

Asymmetry Theory and Practical Application in US-Kenya Counterterrorism

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Abstract: Asymmetry Theory views asymmetry in a distinct light from the popular view in International Relations. Drawing from Womack's (2016) perspective on Asymmetry Theory, international relations are interactions based on relational beads rather than independent transactions. The obvious distinction in global capabilities between a larger and a smaller state does not translate into anarchy as Asymmetry Theory concentrates on the interdependence of states. This study provided an analysis of the US-Kenya bilateral relations within a context of an asymmetric relationship and its counterterror influence in East Africa. It assessed the assumptions and impact of the Asymmetry Theory in the engagements of US-Kenya counterterrorism in East Africa. Secondary and primary data was collected through descriptive statistics in selected incidents of terror indicating Kenya's vulnerability and resilient success in fighting the scourge of terrorism after 9/11. The study is timely for it unpacks the indispensable impact of the theory and its practical application in US-Kenya strategic approach to counterterrorism. Asymmetry Theory brings a new contribution in the study of counterterrorism, expanding the understanding of counterterror strategies. This study refutes contradictory claims that argue that power asymmetry between states is relative to dominance.

Keywords: Asymmetry theory; interdependence; cooperation; bilateral relations; terrorism; counterterrorism; insecurity.

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Introduction

Asymmetry Theory is a calculated theory that weighs in the benefits of states' distinct capabilities in International Relations. The field of international relations is engulfed with several paradoxical perceptions and theories that enlighten the challenging shape of state interactions. As states relate with one another, they become interlinked by numerous factors such as territorial boundaries, socio-economic interests and intercultural affinities, amongst others. One seeming paradox that Asymmetry Theory has in international relations is the unequal yet common and vulnerable composition of the environment where states interact. The power capability of states which can be extremely distinct in terms of their military strength,

size of economy and strategic location are also determinants of asymmetry. These attributes can give states leverage to influence global policies in international affairs but despite this visible inequality, they are also reach a 'mid-range.' This refers to a point where smaller states do not contest the 'power' of larger states nor do they become subjected by larger powers because of the mutual interests that each side aims to achieve. Arguably, asymmetric states are to an extent equal in global politics. States are somewhat symmetric by virtue of their subjectivity to rules and regulations found in international law and their exposure to vulnerabilities to global threats such as terrorism. Consider for instance the US-Kenya asymmetric relationship, these are two distinct nation-states

located in two different continents. On the one hand, the US' military and economic capability is unmatched when comparing with that of Kenya.

By virtue of being a state from the global North, the US is more advanced than any African developing nation. The US is located in North America with about 9,831,510 km² in size. It exhibits political stability of about 65% and 82% in civil rights. Christianity is a popular religion that rates 78.5% higher than Islam with about 1.1% amongst its 331,894,000 constituency. On the other hand, the global South state of Kenya is a developing nation. It occupies 580,370 km² territory in East Africa. Its political stability rates at 41% with civil liberties that rate 34% amongst its highly Christian populace. There is quite a gap in the size of Kenyan Christian and Islamic population. The Christian population is ranked at 82.5% whilst Islam constitutes a second larger religion with only 11.1% in the overall 53,006,000 inhabitants (WorldData.info, 2022). These visible and sizeable differences are equalized by the states' "mutual exposure" to uncertainties that threaten their respective security interests. Their asymmetric interactions are characterized by "patterns of attention and behavior result" that they share in global affairs (Womack, 2016, p. 39). In the study of US-Kenya asymmetric bilateral relations, counterterrorism serves as a power fora. In this fora, states' economic, military and social disparities become conditions that enhance the achievement of common interests such as, the promotion of international peace and security through partnerships.

To attain mutual goals, Asymmetry Theory attests that cooperation and interdependence are vital features of international relations unlike other theories such as realism that emphasize dominance and anarchy amongst states as a major feature in International Relations. According to Kydd (2015), realism is a theory bearing a traditional thought that stretches back to the era of Thucydides which in many respects gives an ancient interpretation of the international system because Thucydides' worldview is "wilfully complex" (Mynott, 2013 p. xxxv). The interpretation of certain terminologies such as 'conscience' and 'human rights' often times do not present a conventional contextualization of events because of the distinct political, cultural and linguistic era in which these terminologies functioned. For this reason, Realism is prominently used to best explain late Cold War scenarios whereas Asymmetry theory is a relatively newer

theory in International Relations. Asymmetry Theory does not refute the on-going power disparity amongst states but it emphasizes that despite this possibility, states can still engage in 'normal' bilateral relations. This study's assumption of Asymmetry Theory upholds that the extant power and dominance of the hegemony such as the US in relation to a smaller state such as Kenya does not necessarily lead to competition for domination as competitive dominion may lead to relational disequilibrium in asymmetric bilateral relations.

Asymmetry Theory, therefore, concentrates on the interdependence of larger (US) and smaller (Kenya) states. This phenomenon equalizes mutual interests which entail the advancement of measures that strengthen the prevention, detention and pre-emptive mechanisms in response to transnational terrorism. The absence of an alternative theoretical perspective that depicts interdependence as a pattern of 'normalcy' in bilateral relations between asymmetric states such as the US-Kenya relations compelled this study to adopt Womack's (2016) conceptualization of Asymmetry Theory. Womack's (2016) explanation of asymmetric relationships in International Relations expands the study's understanding of US-Kenya counterterrorism strategies in East Africa. This study unpacks assumptions in asymmetric relations and analyses the impact of Asymmetry Theory and its practical application in US-Kenya counterterrorism in East Africa.

Asymmetry Theory in Perspective

It has never been an easy task for states to put a theory into practice in international relations, whether a stronger or a weaker nation-state. The state of insecurity in the international environment knows no boundaries and no amount of military capability can unilaterally prevent a security threat emerging from transnational terrorism. Consequently, how can Asymmetry Theory be applicable in real-life? Can asymmetry yield harmony and cooperation amongst unequal states? This study's main assumption responds to these questions. Furthermore, the study's assumption stresses that within the framework of Asymmetry Theory, bilateral relations between states with distinct power capabilities are possible without an element of imposed force. This assumption takes a more positive overview in international relations based on the analysis of US-Kenya asymmetric relations.

There are, however, two contrasting views that challenge this study's assertion although there is a sense of a common ground that Asymmetry Theory presents a structural relationship. That is, a relationship between two distinct parties in which one can be classified and evaluated as strong or weak, rich or poor. This distinction is attributed to a state based on the distinct military or economic capabilities. There are contradicting views on the nature of asymmetry amongst stronger and weaker states such as the US-Kenya asymmetric bilateral relations.

