

## Challenges and Lessons Learned from Counter Terrorism Strategies in Kenya

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### ABSTRACT

*The changing nature of terrorism activities both in the developed and developing countries makes it imperative to fully tackle this problem. Fears of advancement in weapons by terrorists to chemical, biological and nuclear weapons continue to be on the rise. As such, despite formulation of numerous strategies, the states and regions remain vulnerable to future terrorist attacks. The objective of this study to explore the challenges encountered in counter terrorism strategies employed in Kenya. The study employed a desktop review and thematic analysis to provide a multi-dimensional exploration of the challenges confronting Kenya's efforts to counter terrorism. This approach not only contextualized the current state of counter-terrorism within the nation but also contributed to a more holistic comprehension of the intricate dynamics involved. The study revealed that the respondents encounter challenges in the fight against terrorism in Kenya. The study also found that the most faced challenge was inadequate training and inadequate funding in the security organizations. These tend to act as a limit barrier in not only acquiring but also utilizing modern terrorism equipment. However, unclear definition of law was the least experienced challenge showing that there were no legal barriers in the implementation of the counter terrorism strategies. The study recommends that the security agents should put measures to ensure increased public participation in countering terrorism. Additionally, the study recommends audit and scrutiny of the security agencies so as to ensure that they are well capable and trained for their respective positions.*

**Keywords:** Challenges, Counter-terrorism strategies, Terrorism

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Addressing the evolving landscape of terrorism remains a critical imperative for both developed and developing nations. The persistent fear of terrorists acquiring advanced weaponry, including chemical, biological, and nuclear arms, underscores the urgency of effective counter-terrorism efforts. However, despite the formulation of numerous strategies, states and regions remain vulnerable to future attacks (Hafez, 2007), highlighting the substantial barriers in the path of comprehensive counter-terrorism.

Globally, the pursuit of effective counter-terrorism is fraught with a series of intricate challenges. Each of these hurdles presents its own complexities, casting a shadow over the nation's security efforts. Kiggundu (1991) asserts that one recurring challenge is the allocation of adequate financial resources. The demands of evolving threats often outpace the resources required to equip security forces, enhance intelligence capabilities, and sustain counter-terrorism operations.

The intricate task of counter-terrorism within the society is further compounded by the presence of sympathizers and collaborators. Balancing the identification and neutralization of these internal elements with the preservation of civil liberties requires a nuanced approach. This complexity extends to differentiating between those who hold extremist views and those with differing opinions, necessitating meticulous investigation to avoid alienating segments of the population and driving radicalization. Thus, effective strategies must emphasize community engagement, education, and open dialogue to address the roots of extremism (Holmes, 2007).

Efforts to enact comprehensive anti-terrorism legislation encounter challenges in achieving consensus among diverse stakeholders. The tension between robust legislation and civil liberties has prolonged deliberations, exacerbated by international pressures and the need to respect national sovereignty. Achieving equilibrium between empowering law enforcement and safeguarding against potential abuse remains pivotal in these discussions. Ensuring transparent discourse involving governmental bodies, legal experts, civil society representatives, and human rights advocates is crucial in formulating legislation that combats terrorism effectively without compromising freedoms (Kagwanja, 2006).

The balancing act between counter-terrorism operations and civil rights has at times led to inadvertent discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and religion. This challenge underscores the necessity of cultivating a highly skilled and adaptable counter-terrorism force. However, deficits in training facilities, experienced instructors, and current curricula pose hindrances in developing the requisite skills for efficient response (Pampinella, 2014).

Public support for counter-terrorism strategies, often entailing increased security measures and surveillance, requires transparent communication about objectives and methods. Overcoming this challenge to maintain a collaborative partnership with the public is paramount. Additionally, the rising concern of youth radicalization underscores the influence of extremist groups exploiting vulnerabilities among young people. Rapid technological advancements, economic disparities, limited opportunities, and ideological manipulation contribute to the escalating challenge of radicalization among the youth (Holmes, 2007).

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The outcomes of terrorism in Kenya and globally has continuously been a threat to peace and prosperity (Masese, 2007). The problem has persisted in the global picture and now it has joined the technological way in which terrorism is being conducted. As an outcome, governments have come up with a way in dealing with the terrors. For example, a body that deals with terrorism has been brought up, the economic conditions have been improved, security details have been enhanced, and there has been an increase in the diplomatic involvement of the Kenyan government. However, apart from the measures being implemented, there is still a real risk of terrorism in the country.

According to Le Sage (2014), this is due to the state of the Kenyan economy, the cleavages in some parts of the country and the county's location geographically. This create a challenge to the government and its need to come up with new ways of dealing with terrorism like direct engagement with diplomats, involving private and public sectors, the reactiveness in counter-terrorisms matters and security forces enhancements (Masese, 2007).

Munyao (2006) did an extermination on the terrorism phenomenon and its development throughout time i.e. 1980-2005 and the measures of counter-terrorism globally, nationally and locally. In his study, there were conclusions that Kenya has been above average in war against terrorism even though there has not been enough emphasis on the anti-terror laws. The main challenges on curbing terrorism has been, corruption, lack of anti-terrorism laws and political instabilities among parties, and for the war to be won, the States' national interests, independence, and sovereignty must be surmounted before the war.

