Intelligence sharing mechanisms between Kenya and the United Kingdom in countering Al-Shabaab threats: Evidence from Nairobi County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

In the post 9/11 era, the United States pioneered initiatives like the Five Eyes Alliance (FVEY), involving the United States (US), United Kingdom (UK), Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, to enhance intelligence collaboration. In Africa, complex terrorist threats have undermined intelligence operations, with regions like West Africa, the Sahel, and North Africa grappling with violent extremist groups. Devastating attacks such as Westgate Mall in 2013 and the one at Garissa University in 2015, are some of the main terror attacks in Kenya. Although, Kenya and the United Kingdom have established longstanding security and intelligence cooperation, Al-Shabaab threats and operational challenges persist thus raising questions regarding the effectiveness of existing intelligence-sharing mechanism. This study examined intelligence sharing mechanisms between Kenya and UK in countering Al-Shabaab threats in Nairobi County, Kenya. The study was guided by three theories namely, Smart Power Theory, Mosaic Theory and Securitization Theory. The study adopted a descriptive research design which integrated quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtained detailed understanding of Kenya-UK intelligence-sharing practices. The study was conducted in Nairobi County and focused on institutions and actors involved in intelligence sharing and counterterrorism efforts. The target population was 350 out of which a sample size of 200 was picked. In addition, Key Informant Interviews [KIIs] were selected from policy experts and political decision-makers, officials from the UK High Commission, corporate security experts, as well as returnees and defectors from Al-Shabaab. The study used both purposive, census and snowballing sampling techniques. Both primary and secondary data collection methods were used. Questionnaire was the principal instrument supported by interview schedules. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics by way of cross-tabulations, bar graphs and pie-charts together with themes developed from KIIs. The findings indicate particularly strong support for joint task forces, with 83.5% of Kenyan respondents and 83.0% of UK respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that they are effective intelligence-sharing mechanisms. Overall, the study concludes that effectiveness of intelligence sharing mechanisms does not depend on any single mechanism but by the interaction of formal agreements, joint operational structure, technological capabilities and human capacity. Therefore, the study recommends that both countries should invest more on technology acquisition, interoperability. This will ensure continuous evaluation of intelligence-sharing mechanisms to determine whether they remain responsive to the changing nature of Al-Shabaab threats.

Keywords: Al-Shabaab, Intelligence Sharing, Kenya-United Kingdom

I. INTRODUCTION

Across the globe terrorism has become an existential threat requiring deliberate and strong intelligence sharing to avert and combat. As observed by Bergen *et al.* (2021) the post 9/11 security environment necessitate the need for global intelligence cooperation bring on board the Five Eyes Alliance namely the US, UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand in a collaborative framework aimed at enhancing global counterterrorism, intelligence sharing. For instance ,the UK bolstered intelligence collaboration through international organizations such as Europol and Interpol (Dawson, 2015). Within Asia, countries such as India and Indonesia enhanced regional intelligence by reinforcing capabilities of ASEAN to combat ISIS and Al-Qaeda (Saptono *et al.*, 2023). In Latin America, countries such as Colombia and Brazil have collaborated with the United States to strengthen intelligence frameworks (Global Terrorism Index, 2020).

Consequently, this has contributed to the disruption of terrorist financing (Global Terrorist Index, 2020). Besides, emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) have increasingly changed the contours of intelligence systems thus improving early earning and threat detection (Al Waro'i,, 2024). In the wake of this new reality, the US continues to encounter terrorist threats and challenges meaning from adaptive intelligence capabilities. Therefore, reinforcing the capabilities of intelligence agencies in gathering prompt and accurate information on extremist organizations is crucial (Pedley, 2022). Notably, counterterrorism requires intelligence approaches difference from those used during Cold War. In essence, a paradigm shift is necessary. For instance, Australia has institutionalized counterterrorism intelligence through Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO) established under ASIO

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Act. Appreciatingly, the experiences of both the US and Australia offer reliable, dependable bilateral intelligence partnerships (Pedley, 2022).