On the one hand, some arguments stress that a stronger party dominates the relationship to advance favorable agreements from the weaker party. On the other hand, the contradictory view suggests that a weaker party is not completely vulnerable to the advances of the stronger party because of an existing predominant goal that connects their relationship. In this case, the prevention of an existing terror threat may constitute such a goal because both sides may be compelled to engage in counterterrorism to sustainably address insecurity challenges. In a nutshell, Asymmetry theory in Bilateral Relations defines an asymmetric relationship as one in which the "stronger party tries to play out its strength in favor of its interests and the weaker party tries to be treated on equal terms with the stronger party" (Pfetsch & Landau, 2000, p.23). In an extreme case scenario, the connotation surrounding the definition of asymmetry in bilateral relations views it as "unjust" because in this perspective, Asymmetry in common terms "means discord and discord is negative" (Pfetsch, 2011. p.41). However, this study's position contends with this view presenting a much positivist progressive perspective to the asymmetry theory discourse.

On a positive note, this study argues that despite the above contrasting views, the working definition using the analogy of Womack (2016) presents a favorable explanation of the benefits that can be drawn from an asymmetric bilateral relationship. It defines Asymmetric bilateral relations as an international connection of two states with distinct military and economic strengths. These distinct characteristics do not negatively affect states' continued interactions because of the mutual interest that binds their bilateral relations. For instance, the creation of the United States Africa Command (US-AFRICOM) exemplifies such a negotiated agreement. In this case, the US as a

larger and stronger state forms agreements with Sub-Saharan states such as Kenya to strengthen regional partnerships through an array of development and strategic pillars of security. There are four main strategic pillars of development and security which the US pursues in asymmetric bilateral relations with African states, notably, strengthening democratic institutions, spurring economic growth, enhancing trade and fostering investment in Africa. All these development areas enable the US-Africa partnership to collaboratively engage with African states in different regions. These strategic pillars, therefore, serve as a proactive partnership development and a Foreign Policy strategy (US AFRICOM Public Affairs, the White House Fact Sheet 2012). Furthermore, in the context of the US-Kenya asymmetric bilateral relations, the uncertainties of the post-9/11 era bring to light the significance of asymmetric bilateral relations between larger and smaller states with visible distinct capabilities but beneficial to both states. In this sense, unlike Pfetsch's (2011) view that stresses on Asymmetric bilateral relations as catalysts of 'discord,' this study argues that asymmetric bilateral relations are in fact sources of harmony and stability. Asymmetry relations create balance of power between stronger and weaker states in which this balance is struck by the existence of mutual security interests. Nonetheless, Asymmetry Theory acknowledges the existence of a problematized practical application of the theory and the unsustainability within the international system which leads to an asymmetric warfare. An asymmetric warfare is a hybrid battle between state actors and non-state actors exposing distinct combatants, weaponry, "battlespace parameters, targeting schemes, and/or rules of engagement" (Bunker, et al., 2015, p. 69). For example, in the wake of the terror attacks in the US on September 11, 2001 dubbed the 9/11 era, terrorist groups, specifically Al-Qaeda, engaged in an asymmetric warfare – a warfare between a state and non-state actor. According to the United States Government Printing Office, the 9/11 Commission Report (2001), narrates how the incident leading to the US 9/11 terror attacks occurred. Al-Qaeda resorted to hijacking aircrafts that were ultimately used as an improvised lethal missile in the lack of a traditional missile. To advance in bringing about the horrific acts of terror to selected US' vital infrastructure,

The hijackers quickly gained control and sprayed Mace, pepper spray or some other irritant in the first-class cabin in

order to force passengers and flight attendants toward the rear of the plane. They claimed they had a bomb... At 9:03:11, United Airlines Flight 175 struck the South Tower of the World Trade Center. All on board along with an unknown number of people in the tower were killed instantly (United States Government Printing Office, the 9/11 Commission Report, 2001, p.5-8).

Against the above backdrop, it is evident that the notion of power asymmetry is manifested in a warfare between unequal foes, that is a state (US) and a non-state actor (Al-Qaeda or terrorist group) as mentioned earlier. What is striking in this form of an asymmetric relation and/or warfare is that the battlefield exposes a distinct power dimension between asymmetric combatants. In the case of the US 9/11 terror attacks, the rules of engagement between a state and non-state actor were unpredictable and to a certain extent non-existent given that terrorists and extremist groups often disregard a state's strength to protect its territorial legitimacy. In fact, terrorists and extremist groups are perpetrators of extreme violence and international insecurity. The incidents of terror that swept across East Africa in post-9/11 were not only asymmetric in nature but were also motivated by extreme use of violence by non-state actors. Violent extremists are individuals or groups who "adopt increasingly extreme political, social or religious ideals and aspirations" Kagwanja (2016, p.15). Apart from adopting extremist ideals and aspirations, these individuals can also be sponsors and perpetrators of extreme violence through radicalization within vulnerable states and beyond. The definition of extremist groups can entail "individuals who support or commit ideologically-

motivated violence to further political goals" (United States Department of Homeland Security, 2015).

The incidents of terror in the following case studies, notably the 2002 terror incident in Kikambala, the 2011 African Union's peacekeeping mission in Somalia (AMISOM) pursuit of Al-Shabaab and the 2015 Garissa University College Attack (See Table 1) offer vivid examples of the manifestation of violent extremist acts as an outcome of terror. Notwithstanding that since the US 9/11 terror attacks, Kenya experienced other incidents of terrorism during the 2002-2015 period and these are deemed significant for this study. The cases mentioned in Table 1 are a reflection of terror incidents with the highest number of fatal casualties which influenced US-Kenya counterterrorism strategies that effectively address the challenges posed by non-state actors such as Al-Shabaab (Mkuti, 2022). To respond to these incidents, Kenya's counterterror measures have included joint operations and offensive engagements to "prevent, deter, pre-empt and respond to terrorism" (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2017, p. 4). Al-Shabaab's resilient acts of terrorism have contributed to Kenya's continuous synergy with international actors because terror instigated by non-state groups has become extremely challenging to counter through a unilateral approach. The battlespace where non-state groups such as Al-Shabaab operate offers an uncommon security vulnerability to state actors. Hence, a multidimensional approach to counterterrorism is perceived as strategically sound. Table 1 shows the three major case studies that indicate the state of Kenya's vulnerability to incidents of terror after 9/11 attacks to US national security interests.

