents within

the Kenya-Somalia border to mitigate and deter criminal elements from crossing the border area. Surveillance incorporates both human and technology usage. At the same time, border surveillance is critical for nation-states' survival. According to the researcher, such an arrangement within the Kenya-Somalia setup is non-existent or loop-sided to a more significant extent. Further, the researcher has observed that the Kenya-Somalia border security setup poses more substantial security concerns diminishing cross-border crimes. It is, therefore, necessary for research such as this one to be conducted to find out threats affecting the Kenya-Somalia border.

Terrorism and cross-border crimes are real threats to the survival and existence of both Kenya-Somalia; both states must at all times secure their borders to deter any terrorist plans [2]. Therefore, border surveillance efforts need to be activated and nurtured. Therefore, cooperation is critical for states' survival; however, a collaboration between the two countries faces constant threats in this scenario [3]. According to the researcher while terrorism is a crucial security threat along the Kenya-Somalia border. The greatest danger emanates from poor information exchange, especially amongst the two states' intelligence agencies. The researcher observes that intelligence sharing between Kenya-Somalia is riddled with uncooperativeness, poor coordination and mistrust. As a result, counterterrorism and counterespionage efforts are paramount, and it becomes challenging to measure the output levels of security efforts deployed in managing border issues at the Kenya-Somalia border point. Therefore, the study aimed to identify to what extent poor intelligence sharing is a threat affecting Kenya-Somalia border strategies.

Border communities are key actors in border security management issues. The local border communities are vested with a deeper understanding of the local terrain, and they are more aware of the operations of criminal elements operating at border points [4]. While the literature reviewed above has pointed out the critical role of border communities in border security management, other studies have expressed that border communities are a vital threat to effective border management. More often than not, there is an open alienation in the role of existing local border communities found along the Kenya-Somalia border [5]. Such gaps are fully exploited by criminals who entrap the local community to help them carry out their criminal activities. Therefore, there is a need to question the reasons for this view; the study seeks to provide new trends in the thinking on the role of the border community as being regarded as existing threats to border security management.

A blanket condemnation and crackdown on Kenyan Muslims is a negative strategy adopted by the security agencies. This profiling of the Muslim community is emerging as a critical threat to effective border management. It would only aggravate and lead to the significant radicalization of the Kenyan Muslims, creating a fertile ground for the growth of domestic terrorism [6]. Further, ethnic profiling by the security agencies has

worsened an already fragile relationship between the security agencies and the local populace; counterterrorism programmes need to be implemented by neutral players, unlike the security agencies accused of human rights violations. While the security agencies stationed at the Kenya-Somalia border have received numerous "hardware donations" in equipment dealing with the Al-Shabaab menace, donations ranging from numerous border training programmes and fully equipped containers acting as police posts armoured personnel carriers. On the other hand, little training has occurred on "soft skills training; training towards appreciation of the local community as essential players in border security strategies [7].

There is a significant disconnect in matters concerning "customer care" relations between the security agencies and the local community.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Two research designs were employed in this study, namely: experimental research design and descriptive research design. More importantly, because of the designs' intentions and applicability, factoring the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches to the study. Mandera County is found along the tri-border covering Somalia and Ethiopia in North Eastern Kenya, and the ethnic Somali is the dominant community in Mandera. Though made up of one homogeneous community, conflicts are more prone in the region [3].

The researcher selected a sample size of 398 that comprised heads of families. Primary information was gathered using FGDs, survey tools such as questionnaires and observations and interviews. On the other hand, secondary data is retrieved through relevant articles and publication content analysis. Thus, descriptive and inferential statistics proved vital in analyzing preliminary information, while content analysis was utilized when analyzing qualitative data. Tables and figures presented the data analyzed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents were to state the various risks that they observed would emanate from inadequate border management. The response was as follows; 100 (25%) indicated that banditry, Terrorism incursions 240 (60%), Trafficking 58

(14%). Therefore, it was deduced that most respondents observed that terrorism emerged as a significant risk that would arise from poor border management in Mandera county. At the same time (14% of who were the least observed that trafficking was a problem of inadequate border management.

The findings of the study further collaborate through an interview with a key informant who stated that:

When we as security agencies fail in our duties in guarding our borders, Mandera country is prone to terror attacks; however, our failures in implementing strict border management policies greatly encourage terrorists to launch their attacks within our borders. Effectively. We risk encouraging cases of terrorism to rise and endanger our lives and the lives of the communities that we swore to protect. (Interview with Key informant in Mandera, August 20 2018).

Residents were asked to state the different types of terror activities which they knew; the residents observed the following 270 (67%) general attacks on people, 50 (12%) demolition of a government building, murder 78 (19%). Therefore, it was interpreted to mean that a large majority, at 67%, stated that a general attack on people was the most common type of terror attack that the respondents were aware of, while 19% observed that murder was the standard type of terror attack witnessed in the area.

The findings of the study area, agree with the views, expressed a key informant within the security agencies located in Mandera who observed that:

Terror related activities within Mandera country are associated more with loss of human life than anything else. For example, we have lost more than 100 security agencies officials who have either been attacked directly or through improvised devices – resulting in blowing up security vehicles (interview with Key informant in Mandera, August 20 2018).