Within the African context debate on intelligence sharing mechanisms continue though intermittent (Okereke, 2013; Tsui, 2020). Across Africa persistent threats are ubiquitous and violent especially from Boko Haram and other jihadist groups. As a consequence, intelligence sharing has become indispensable in promoting African counterterrorism efforts. For instance the Multinational Joint Task (MNJTF) has buttressed intelligence operations against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin (Eizenga & Williamms, 2020). Contemporaneously, the North African countries under the auspices of the African Union have collaborated to strengthen intelligence sharing platforms (Breen, 2018). On the other hand, the G5 Sahel Joint Force promotes intelligence coordination among Mali Niger and Chad. Through the Southern African Development Community (SADC), South Africa has supported regional intelligence cooperation and assisted neighboring countries in contributing resources, fostering peaceful coexistence and strengthening institutional trust to address intelligence cooperation gaps (Mishra, 2019). Therefore, buttressing regional intelligence frameworks is essential for sustainable counterterrorism.

In the Horn of Africa, especially among the littoral states *Al-Shabaab* has wreaked havoc by continued attacks .Somalia, Kenya and Uganda have not been spared of these perennial attacks .As a consequence, the AU deployed AMISOM now transitioned to AUSSOM to strengthen intelligence cooperation among Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia (Sabala, 2024). Kenya in particular has stepped up its efforts to counter the inroads and operations of *Al-Shabaab* by collaborating with regional organizations such as East African Community (EAC) and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) (Mishra, 2019). Besides, the Somali National Army under the aegis of ATMIS and AFRICOM ,has employed shared intelligence to avert *Al-Shabaab* threats and foil attacks orchestrated by this terrorist group (Elmi, 2023).

Within Kenya-UK partnership, a strong bilateral intelligence cooperation framework has been established to counter *Al-Shabaab*. Through joint training programs, Kenya and the UK have enhanced operational capacity as well as intelligence capabilities. Besides, these two countries have reinforced financial intelligence cooperation thus disrupting terrorist financing networks. In this regard, joint operations have aided in preventing and disrupting planned terrorist attacks. However, despite these efforts, intelligence cooperation continues to face a litany of challenges with regards to state sovereignty, national interest, intelligence leaks as well as limited information sharing. It is against this backdrop that Nairobi was selected. Nairobi was chosen due to its political and diplomatic importance as well as its vulnerability to terrorist attacks. Kenya continues to partner with IGAD and AUSSOM to bolster regional intelligence coordination against *Al-Shabaab* (Sabala, 2024). Additionally, the UK-Kenya security has enhanced intelligence sharing, technical assistance as well as capacity building for Kenyan security apparatuses. Jointly, both Kenya and the UK continue to cooperate in tracking and disrupting terrorist financing networks despite persisting challenges such as inadequate local resources, intelligence breaches and institutional capacities. With the advent of Artificial Intelligence, the situation has been compounded since *Al-Shabaab* use such technologies to disrupt important intelligence network.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

For years Kenya and the UK have forged bilateral cooperation on security and defence. Kenya has participated in regional intelligence -sharing frameworks though IGAD's Security Sector Programme as well as the African Union's Early Warning System. However, despite intelligence sharing and sustained counterterrorism efforts, regional threats persist especially from Al-Shabaab group. Kenya has faced major terrorist attacks on Westgate Mall (2013), Garissa University (2015) as well as DusitD2 attack in 2019 (Mwaura, 2024). Though Kenya-UK intelligence sharing focuses on disrupting terrorists plots as well as dismantling financing networks ,challenges persist including delays in real-time intelligence exchange ,inadequate resources and operational differences (Mutambo, 2019). The existence of weak interagency coordination and inadequate community -based counterterrorism efforts stymies the effectiveness of intelligence-led operations. Thus, fundamental question emerges on ineffectiveness of established mechanisms despite longstanding intelligence cooperation. Against this backdrop, this study analyzed the efficacy of intelligence sharing mechanisms between Kenya and the United Kingdom in countering the *Al-Shabaab* threat in Nairobi County.

1.2 Research Objective

The objective of this study was to examine the intelligence sharing mechanisms between Kenya and the United Kingdom in countering *Al-Shabaab* threat in Nairobi County, Kenya.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study was underpinned by three theories. First Smart Power theory, second Mosaic theory and third Securitization theory.