Table 1: Selected case studies for analysis

Date (day, month, year)	Location of event	Organization
28 November, 2002	Kikambala, Mombasa	Al-Qaeda
16 October, 2011	Along Kenya-Somalia border areas in Juba and Gedo regions ('Operation Linda Nchi')	Al-Shabaab
02 April, 2015	Garissa University College, Northeastern Kenya	Al-Shabaab

An asymmetric relation between states and non-state actors offers states with an opportunity that is 'close to zero to nil' in terms of dominance over the battlespace gains. Furthermore, the acts of terror waged by terrorist groups or any independent non-state actor is highly "difficult to respond to than state-sponsored terrorism" (Bunker, *et al.* 2015,

p.69). For this reason, Asymmetry Theory presents patterns of interaction premised in interdependence and cooperation amongst state-actors. An emphasis is placed on states' interdependence and power of interactive negotiations rather than a competitive or domineering interaction. Interdependence and cooperation are the only leverage position that

states have in international relations. In this strategic position, states are in a better place to efficiently address the security threats posed by non-states actors that operate in a rather unpredictable international environment.

The 28 November 2002 terror attacks to Israeli owned Paradise Hotel exemplifies the unpredictability that states are subjected to in their co-existence with non-state actors operating in the international system. The widespread incidents of gruesome acts of terror are an indication that states have 'little control' over the protection of their own territorial boundaries. While this argument may be true, Womack (2016) gives evidence that Asymmetry Theory puts forward 'new vantage' to states' patterns of interaction. It diverts from the notion of 'power' seen in hegemonic cycles perpetuated by realism which subsequently fails to address what Womack (2016, p. 3) calls the "blind spot in most thinking about International Relations." When observing states' reactions and the strategic plans adopted after Al-Qaeda and its affiliates deliberately disregarded the sovereignty of Kenya, one can clearly realise that the idea of one-sided dominance in addressing terror threats posed by asymmetric forces does not apply as an effective strategy for counterterrorism. For instance, on 28 November 2002, terrorists adeptly attacked the Kenyan Paradise Hotel, in Kikambala using missile bombings and suicide tactics. There was suspicion that members of Al-Qaeda or its supporters were responsible for the Kenyan Hotel blast that killed 18 people and caused about 80 injuries when the bombers drove an explosive packed car into an Israeli-owned hotel, (The Guardian, 2002). There were also missile attacks attempted on the Arkia Israeli Airlines flight 582 which was carrying 271 people departing from Mombassa en-route to Tel Aviv, Israel. This shows the unconventional use of warfare tactics by terrorist groups. Being as it may, at this point acts of violent extremism and terrorism were no longer against the US interests at 'homeland' nor merely hostile to the interest of Israelis abroad. All Westerners and their affiliates in the Global South such as Kenya were also becoming victims of terror. In the aftermath of the 2002 Kikambala terror incident, the then Israeli Minister, Binyamin Netanyahu accentuated that the rising trend in international terrorism,

means that terror organizations and the regimes behind them are able to arm themselves with weapons which can cause

mass casualties anywhere and everywhere. Today, they're firing the missiles at Israeli planes, tomorrow they'll fire missiles at American planes, British planes, every country's aircraft. Therefore, there can be no compromise with terror (The Guardian, 2002).

To this end, the international community not only condemned these acts of terror but reprimanded all acts of terror that were momentarily arising since the incidents of the US 9/11 terror attacks. The United Nations Security Council also stressed that any act of international terrorism was equivalent to a threat to international security and peace. Hence, the international community unanimously passed a United Nations approved resolution 1450 (2002) which was vehemently backed by the US (United Nations Information Service, 2002). Since the threats to international security emanate from the unpredictability that arise from the extreme actions of non-state actors, both stronger and weaker states shape the available opportunities to implement counterterror strategies that will intensify cooperation and lead towards the attainment of mutual security benefits. As such, the logic for the implementation of counterterrorism strategies based on the stronger state's domination of critical decision making is unrealistic. For this reason, instead of competing for dominance, states cooperate bilaterally as well as multilaterally and devise counterterror measures to address one of the defining threats of all times – terrorism. As illustrated above, terrorism is an undesirable global ill that requires the implementation of workable counterterror strategies in order to avert terrorists' exponential transnational expansion. The earlier illustrated table 1 shows the three major case studies indicating Kenya's vulnerability to incidents of terror. The incidents of 9/11 terror attacks to the US intensified a roll-out of counterterrorism strategies between US and its allies abroad. This was the epoch that saw Kenya becoming US' major East African counterterror ally in the fight against terrorism in the region. The terrorist atrocities of 2002 in Kikambala became an indication that Africa, particularly in East Africa requires an enhanced counterterror based on collective integration of both stronger and weaker states. Moreover, the US has overtly acknowledged "how interconnected our world is—and how our fates are bound up together." Further reiterating that, "Africa's peace and prosperity are prerequisites to bolstering

Africa's ability to solve global problems" (United States, The White House, 2022, p.13). In this context, although an "inclusive cooperation does not imply equality, it does require a pattern based on the interests of all" for it to work effectively Womack (2016, p.169). Because of this underlying feature of asymmetric bilateral relations the study identified Interdependence-cooperation patterns as the main analytical framework to examine the theoretical application of the Asymmetry Theory in US-Kenya multidimensional counterterrorism interventions pursued in Clinton, Bush and Obama's Administrations.

The study argues that while International Relations is driven by asymmetric global interests that include the promotion of international peace and regional security. The challenges that states face in their collective attempt to stabilize global security remain unrelenting although it is evident that these are being collectively managed, through national, regional and global counterterror engagements with socio-political communities. To address the state of uncertainty and insecurity in the international system, a collective advancement of counterterror strategies is inevitable. Asymmetric bilateral relations become essential because hegemonic powers have been indispensable in offering unrelated support to counterterror initiatives. The case of the adoption of the United Nations Security Council resolution (United Nations Security Council, 2001) is an example of US' increased support towards Kenya and the security of the entire African continent. As a global hegemon, the US has the responsibility to ensure that its global partners, specifically those in Africa, have the necessary support to strengthen the governing institutions. By so doing, African states can sustainably address the recurring security challenges influenced by the expansion of terrorism across the African continent. As such, the United States' continuous 'sponsorship' on African states' counterterror measures is largely carried out to enhance and "to deepen its security partnership with African countries and regional organizations" as a collective endeavor to eradicate terrorism (United States Africa Command [US AFRICOM] Public Affairs, the White House Fact Sheet, 2012). The adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution by the international community represents yet another collective approach to counterterrorism as the international community collectively reaffirmed the need to combat by all means, in accordance with the Charter

of the United Nations, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts (United Nations Information Service, 2002). Hence, a year later Kenya enacted the Suppression of Terrorism Bill of 2003 despite leading to heated domestic contestation and attracted pervasive scholarly criticism due to US' leading role in the enactment of the Bill (Kamau, 2006). Yet, the preemptive action of Kenya's government has yielded global recognition and positioned Kenya as one of the East African states that adheres to the norm of 'good practices. Kenya has also managed to effectively respond to national and regional security threats through the implementation of the National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism (NSCVE) which also addresses the problematic expansion of the radicalization 'steerers.'