The researcher was informed of a newly emerging strategy employed in terrorism, through which the beasts of burden (donkey) has made the war against terror more complex. The donkey, a domesticated animal, is used by man as a helper; however, the latest creative (mis) use of the beast of burden for terrorism has emerged as a critical concern to the security apparatus.

According to a critical security officer on the ground, he observed that:

Security officers neutralized a suspected member of the Al Shabaab after they intercepted him with a donkey loaded with bomb-making materials; furthermore, the donkey had two AK 47 rifles straddled on its back. The suspect was shot dead, and the cart carted away. Animal borne bomb attacks, in which the beasts of burdens are used to transport or deliver explosives, are steadily becoming a key security concern. We have noticed that the explosives are mostly strapped to a pack of animals. And set off to crowds or directed towards security installations to explode there. We believe that the Alshabab have a complete donkey unit fully trained to undertake this bloody operation. Therefore this is a new emerging case of Alshabab donkey assisted operations (interview with a security officer in Mandera, August 20 2018).

This new emerging reality is a crucial security challenge to anti-terrorism efforts undertaken in Mandera county. Administrators within the county cannot declare or decree the none usage of donkeys as a mode of transport. Since implementing such a move would generate heated debate from animal rights lobby groups and predominantly so from the local community members. One security officer further observes that:

We have intelligence reports concerning young men who play a role in abetting terror-related activities in Mandera County. Young men are recruited to participate in scouting, purchasing, ferrying and delivering donkeys to and fro Somalia and transporting weapons. Our security agencies have the task of interacting more with the locals to disrupt this network. The usage of donkeys has complicated the war on terror incredibly. As security officers, any large concentration and movement of loaded donkeys are treated as “Alshabab activity”. We have warned the local through the usage of the local administration that the authorities would target individuals caught selling their donkeys. The selling of donkeys to Al-Shabaab authorities is undermining Kenya’s Security mission at the border area (interview with a security officer in Mandera, August 20 2018).

The researcher observes that the donkeys have been employed to advance the interests of guerrillas to defeat the usage of high-tech military forces; this was seen during 2003 when

the use of donkeys rose to counter the prominence of the US military-led operations in Iraq. During this period, when the beasts of burden were under intensive scrutiny by security agencies. The researcher further observes that individuals are being arrested in the current swoops by security agencies. Ought to be regarded as mere innocent donkey handlers employed to transport luggage, which most may not know. To adequately fight this new strategy, security officers must burn the midnight oil to trace the source of the weapons being transported, destination, and these illicit weapons' intentions. Further intelligence should categorize and state whether the illegal weapons are meant for ordinary theft, cattle rustling or terror-related activities.

CONCLUSIONS

The study's main objective was to find and cross-border security-related threats along the Kenya/Somalia border. The study found out from the household head representatives that terrorism was the most significant security concern in the study area. It was further observed the beast of burden(Donkey) has complicated the war against terror and made it more complex. The frequency of terror attacks had significantly increased in Mandera. As narrated to the researcher by most of the residents that terrorism in the form of attacks on government facilities, blowing up critical installation facilities like telecommunication networks, government officials' abduction was a crucial threat in the area.

REFERENCES

1. The East African. (2015, April 3). Somali President urges stronger ties in Al Shabaab war, condemns Garissa attack. Retrieved from <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/Somalia-condemns-Al-Shabaab-attack-on-Kenyan-varsity/-/2558/2674758/-/d8gxf1z/-/index.html>
2. African Development Bank Group. (2018). *Africa Economic Outlook*. Retrieved from https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/African_Economic_Outlook_2018_-_EN.pdf
3. Allameh, S.M., & Rostami, N.A. (2014). Survey relationship between organizational justice and organizational citizenship behavior. *The International Journal of Management*, 2, 1–8.
4. Allen, W (2008). *Federal Government of Somalia*. Boulder, Co. Westview Press.
5. Simon, A. (2015, March 2). Kenya to build a wall on the Somali border to keep out al-Shabaab. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/02/kenya-wall-israel-separation-barrier>
6. Abdi, R., & Hogerdoon, E. (2011, November 11). *Kenya: Risks and Opportunities in Kenya's Intervention in Somalia*. Retrieved from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/kenya/kenya-risks-and-opportunities-kenya-s-intervention-somalia>
7. Anderson, D. M., & McKnight, J. (2014). Kenya at war: Al-Shabaab and its enemies in Eastern Africa. *African Affairs*, 114(454), 1–27. doi: 10.1093/afraf/adu082
8. Andreas, P., & Snyder, T. (2000). *The wall around the West: State borders and immigration controls in North America and Europe*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
9. Arango, T. (2015, December 22). *Turkey Moves to Clamp Down on Border, Long a Revolving Door*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/23/world/europe/turkey-border-refugees.html>
10. Caldwell, M. (2014, November 11). *Atta- Asamoah: 'Retaliatory attacks' may not curb terrorism in Kenya*. Retrieved from <https://www.dw.com/en/atta-asamoah-retaliatory-attacks-may-not-curb-terrorism-in-kenya/a-18083868>
11. Ajami, F. (1993). *The Summoning*. Retrieved from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1993-09-01/summoning>
12. Baud, M., & Van Schendel, W. (1997). Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands. *Journal of World History*, 8(2), 211–242.

13. Adan, H. (2005). *Combating Transnational Terrorism in Kenya*. Retrieved from <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA436675.pdf>