2.1.1 Smart Theory

Smart Power theory was propounded by Joseph Nye in 2004.This theory vouches for a combination of hard power with emphasis on military force, threat, ultimatums, red tapes and sanctions and soft power emphasizing on diplomacy, cooperation and the art of persuasion. The researcher underscores that this theory provides a balance approach to achieving both foreign policy and security objectives between Kenya and the UK. It asserts that Kenya-UK intelligence partnership is premised upon joint counterterrorism operations, intelligence sharing capacity building as well diplomatic cooperation. This theory further affirms the importance of integrating military action with diplomacy to militate against Al-Shabaab threats. The theory's strengthen lies on its flexibility and adaptability to evolving security threats as well as encouraging cyber intelligence and community -based counter radicalization efforts. Its limitations include coordination challenges among security agencies as well as trust deficits that often undermine intelligence sharing activities. Smart Power theory explains the integration of military and diplomatic tools in countering *Al-Shabaab* threats

2.1.2 Mosaic Theory

Another theory used by this study was the Mosaic theory. This theory was developed from the United States vs Marchetti (1972) case. It was advanced by Pozen (2005). This theory argues that intelligence becomes effective when information multiple sources are combined. Therefore, no single intelligence source can reliably be used to portray the truest picture of terrorist threat. This theory emphasizes on incorporating human intelligence (HUMINT), signals intelligence (SIGINT), Open-Source intelligence (OSINT), cyber intelligence among other forms of intelligence critical in gathering sufficient information on impending threats. In essence, Mosaic theory is grounded on fragmented intelligence, interdisciplinary integration as well as pattern recognition. Its strength lies on improving threat detection and predictive intelligence as well as enhancing comprehensive understanding of Al-Shabaab operation. The strength of Mosaic theory lies on broadening security analysis beyond military threats to factoring in militia threats. It argues the political processes that underpin intelligence cooperation. Mosaic theory explains how intelligence from multiple sources can be used to produce actional intelligence against *Al-Shabaab* However, its limited in terms of information overload since multiple sources must be gathered and used. Besides, its limited in terms of delays caused as a result of poorly filtered intelligence.

2.1.3 Securitization Theory

The third theory, securitization theory, was developed by Ole Waever through the Copenhagen School in 1998.This theory explicates how issues become security threats through political discourses. The speechifying act is created when as issues like terrorism is framed as an existential threat that requires extraordinary security measures. This theory justifies intelligence sharing between Kenya and the UK beyond normal political processes, in other words, the political discourses in Kenya and the UK can influence the level and degree of intelligence sharing in light of the existing threats. This theory supports the establishment of formal intelligence -sharing institutions. Securitization theory explains how *Al-Shabaab* threats can framed as an existential threat warranting extra ordinary security measures.

2.2 Empirical Review

This study identifies bilateral agreements as an integral institutional mechanism for enhancing intelligence exchange between Kenya and the United Kingdom. The findings suggest that formal agreements create a foundation for structure cooperation. However, differences in perceptions between Kenya and the UK raises concerns about implementation, institutional capacity as well as tangible benefits of bilateral cooperation. Mwangi *et al* (2020) opine that While efforts have been put to buttress intelligence sharing systems, implementation remains a big challenge. This study therefore, highlights the need to investigate how formal bilateral agreements translates to timely intelligence exchange. This study further underscores the importance of joint task forces as mechanism for strengthening collaboration among intelligence agencies The findings demonstrate a convergence between Kenya and the UK on coordinate operations as well as shared expertise. Joint task forces are established to facilitate early threat detection as well as improve the capacity to deter and disrupt Al-Shabaab networks. Nevertheless, questions regarding unequal access to intelligence and sovereignty suggest that collaboration may not always produce equitable outcomes (Estévez, 2026). This study further observes that technology and intelligence data sharing has increasingly become a critical component of intelligence cooperation. In this regard, this study underscores the significance of secure communication platforms and robust surveillance systems. However technological disparities and unequal access to advanced

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intelligence sharing infrastructure stymies effective cooperation. Besides, the study observes that training and capacity building are integral in enhancing intelligence analysis as well as operational readiness. However, there is need for sustained investments and coordination to respond to evolving threats by *Al-Shabaab.* The study establishes a key gap of how these mechanisms interact to influence counterterrorism effectiveness within Nairobi County. Therefore this study addresses the gap by examining the implementation of intelligence-sharing mechanism and their contribution towards countering Al-Shabaab threats

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive research design. The descriptive design provided a systematic description of intelligence-sharing practices between Kenya and the UK as well as understanding counterterrorism operations.