Notable critics such as Kamau (2006), Oloo (2007), Botha (2008), Whitaker (2010), Baah (2014) and Burgess (2015) observed the implementation of the 2003 Suppression of Terrorism Bill and concluded that it was highly influenced by the US as was the case of the United Nations Security Council (2001) The greater US influence on Kenya's Suppression of Terrorism Bill of 2003 was inevitable since the US' Foreign Policy entails building support to Sub-Saharan states by promoting credible implementation of international and domestic security measures. A delay in the implementation of these counterterror measures may have a negative impact on the security interests of US-Kenya. For instance, despite having passed the Kenyan Prevention of Terrorism Act No 30 of 2012, this was only implemented in early 2015 (Kenya Law, 2012). A delay in the implementation of counterterror legislation in Kenya has proven to have the potential to create conditions favorable to the intensification of socio-political and religious cleavages. These unstable socio-political and religious conditions may result in intra-state conflicts that subsequently "threaten the credibility of democratic processes" (United States Africa Command [US AFRICOM] Public Affairs, the White House Fact Sheet 2012). It is therefore, vital that anti-terrorism Acts are timeously implemented as a national security strategy. A state's adherence to the global norms of 'good practices' is equally critical for a secured and peaceful environment. Only then can vulnerable states such as Kenya respond effectively to peace and security threats posed by a plethora of insecurity challenges that manifest in distinct forms, such as radicalization and the transnational

expansion of terrorist networks in East Africa and beyond.

There is a growing criticism on the role of the US in the continuous support and sponsorship of Kenya's counterterror measures. However, in the absence of this collaborative counterterror engagements, the battle ground for terrorism on the African soil would become extremely unruly without the collaboration with Western powers. International cooperation and interdependence on matters related to counterterrorism enable African states to manage terror threats and challenges arising from a unilaterally unmanageable terrorist battlefield. Asymmetry Theory explains that asymmetric bilateral relations such as the US-Kenya can experience relational disparities as a result of the size and capabilities of each side of the relationship. However, the existing distinct disparities in asymmetric bilateral relationships do not mean that hegemonic domination is certain because the uncertainties that often lead to challenges in international relations are managed through negotiations, Whitaker (2010). The emphasis here is placed on the management of the asymmetric bilateral relationship which suggests normalcy of interactions instead of chaos. This means that both parties come to an agreement based on a mutual goal rather than a situation where the stronger state imposes measures to the smaller state. There are three main utilities of Asymmetry Theory. Firstly, Asymmetry Theory provides practicality in the assessment of asymmetry in an environment where an inter-state relation is stable and normalized deriving from the "state-to-state" relation interpretation which is relevant to the analysis of the US-Kenya case study (Womack 2016). Secondly, Asymmetry theory also aids in understanding how asymmetric states can deal with non-state actors that constitute a threat to states' interests in international relations. Finally, the theory is viable for assessing the role of transnational organizations such as the United Nations, the African Union which are crucial multilateral institutions that shape the decision made in an unpredictable international environment where inter-state relations interplay.

The assumption drawn from this assertion is that the post-9/11 strengthened the US' support on Kenya's implementation of global and domestic counterterror initiatives. The visible US-Kenya asymmetric bilateral relations is embedded in interdependence and cooperation as a result of common goals that both states aim to achieve,

mainly to cooperate in efforts that undertake to disrupt the will of terrorists. Since 9/11, there have been numerous counterterror initiatives which were enforced and supported through the US-Kenya asymmetric bilateral relation. These counterterror initiatives incorporate regional and transnational organizations including the US government, the Kenyan Government, the African Union, the European Union and the Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF). The GCTF comprises of informal group of 30 States across the globe including the US, the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, France, South Africa, Algeria, Nigeria and Egypt. These states' primary objective is to engage on Counter-Violent Extremism (CVE) programs with the Inter-governmental authority of Development (IGAD) as well as bilaterally with member states. This multinational commitment creates a collective forum where solutions to the challenges posed by terrorism, specifically in East Africa and the larger part of the Horn of Africa are practiced and shared (Desta, 2016).

Before delving deeply into the intricacies of the theoretical practice of counterterrorism, it is essential to bring the concepts of terrorism and counterterrorism into perspective. Counterterrorism cannot be significant in the absence of terrorism because there is an inseparable nexus between the concepts 'terrorism' and 'counterterrorism' as one cannot exist without the other.

Terrorism and Counterterrorism: The Leverage of Asymmetry Theory

Terrorism is one of the widely defined concepts, yet it lacks a universal conceptual understanding because of multiple dimensions in which it may occur. Politically, terrorism entails the use of force or threat of violence by individuals or groups with the intention of coercing victims and create anxiety to an extent that the targeted group accedes to the political demands of the perpetrators, (Wardlaw, 1982). Furthermore, debates on what constitutes terrorism and its causes have been researched only to get into a "stagnation state" mostly due to the distinct variations. The manifestation of Terrorism has taken various forms which have contributed to amassed academic research to determine the distinctive features emerging in the "lethal wave of terrorism... to see whether suicide, terrorism or lone wolf terrorism were new or different from other forms of terrorism" (Sageman, 2014, p.569). The variations in terror manifestation pose a challenge to state's formulation and implementation of

counter terror strategies that may effectively respond to terror 'universally.' Hence, some counter terror strategies may be deemed ineffective whereas in other parts of the world they may be effective. Note that, Scholars from various fields of study such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, history, economics, engineering and computer science have shown interest on terrorism. This turn of events leads to an intricate multidisciplinary interpretation.