3.2 Study Area

This study was conducted in Nairobi County, Kenya. Nairobi County was selected due to its proximate and strategic role in Kenya-UK intelligence sharing architecture as well counterterrorism operations. Nairobi hosts the UK High Commission as well as a number of diplomatic missions. This makes it a centre for intelligence cooperation. Nairobi is a high-value target for terrorist attacks because of its political, diplomatic and economic importance. Besides, it holds major international organizations making it susceptible to terror attacks. It also experienced major attacks in 2013 and 2019.Al-Shabaab have made inroads to the city due to its sleeper cell, highly sophisticated recruitment networks and logistical hub. The UK and Kenya were chosen because the two countries have a longstanding diplomatic and security relations in pre- and post-independence Kenya. Besides, the UK has a high-value threat since significant number of British populations reside in Kenya. Additionally, Kenya acts as an anchor as well as strategic state for the UK in the Horn of Africa. Despite Kenya-UK intelligence cooperation, the intelligence sharing mechanisms remain underexplored as compared to US-Kenya intelligence cooperation.

3.3 Target Population

The target population was 375. This was drawn from National Intelligence Service (90), Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (90),Directorate of Military Intelligence (90),Directorate of Criminal Investigations(90) AND Secret Intelligence Service from UK (35).In addition, key informants (KIs) were selected from policy experts and political decision-makers, officials from the UK High Commission, corporate security experts, as well as returnees and defectors from *Al-Shabaab.* The study focused on the UK High Commission, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, Kenya-UK liaison Offices as well as intelligence and security agencies involved in counterterrorism.

3.4 Sampling and sample Size

The study used both purposive, census and snowballing sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to select participants with relevant expertise and knowledge in intelligence sharing and counterterrorism strategies. Through purposive sampling it was possible to reach respondents based on their unique knowledge and positions. Snowballing was used to identify returnees and defectors from the *Al-Shabaab* group.The researcher used Slovin's formula to derive the sample size which was 194.The return rate was 95% since a total of 194 questionnaires were administered and 185 questionnaires duly filled and successfully returned.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments and procedures

Both primary and secondary data collection methods were used. Data was collected using primary approach of administering structured questionnaires, key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and document analysis. The study also adopted secondary approach to complement the primary findings. A combination of survey findings and qualitative interviews to provide a holistic understanding of intelligence -sharing practices was crucial. This combination enhanced evidence-based analysis by integrating institutional perspectives with respondents' experiences. Questionnaire was the principal instrument for collecting data supported by interview schedules.

3.6 Data analysis

Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics by way of cross-tabulations, bar graphs and pie-charts. This study adopted both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Quantitative analysis allowed the researcher to methodically classify, summarize and exemplify observations using the SPSS version 22. Further, it enabled the researcher to comprehend and draw conclusions about the phenomenon under study. Qualitatively, the researcher cross-referenced the transcript of all interviews to ascertain accuracy and reliability. A qualitative analysis enabled the researcher to develop themes systematically and arrange data into significant clusters

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3.7 Ethical Consideration

Ethics Serves as the foundational principle that guides all research endeavors, from the initial conceptualization of project to the completion and dissemination of the final study (Breen, 2018). This study sought informed consent of the respondents before actual data collection was done. Further, relevant authorizations were sought from Directorate of Postgraduate Studies at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. This served as formal request for research permit and authorization from the National Commission of Science and Technology (NACOSTI). Given the sensitive nature of intelligence-sharing, data collection was carefully structured to comply with national security protocols. Therefore, the study avoided the disclosure of classified operational details and focused on analytical and policy insights. The researcher adhered to ethical principles such as voluntary participation of respondents, seeking informed consent and upholding confidentiality of the respondents before, during and after data collection phase.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