It is no doubt that the conceptualization of terrorism and counterterrorism has become a central topic of scholarly research that presents contested viewpoints in 'what' and/ or 'who' constitutes a terrorist Rineheart (2010), Bjørge (2013), Tembo (2014), Young and Gray (2011). These scholars also stress the lack of a universally accepted definition of terrorism, which often contributes to some negative outcomes that influence the effectiveness in the implementation of counterterrorism. This is chiefly because of the challenges involved in the definition of the concept itself. Nonetheless, there are at least two perspectives to terrorism that can be observed. On the one hand, some scholars such as Tembo (2014), Poynting and Whyte (2012) as well as Smith (2010) view terrorism from a classic perspective. This refers to a form of terrorism with a nationalist agenda. This form of terrorism was predominant in the 1960s to 1970s. In its classic form, terrorism manifested in the form of civil wars. This was the case in most African countries. For Herman (1996), terrorism was an act pursued by a group of individuals regarded as socially alienated and radicals in nature. These groups resorted to violence to disrupt the established status quo. Tembo (2014, p.17), for instance, views terrorism as 'the threat, or act of violence against a people or infrastructure for the purpose of extracting political concessions and /or causing fear.' Although this definition understands terror as a threat, the scholarship supporting this view does not expand its studies on the cooperation between stronger and weaker states nor does it expand on the effects and significance that can be drawn from asymmetric relations when implementing counterterror strategies.

On the other hand, there is a contemporary perspective to terrorism. This perspective views terrorism as the basis for public policy contours because of the intricacies that both terrorism and counterterrorism have on communities (Spalek et al., 2012. p. 5). This view is backed by the incidents

of 9/11 terror attacks to the US. These terror incidents paved a way for an aggressive global presence of the US on counterterror issues. Since 9/11 incidents, the US has been on the forefront of numerous global 'wars on terror,' campaigns that influence government policy, military engagements and individual sense of security. Terrorism thus became the basis for this public policy definition which stresses on 'group-target' approach. This approach has played a role in informing and aiding counterterror measures (Reitan (2010). This definitional approach is relevant to this study as it may aid in the exploration of counterterror measures pursued by the US in Kenya and the entire East African Region. A definition of terrorism within the context of public policy is viable for counterterrorism because of its ability to legalize counterterror measures into lawful practices. The legalization of counterterror measures must adhere to the 'good practices' and be able to curtail the fluid movement of terrorists from their home-grow cells to unpatrolled territories. According to the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, (2018), terrorism is a transnational threat posed by terrorists as well as transnational criminal operatives who exploit the porosity of borders and their weakened infrastructures to traverse into unguarded territories. In East Africa, the regional insecurity vulnerability branches out from the interconnectivity of states that are still battling to secure their 'artificial' territorial borders. This in turn, leads to a pattern of insecurity that affects the entire international community's harmonious co-existence and stability. This challenging reality gives the international community a valid reason to enforce national and regional strategic plans of actions and counterterror measures deemed critical to the protection of their national security and foreign policies that steer the course of their international relations.

Even though the most pressing issues revolving the continuous evolution of terrorism remain unanswered, the international community remains decisive in enacting legislations and implementing good practices through a collaborative international interdependence and cooperation. Kenya, for instance, has a Constitution that "provides for a robust and strong Bill of Rights" (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2017, p. 3). In Kenya, just as in any other democratic states in the world, the Bill of Rights protects the rights of all people within its territorial

boundaries. Notwithstanding that, the enactment of Acts such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the Money Laundering Act into Laws assists states to strengthen counterterror measures. This subsequently builds confidence of the state's capability to advance 'good practices' which is an essential norm found in the United Nations compendium of the good practices (United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) And United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism [UNOCT], 2018).

Nonetheless, terrorism remains the prime threat to US-Kenya vital interests nationally, regionally and globally. This is largely because terrorism is still a complex term devoid of a universal definition which is an essential prerequisite to devise appropriate counterterrorism strategies. As it stands, counterterror strategies are 'trial and error' measures which states can assess workable measures and implement in their respective states and regions. Despite the lack of consensus in the definition of the term terrorism, the study has analyzed the most popular definitions and explanations of terrorism made by the US government and the international community. It reached a consensus that there is still paucity of literature in this field of study. Specifically, a literature linking the dichotomy of views in relation to who and/or what constitutes a terrorist/terrorism from an African perspective. This is essential as it may directly influence the reluctance in the implementation of key legal instruments to counter terrorism in East African states such as Kenya. Nonetheless, there is empirical evidence uncovering the growing trend in the evolution of terror threats specifically those that are 'home-grown' such as the Somali terrorist group. Al-Shabaab is a popular terrorist group in East Africa and an eminent threat due to its transition from being a mere proxy terrorist group for Al-Qaeda to officially pledging allegiance to Al-Qaeda in February 2012 (Coleman, 2019, pp.31-32).

It is reminiscent that being able to define terrorism forms an essential component to enable an effective counterterror strategy, thus, referring to a strategy that addresses issues surrounding the discourse in counterterrorism strategy. It has been, to certain extent, a difficult task to identify a specific counterterror strategy because of the over-reliance on offensive actions when structuring counterterror strategies. Hoelt (2015, p. 4) notes that this often brings "immediate headlines and the illusion of

measurable results of success." For instance, following the 9/11 attacks on the US, the Bush Administration resorted to coercive strategies to counter terror activities of Al-Qaeda. In many respects, these strategies have enabled the dismantling of this terrorist organization and therefore regarded as successful counterterror tactics (Cochrane, 2013). Other critics viewed US-led counterterror strategies as a "cover for US imperialism" as the US remained the major supporter and 'driver' of the 'global war on terror' especially those led by the US in Kenya and other parts of Africa (Mogire and Agade, 2011). Regardless of this claim, counterterror approaches may take on a wide spectrum depending on the form and manifestations of terror threats. Hence, in some instances these may yield effective results whereas in other parts the same strategies may lead to less effective or visible outcomes.

There is also evidence in the significance of implementing workable counterterror strategies in Africa as some scholars specifically, Oloo (2007), Botha (2008), Whitaker (2010), Baah (2014) and Burgess (2015) attest to this. Sadly, in most cases, these counterterror strategies are largely influenced by Western forces, the US and Britain, particularly in Kenya. Subsequently, there have been great scholarly views regarding the parameters of the US responses to terrorism. For example, Lind and Howell (2010) analyzed the impact of counterterrorism in Kenya that shows diplomatic pressures to co-operate with the political and military objectives of the post-9/11 War on Terror strategies. Additionally, the bulk of scholars mentioned earlier have also shown concerns about the use of military as the prime strategy when responding to terror threats in parts of Africa. There is a need to reconstruct the approaches to counterterror strategy as the sole application of a militaristic approach has proven futile in quelling the unprecedented rise in extremist activities across the East African region.

Asymmetry Theory: Assessing its Significance in Counterterrorism

As alluded earlier, Womack (2016) emphasizes the asymmetric nature of bilateral relations. The significance of this theory lies in the assumption that asymmetry constitutes a "new" paradigm that addresses the effects of national disparities. According to Womack (2004), the effects of asymmetry are much more visible to geographically enclosed states as was the case of, for example, the

antagonistic bilateral relations between China and Vietnam who were in over a decade involved in border war from 1979 to 1990 period but have since improved their diplomatic and economic ties. However, the capability disparity can be noticed even in states that are located continents apart as is the case study of US-Kenya asymmetric bilateral relations. Furthermore, unlike the China-Vietnam not all asymmetric bilateral relations can be regarded as antagonistic regardless of their existing 'inequalities' in the size and capability of their military and economic standards.

Asymmetry Theory brings a different view to International Relations, a view that still acknowledges the relational disparities in states' bilateral relations. Additionally, it recognises that in post-9/11, states have become increasingly dependent on each other. This interdependence is largely because of a common interest, in this case – the fight against all forms of politically and religiously motivated violence that can threaten states' security by means of terror. The manifestation of extreme political and religious violence is often perpetrated by non-state actors that threaten the security of nation-states. Asymmetry Theory best explains that asymmetry in the relationship between stronger and weaker states can be normal. This is because the visible disparities make no substantial difference in their relationship as these are strengthened by common interest, as illustrated earlier (Womack, 2016).

Although Asymmetry Theory's significant contribution in this study relates to the accomplishment of common goals through negotiated agreements, there are differing assumptions. Pfetsch and Landau (2000) present an opposing view and stress that stronger parties often dominate in a bilateral relationship in order to advance favorable agreements for themselves at the expense of the weaker party. This view does not represent the assertions formulated by Womack's (2016) Asymmetry Theory and therefore is contestable in the US-Kenya asymmetric bilateral relations.

The study is based on the premises that the asymmetric nature of International Relations more especially between the US and Kenya does not alter the common view that the current trend in East African terrorism is manifested through the existence of non-state actors. Frequently, these actors disregard democratic values and legitimize

civilians as targets of attack. Asymmetric theory thus sets up a framework to expand the means through which state actors implement counterterrorism strategies. This is vital for it assists states irrespective of their distinct capabilities to fight against common threats. Unpredictable and uncommon foes such as Al-Shabaab with decentralised 'safe haven' in East Africa pose regional security threat. The adaptability of terrorist groups and variations in terror manifestation threaten international peace as terrorist expand their reach beyond their countries of origin. For instance, despite having emerged in Somalia, Al-Shabaab and its affiliates found a 'stronghold' in regions beyond East Africa, specifically in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) (Mkuti, 2022). As such, Asymmetry Theory provides a platform to explore and shape the study's perspective on counterterror alliances in international relations between stronger and weaker states (Womack 2016). The effectiveness of counterterrorism pursued within a US-Kenya asymmetric bilateral relationship depends on the collective engagement of other states. Interdependence and cooperation are major patterns of Asymmetry Theory through which regional and multilateral structures motivate compliance to counterterror instead of dominance and competition. To this effect, compliance to counterterror strategies in asymmetric bilateral relations between larger (US) and smaller states (Kenya and other African countries) result from "a community of interests rather than the result of prudence in the face of a preponderance of power," Womack (2001, p.138).

The study also holds that the asymmetric nature of international relations may affect the outcome of counterterror initiatives. This can occur despite the fact that state actors are influenced by the international society when responding to terror threats. This is largely because asymmetry relations are not established between symmetric states, whether the relations are amicable, hostile and normal or between actors who exhibit state sovereignty (Womack, 2006). It is worth noting that this assumption does not place any value judgement on the initiatives framed by the international community – whether the US' capability over Kenya and that of the East Africa, is good or bad. The assumption rather stresses on the global implications that terrorism has on states' asymmetric bilateral relations. These implications

are manifested in form of violent extremism which has greater impact on the counterterrorism agenda of both stronger and weaker states, at any given time in international relations. The collective adoption of the UNSC Res. 1450 (2002) presents a vivid example of how states with relatively asymmetric capabilities are essentially 'symmetric' by virtue of a common denominator - a security threat which cannot be contained unilaterally. Terrorism and all forms of extreme violence threaten international peace and security. Hence, the exposure to mutual threat captivates the attainment of common interest through collective adoption of resolutions that reaffirms and "urges all States, in accordance with their obligations under resolution 1373 (2001), to cooperate in efforts to find and bring to justice the perpetrators, organizers and sponsors of these terrorist attacks" (United Nations Information Service, 2002).

Fundamentally, this study's choice of the Asymmetry Theory over other international relations theories is chiefly because of its emphasis on interdependence and cooperation that both larger and smaller states exhibit in their bilateral relations despite their distinct global influence and position. The study, therefore, applies Asymmetry Theory perspective as elucidated in Womack's (2016) *Asymmetry and International relationships* and other previous works to examine US-Kenya counterterror partnerships. According to the author's knowledge, such studies have rarely been conducted. Additionally, despite the fact that Asymmetry theory has its basic interpretative unit which entails the analysis of bilateral relations between a stronger and a weaker state, there is still a dire need for reconceptualization of this assertion. The study suggests that the conceptualization of asymmetry in inter-state relations should not only be interpreted from a perspective of disparity of capabilities but should concentrate on the leverage that both stronger and weaker states tend to gain from an asymmetric bilateral relation, specifically when dealing with non-state actors. By embracing Womack's (2016) Asymmetry theory as an interpretive model in the analysis of the US-Kenya asymmetric bilateral relationship, the study attempts to explain its application in countering a threat posed by non-state actors that do not observe nor obey the principles of sovereignty. As such, this interpretative model conceptualizes the manifestation of asymmetric bilateral relations through formation of coalitions. The multilateral

and regional structures are coalitions that states engage in that serve as essential enforcers of a stable asymmetric bilateral relationship in a stronger-weaker relational dynamic. A stable asymmetry seen in the US-Kenya asymmetric relationship derives from the supposition of "mid-range" which Asymmetry Theory presents in International Relations.