4.1.1 Bilateral agreements

Bilateral agreements have increasingly become essential means of fostering state-qua-state security relations. This study examined bilateral agreements as integral intelligence-sharing mechanism between Kenya and the UK in countering Al-Shabaab threats in Nairobi, Kenya. Bilateral agreements facilitate structured intelligence exchange programs, enhance operational coordination as well as buttressing joint counterterrorism efforts. Therefore,out of 185 respondents the study found that among Kenyan respondents 46.4% either agreed or strongly agreed that bilateral agreements are an effective intelligence sharing mechanism,11.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 3.8% remained neutral. Among the UK respondents,82.9% agreed/strongly agreed that bilateral agreements are key in intelligence sharing,11.4% disagreed/strongly disagreed while 5.7% remained neutral. The UK respondents expressed significantly greater confidence in bilateral agreements than Kenyan respondents. The higher level of agreement among UK respondents compared to Kenyan respondents reflects a stronger institutional belief in formalized intelligence-sharing mechanisms. This could be attributed to the UK's long-standing tradition of intelligence partnerships, robust security institutions, and historical engagements in counterterrorism operations. The results are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Bilateral Agreements

Response	Kenya Count	Kenya %	UK Count	UK %
Strongly Disagree	9	4.9%	5	7.1%
Disagree	13	7.0%	3	4.3%
Neutral	7	3.8%	4	5.7%
Agree	70	37.8%	49	70.0%
Strongly Agree	16	8.6%	9	12.9%

From the foregoing findings, it is evident that bilateral agreements are widely recognized as an important tool for intelligence sharing between Kenya and the UK. The stronger UK support is an indication of confidence in intelligence partnerships as well as well-established security institutions. On the other hand, Kenyan respondents demonstrated more cautious support due to operational as well as institutional challenges exacerbated by lack of advanced training and budgetary constraints. Though Kenya has been pivotal in the region, relying on multiple intelligence frameworks constrains its capability to certain extent. Besides inter-agency rivalry and bureaucratic inefficiencies undermine its full potential in countering Al-Shabaab threats hence the partnership with the UK. On the other hand, the UK's intelligence efforts are robustly underpinned by advanced intelligence infrastructure and institutional capacity. Besides, the UK enjoys long-standing experience in intelligence partnership as well as greater reliance on structure and institutionalized intelligence cooperation.

In support of the antecedent views, one of the Key informants stated:

> *"Kenya-UK bilateral agreements are crucial. For timely sharing of intelligence on Al-Shabaab cross-border operations, Kenya and the UK often jointly pursue intelligence sharing mechanisms tailored towards foiling Al-Shabaab attacks. This partnership also signifies the importance of proactive sustainable as well as structured intelligence sharing exercises"* (KII with UK High Commission official, 23rd.July 2025, Nairobi)

The foregoing assertions are in tandem with Gichangi (2020) who argues that bilateral agreements enhance trust and timely intelligence exchange. Furthermore, Mwaura (2024) opines that bilateral partnerships bolsters Kenya's counterterrorism capacity despite institutional challenges. He notes that Kenya's intelligence benefit greatly from structured and sustained partnerships with the UK. This perspective is in tandem with Kenyan respondents who appreciated the primacy of bilateral agreements. Furthermore, Imbiakha et al (2020) argues that with the increasing

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regional threats by Al-Shabaab a multidimensional nature of counterterrorism is critical. He contends that bilateral efforts are not enough a position reflecting the skepticism demonstrated by Kenya respondents on why bilateral agreements have not been effective. Therefore, the researcher argues that bilateral agreements constitute intelligence-sharing mechanisms between Kenya and the UK and their effectiveness depends on robust institutional infrastructure, operational capacity as well as effective implementation.

4.1.2 Joint Task Forces as an Intelligence -sharing Mechanism

Joint task forces have been a common practice in the contemporary intelligence sharing exercises. States have increasingly intensified the establishment of joint task forces as necessary pathways for addressing emerging security threats. The study examined joint task forces as key intelligence -sharing mechanisms between Kenya and the UK in countering Al-Shabaab threat in Nairobi, Kenya. Joint task forces offer operational coordination, resource sharing opportunities as well as trust-building between and among partner states. Therefore, out of the total respondents, the study found that among Kenyan respondents,83.5% agreed/strongly agreed that joint task forces are an effective intelligence sharing mechanism,12.2% disagreed/strongly disagreed and 4.3% remained neutral. Among the UK respondents,83.0% agreed/strongly agreed that joint task forces are essential, while 12.8% disagreed/strongly disagreed and 4.3% remained neutral. Collectively, these figures illustrate a strong convergence: both Kenyan and UK respondents overwhelmingly perceive joint task forces as indispensable, though small fractions remain doubtful. The results are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 1