In a 'mid-range' scenario, a smaller state such as Kenya does not contest the "power" of larger states such as the US nor do smaller states become imperiled by the power of larger states. This occurs because of the underlying peace and security interests that each side aims to achieve. These interests are often greater than the risks states might draw if they decide to engage in a competing or domination strategy. The choice for the attainment of peace and harmony within a political community is a common goal and therefore favorable to states engaged in an asymmetric relation. A political community is an open environment for all players in the international system, be it states or non-state actors. However, both players (larger and smaller states) form part of the greater international sphere as vital players that advance of regional security challenges (Mkuti, 2022). For instance, the asymmetric bilateral relation between the US and Kenya is a case study of a relationship grounded on each side's political community interests. The US has a global responsibility to partner with African states, specifically East Africa to protect its foreign policy interests regionally and domestically. The East African region is extremely strategic because the post-9/11 period heralded an era where Westerners and Africans alike continued to be the major victims of terrorism in Africa (United States Homeland Security (2004)). It was therefore imperative for US-Africa coalition to materialize. The US reaffirmed its unending bilateral and multilateral commitments to embattling nations such as Kenya and other members of East Africa. The dire pursuit of counterterror initiatives such as the US East Africa Counterterrorism Initiative (EACTI) has been instrumental in dedicating sizeable resources to improving police and judicial counterterrorist capabilities in the East African countries of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Djibouti, Eritrea, and Ethiopia that address challenges posed by terrorism...to assist those nations in protecting their borders, combating terrorism, and enhancing regional stability (United States Homeland Security (2004)).

The above assertion suggests that each global and regional 'power' has own national interests. These interests may relate to improvement of conditions and institutions that foster economic integration and political stability. These goals are often located within a specific political community that addresses common interests such as the SADC and the East African Community. These regional communities advance mutual interests through enduring public diplomacy and foreign policies. These collective interactions and interests influence an international relationship that is not only dynamic but is vehemently interactive based on collective expectations. This thesis therefore builds on Asymmetry theories and analysis by Womack (2016). It applies Womack's (2016) perspective given its responsive framework in framing a better understanding of US-Kenya counterterrorism dimensions. The study fills a gap in the architecture of US-Kenya counterterrorism and determines an existing opportunity for the utility of Asymmetry Theory not only to Kenya but to other asymmetric relations that can be drawn from studies beyond East Africa.

Theoretical Application of Asymmetry Theory in Clinton-Bush and Obama Administrations

The US-Kenya asymmetric bilateral relation has been premised on bilateral agreements that foster trade through the establishment of mutually beneficial markets that has sustained and stabilized both nations. Hence, Bilateral Relations are without a doubt the building blocks of International Relations (Womack 2016). The practical application of Asymmetry Theory in US-Kenya asymmetric relations dates back to 1964 when Kenya achieved its independence. During this period, US-Kenya bilateral relations were magnified through trade relations that accelerated economic growth amongst states in the sub-Saharan African region. The three US Governing Administrations – Clinton, Bush and Obama Administrations solidified the creation of several bilateral and multilateral initiatives that continue to improve interdependence and cooperation in US-Kenya asymmetric bilateral relations.

Firstly, the US-Africa foreign policy prior to 9/11 was largely concerned with economic partnerships. The creation of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) is an example of such economic partnerships which accelerated economic growth amongst states in sub-Saharan Africa. The Clinton administration (1993-2001) played a vital role in the

expansion of the US economic assistance and fostered conditions for Africa's regional integration. AGOA for instance, forms part of the US trade legislation signed into law on 18 May of 2000. This bold move by the former US President Clinton became an historic Trade and Development Act of 2000. It catalyzed the implementation of tariff reduction and non-tariff barriers, advancement in negotiation of trade agreements and enhanced regional economic integration into the global economy. These developments may still be firm until 2025, (Owusu and Otiso, 2021). As Womack (2016) clearly points out, no leader operates in a vacuum. Therefore, the stable and prolonged US-Kenya diplomatic actions steer their international relations despite visible asymmetric capabilities.

Secondly, the US remained a global hegemon and maintained its commitment in leading economic and development partnerships in Africa despite a change in administration. The Clinton administration had 'limited' role on Africa's security affairs. In the 1990s, the US Department of Defense purportedly maintained that the US had "no permanent or significant military presence anywhere in Africa, stating further that they ultimately saw very little traditional strategic interest in Africa (US Department of Defense, 1995). This perspective changed dramatically in the aftermath of the US 9/11 terror attacks as prior to these attacks, the US counterterror responses in East Africa were "limited and unsustainable" (United States Department of Defense, The Pentagon, 1995). The targeting of US allies' national interests which was the case in the 2002 Kikambala terror bombings intensified US' interests in addressing the insecurity dynamics surrounding the East African region. Asymmetry Theory explains this sudden relational shift of interests. Asymmetry Theory explains this shift arguing that due to states' deep structure in capability, diplomacy, identity and context states interests are influenced by their external environments which determine the course of states international relations, Womack (2016). The changes seen in the US-Africa relations in post-9/11 counterterror strategies towards Africa are an indication of an existing deep structural and interconnected ties in asymmetric bilateral and multilateral relations between the US and African states.

To this effect, the Bush Administration (2001-2009) brought a new dimension in the context of US-Africa relations specifically in relation to security

enforcement measures across the continent. Counterterror measures were reinforced through continental structures. The US AFRICA COMMAND (US-AFRICOM) was the major US-Africa counterterror milestone since 9/11. Through AFRICOM, the Bush Administration pursued security interests across sub-Saharan Africa and expanded Defense Foreign Policy through “proactive and forward looking vision grounded in partnership” (United States Africa Command [US AFRICOM] Public Affairs, the White House Fact Sheet 2012).

Finally, despite changes in US administrations, Kenya and the East African region have persistently become major targets of international terrorism. Al-Qaeda and its affiliates such as Al-Shabaab have been responsible for most terror threats in East African region since 9/11. This influenced the Obama administration (2009-2016) to remain steadfast in strengthening US-Kenya counterterror initiatives despite notable weaknesses in Kenya’s implementation of legislative Acts related to the Anticorruption and Economic Crimes Act (revised 2011) and the Leadership and Integrity Act (2012) (United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (2016). These Laws provide punitive measures to corruption activities undertaken by officials as well as measures that advance good governance. Despite these laws being regarded as critical Laws in promoting good governance and transparency, the Kenyan government did not effectively put these laws into practice. Nonetheless, US-Kenya asymmetric bilateral relation embraces a multidimensional strategic approach through which a multi-range of US-led initiatives are enforced, some of which might take longer to yield tangible results. In East Africa, for instance, the Partnership for Regional East Africa counterterrorism (PRACT) has since the Bush Administration shifted significantly from being militarily focused to embracing a multi-agency collaborative approach. The patterns of Asymmetry Theory, notably interdependence and cooperation enforce a multi-agency collaboration. They also sustain the US-Kenya asymmetric bilateral relations. Both states are strategic and play a vital role in promoting global peace and stability in Africa. For this reason, Womack (2016) argues that the US will continue to retain higher “discretionary power” in the sustainability of Africa regional security initiatives but the US will “similarly have to adjust to a situation of greater external exposure” (Womack, 2016, p.219). The rising insecurity threats

of 2001 to 2015 periods exposed the vulnerability of the entire international community. The 2001-2015 period was marked by the disruptive and destructive nature of terrorism and violent extremism which affected the security interests of both US-Kenya. The former General Secretary of the UN, Mr Ban Ki-Moon, expressed concern with the growing security threat that terrorism poses to the stability of the African continent - these concerns should not be ignored. Consequently, US’ incessant support to the AU and the East African Community have in many regards taken steady steps towards the prevention of terror escalation in many parts of East African region (United Nations News, 2016).

Conclusions and Recommendations

To sum up, Asymmetry Theory is a suitable theory that explains the intricacies of an international relationship. The study’s reasoning on the practical application of the Asymmetry Theory has succinctly shown how states’ mutual interests shape their relationship in International Relations. This makes Asymmetry a necessary condition to accomplish common interests in relations between asymmetric states. The US-Kenya case study has shown that the patterns of asymmetry created conditions for the implementation of counterterror strategies that are yielding effective results over time. For instance, the killing of prominent terrorist leaders such as Osama Bin Laden in 2011 by “US Navy SEALs” was seen as an effective counter terror strategy in weakening the organizational structure of Al-Qaeda. The former American President Barrack Obama called on Americans to remember the unity of that tragic day (United States National Archives, 2011). In reference to the fatal incidents of 9/11, this day did not only unite the Americans, but it also unified the entire global community in solidarity against the brutal acts of terrorism.

Therefore, the killing of Bin Laden as well as Al-Qaeda’s successive leader - al-Zawahiri in August 2022 is a sign that Al-Qaeda’s operatives is gradually crippling. Al-Zawahiri was a Mastermind of the East African 1998 attacks on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in which 223 people died (BBC News, 2022). This proves that the apparatus of the US counterterrorism is efficiently dismantling terrorist cells although Al-Shabaab’s continues to inspire violent extremism and provide operational support to terrorist groups beyond East Africa. Nonetheless, the collective counterterror strategy in the US-Kenya asymmetric bilateral relation counts on stronger counter terror operational capability of its

partners. The joint counterterror operations which are supported by the US is an indication that the position of the US as a larger and powerful state does not constitute dominance over the affairs of a smaller and regionally stronger states such as Kenya. Nonetheless, the external environment both states interact in international relations expose them to insecurities such as terrorism and violent extremism which can only be countered through a collective effort.

Asymmetry Theory presents patterns of interdependence and cooperation which aids US-Kenya asymmetric bilateral relations to address global challenges affecting both larger and smaller states through political communities rather than dominance. Political communities are international organizations such as the UN and the AU which are embedded in 'regularity' and 'predictability' of a growing range of policy areas that includes counterterrorism. For this reason, cooperation between stronger and weaker states is a significant step to achieve mutual security goals and attain combined security resolution on matters related to the adoption of international counterterrorism conventions and protocols that "prevent the commission of terrorist acts, including by provision of early warning to other States by exchange of information" (United Nations Security Council, 2001). The study has indicated that cooperation is an essential component in asymmetric bilateral relations through which states respond effectively to common problems as political communities because States, specifically African states require support in improving security on multidimensional and complex global issues such as terrorism.

The study therefore recommends the application of Asymmetry Theory in the analysis of asymmetric relations between larger and smaller states. This theory helps to debunk the ideology that asymmetry is utterly "unjust" and leads to "discord" (Pfetsch, 2011). The application of Asymmetry Theory in the study of US-Kenya asymmetric bilateral relation expounds the theoretical intricacies surrounding the conceptualization of terrorism which remains unclear and ill-defined. This influences the methods and technical implementation of counterterrorism. Being as it may, the rigorous implementation of coordinated counterterror initiatives is increasingly essential to draw effective benefits in asymmetric relations, specifically when responding to terror threats. It is necessary to avoid delays in the implementation of counterterror legislations which

remains a challenge amongst African states. Kenya is a clear example of a state which suffered the repercussions of delayed implementation of critical counterterror measures. The Kenyan Prevention of Terrorism Act No 30 of 2012 which provides measures to detect and prevent terrorism was only implemented in early 2015 despite the fact that Kenya was a systematic victim of terrorism in East Africa during 2002-2015 period. The delayed implementation of the Prevention of Terrorism Act implied that the counterterror measures that were in place since 2012 remained non-binding. Inevitably, this undermined the legislative strength of the Kenyan government in addressing the scourge of terrorism which swept across the region prior to its implementation. However, this has since 2015 changed the fortunes of Kenya as it affirmed its commitment to counterterrorism through the establishment of an interagency body. The Kenyan National Counter Terrorism Center plays a vital interagency role in strengthening counterterror collaboration with multinational actors such as the counterterror partnership established between the Kenyan Federal Bureau of Investigation and Department of State which collectively respond to regional and global security threats. For instance, the first of its kind "Kenyan-led joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) to be located outside of the United States" is an example of how asymmetric states interdependently cooperate in strengthening counterterrorism initiatives (United States Federal Bureau of Investigation News, 2020). This astonishing achievement confirms the significance of stronger states' persistent efforts in advancing smaller states' capacity building which yields an undoubtedly positive impact for both states' counterterrorism interventions. The study, therefore, makes a strong argument in favor of States' urgency in the implementation of legislations, policies and judiciary instruments that advance counterterror strategic plans to decisively tackle the challenging threats of terrorism. In the absence of States' compliance to global security commitments and advancement of 'good practices', it is inevitable that terrorists are bound to exploit these loopholes to their advantage. This in turn has the potential to negatively impact the domestic and international security of nation-states.

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