Joint Task Forces

Response	Kenya Count	Kenya %	UK Count	UK %
Strongly Disagree	3	2.6%	5	7.1%
Disagree	11	9.6%	4	5.7%
Neutral	5	4.3%	3	4.3%
Agree	92	80.0%	55	78.6%
Strongly Agree	4	3.5%	3	4.3%

From the foregoing findings, it can be argued that joint task forces are widely recognized as indispensable for combating Al-Shabaab threats. These forces reinforce operational efficiency by creating real-time intelligence sharing and coordinated responses. The high level of convergence between Kenyan respondents and the UK respondents reflects the effectiveness of structured bilateral cooperation. However, the minority dissent raised concerns over national sovereignty and unequal intelligence and information sharing platforms. Besides, they argue that resource disparities between partner states undermines effective intelligence sharing. These findings are underpinned by Smart Power Theory that reinforces the importance of institutional trust and collaborative security in combating transnational terrorism.

The foregoing discussions resonate with Ayoola et al (2025) and Okome (2018) who argues that joint task forces promote operational synergy and real-time intelligence sharing. In the same vein, Imbiakha et al. (2020) and Ramos (2025) asserts that Joint task forces enables frontline states to leverage on advanced intelligence capabilities through strategic partnerships.

In support of the foregoing views, one of the Key Informants argued that:

> *Joint task forces are essential in honing skills and expertise of intelligence officers, military personnel as well as law enforcement agencies in countering Al-Shabaab threats. These forces facilitate early detection and disruption of cross-border terrorist networks before launching an attack. They also foster institutional trust key in dismantling extremist recruitment, financing networks and operational capabilities of Al-Shabaab* (KII ,23rd. July,2025 Nairobi).

4.1.3 Technology and Data sharing as an intelligence -sharing mechanism

By leveraging advanced technologies, Kenya and the UK governments can enhance intelligence, improve surveillance. Technology-driven intelligence enhances timely exchange of information, buttresses surveillance systems and promotes coordinated counterterrorism operations. Against this backdrop, this study examined technology and data sharing as key intelligence-sharing mechanism between Kenya and the UK in countering *Al-Shabaab*. The study found that out of the total respondents, Kenyan respondents who agreed/strongly agreed that technology and data sharing are effective intelligence-sharing mechanism were 93.1%,10.4% disagreed/strongly disagreed and 5.2% remained neutral. Among the UK respondents,81.7% agreed/strongly agreed that technology and data sharing are essential part of bilateral intelligence cooperation while 14.1% disagreed/strongly disagreed and 4.2% remained neutral. In sum, these results illustrate a convergence between the

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two states: both recognize technology-driven intelligence cooperation as vital, though small fractions remain cautious. The results are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 2

Technology and Data sharing

Response	Kenya Count	Kenya %	UK Count	UK %
Strongly Disagree	5	4.3%	4	5.6%
Disagree	7	6.1%	6	8.5%
Neutral	6	5.2%	3	4.2%
Agree	89	77.4%	51	71.8%
Strongly Agree	18	15.7%	7	9.9%

From the antecedent findings, it can be said that technology and data sharing are considered as critical enablers of intelligence cooperation between Kenya and the UK.It is important to note that digital intelligence platforms accelerates timely sharing of information to combat Al-Shabaab threats. The high-level agreements among the respondents indicate that there is a growing reliance on digital intelligence in combating transnational terrorism. Respondents who agreed cited enhanced surveillance of terrorist activities as one on the reason for data sharing as well early detection and disruption of terrorist networks. Those of the contrary opinion reasoned that, there exist technological disparities as well as unequal access to advanced intelligence technologies.

In support of the foregoing discussions, one of the key respondents argued that:

> *Technology through secure digital platforms facilitate real-time sharing of intelligence on cross-border movements and encrypted communications. Today's technology is helpful because it disrupts Al-Shabaab's operations before attacks. Both countries can intensify collaborative investments ventures on new technologies such as AI that have become game changes in war against terrorism* (KII Kenyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23rd.July 2025, Nairobi).

Modern technology has changed the security architecture. States are increasingly investing databases to fortify their security systems (Dawson, 2015). In today's era, terrorism has evolved as groups use the internet to connect with an audience (Minko, 2024). Online platforms offer a ground for these groups to share their beliefs, attract members and raise funds (Fayi, 2018). For instance, *Al- Shabaab* has leveraged social media sites like Twitter and Telegram to spread their message drawing supporters and operatives from outside the Horn of Africa region. This shift towards tactics highlights the need for strategies, beyond traditional law enforcement or military actions.

Moreover, the socio-political environment of the Horn of Africa complicates terrorism efforts. The region's political instability, economic challenges, and social issues create a ground for extremist ideologies to flourish. Local grievances often align with jihadist narratives making groups like Al Shabaab more resilient and attractive to marginalized populations. The interconnected nature of global factors calls for an approach to counterterrorism where AI can make a significant impact (Minko, 2024).

4.1.4 Training and capacity Building programs

Trainings and capacity building programs are avenues through which security and intelligence personnel hone already acquired skills and expertise. They are also avenues for enhancing more capabilities to identify threat and respond to threats of any kind. This study examined whether training and capacity building programs are intelligence-sharing mechanism. Out of the total respondents, 80.0% Kenyan respondents agree/strongly agreed that training and capacity building are important intelligence-sharing mechnisms,13.9% disagreed/strongly disagreed while 5.2% remained neutral. On the other hand, among UK respondents, 78.6% agreed/strongly agreed that agreed that training and capacity building are important intelligence-sharing mechanisms,11.5% disagreed/strongly disagreed and 10.0% remained neutral.

The foregoing responses indicate that while the UK largely supports capacity building, a slightly higher proportion of respondents expressed neutrality or dissent compared to Kenya. This reflects differing institutional perspectives, whereas UK respondents see capacity building as beneficial but secondary to more advanced mechanisms like technology-driven intelligence sharing, Kenyan respondents argued that trainings should be intensified to reach optimal level of responding to the threats posed by Al-Shabaab. The results are illustrated in Table 4.

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Table 3

Training and Capacity building

Response Category	Kenya (n=115)	Percentage (%)	UK (n=70)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	4	3.5%	2	2.9%
Disagree	12	10.4%	6	8.6%
Neutral	6	5.2%	7	10.0%
Agree	90	78.3%	49	70.0%
Strongly Agree	2	1.7%	6	8.6%
Total	**115**	**100%**	**70**	**100%**

From the foregoing findings, aligning with Kardashevskyi Yurii (2023) who opined that training and capacity building are considered essential for effective intelligence cooperation. These findings also align with Lusiola (2021) that enhanced training intelligence analysis is improved, operational readiness is bolstered and there are well coordinated responses to avert and response to Al-Shabaab threats. The collaborative initiatives between Kenya and the UK, therefore presents an opportunity for both partners to complement training with advanced technological intelligence mechanisms.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that intelligence sharing is an important component in countering Al-Shabaab threats. The study findings demonstrate that bilateral agreements between Kenya and the UK provide both institutional and legal foundations for structured intelligence sharing as well as sustained counter-terrorism cooperation. Further the study establishes that joint task forces constitute significant mechanism for enhancing intelligence sharing. Additionally, the study underscores that technology and data sharing are integral part of intelligence cooperation between Kenya and the UK. However, the existence of formal agreements, task forces, technology and training do not automatically translate to effective intelligence sharing. Overall, the study concludes that effectiveness of intelligence sharing mechanisms does not depend on any single mechanism but by the interaction of formal agreements, joint operational structure, technological capabilities and human capacity.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends that there is need for both Kenyan government and the government of the UK to strengthen the implementation of existing bilateral intelligence and security agreements. Besides, both governments should address issues of sovereignty and unequal access to intelligence capabilities. Further, both governments should reinforce joint task forces involved in countering Al-Shabaab threats by enhancing joint operational planning and coordinated responses. The study also recommends that both Kenya and the UK should invest in secure and interoperable intelligence technologies that secure digital communication platforms and surveillance capabilities. In this regard, interoperable structures should take into account the differences in institutional capacity and technological infrastructure. Overall, the study recommends need for continuous evaluation of intelligence-sharing mechanisms to determine whether they remain responsive to the changing nature of Al-Shabaab threats.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they do not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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