The evolution of modern terrorism has brought forth new challenges, characterized by the ruthless and extensive violence employed by terrorist organizations on a global scale. This shift has been attributed to advancements in technology, weaponry, communication systems, and transportation methods. The emergence of networked organizations has further blurred the lines between traditional hierarchical structures and decentralized operations, necessitating a deeper understanding of these novel modes of operation (Abubakar et al., 2019). The legal and ethical implications of counter-terrorism measures have sparked debates, particularly when it comes to the balance between safeguarding national security and upholding human rights.

Challenging the lawfulness of detention has become a crucial litmus test for evaluating the extent to which counter-terrorism measures respect individuals' rights within the larger framework of global security (UNODC, 2009). The challenge of balancing security imperatives with human rights concerns has been a central theme in Kenya's counter-terrorism discourse. The tension between detaining terrorism suspects and upholding due process rights has prompted legal and ethical discussions. Scholars have underscored the importance of ensuring that counter-terrorism measures adhere to international human rights standards, emphasizing the necessity of legal oversight and procedural safeguards (Gross & Ní Aoláin, 2006).

## III. METHODOLOGY

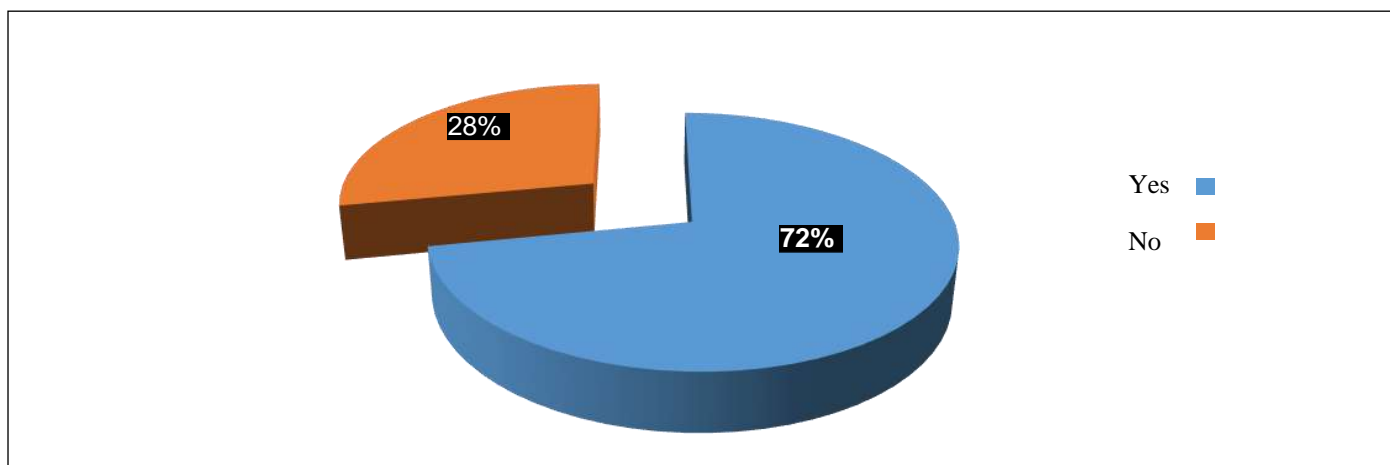
This study employed a desktop review of literature to understand the challenges in countering terrorism in Kenya. The utilization of a desktop literature review offered a foundational understanding of the challenges inherent in countering terrorism in Kenya. Through this method, the study surveyed and synthesized existing scholarly articles, reports, policy documents, and relevant literature. This comprehensive review laid the groundwork for identifying key concepts, historical contexts, and prevailing trends that have shaped the counter-terrorism landscape in the country. Thematic analysis was then employed to systematically dissect the reviewed documents, allowing for the identification of recurring themes, critical insights, and underlying patterns. This combined approach facilitated the

integration of historical perspectives, expert analyses, and empirical evidence from the reviewed literature with the primary data collected through other methods.

#### IV. FINDINGS

##### 4.1 Challenges in Curbing Terrorism

The respondents were inquired to point out whether they encounter challenges in the fight against terrorism in Kenya. The findings are shown in the figure 1 below.



**Figure 1**  
*Encountering of Challenges in Fight against Terrorism*

From the opinion most (72%) of the respondents showed that they encounter challenges in the fight against terrorism in Kenya while 28% were of the contrary opinion. This depicts that the respondents encounter challenges in the fight against terrorism in Kenya.

##### 4.2 Extent of Agreement on Challenges Encountered in Curbing Terrorism

The researcher inquired respondents to point out their extent of conformity on challenges encountered in curbing terrorism. The research findings were placed on a five likert scale 1-5 where 1=Very little extent, 2=little extent, 3=Moderate extent, 4=Great extent, and 5=Very great extent. The findings are as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Extent of Agreement on Challenges Encountered in Curbing Terrorism*

Challenges	Mean	Std. Dev.
Insider threat	3.65	0.6218
Inadequate funding	4.28	0.6432
Inadequate training	4.12	0.6239
Shortage of law enforcement officers	3.77	0.6832
Unclear definition of law	3.50	0.6001

The results as shown by Table 4.4 indicate that the most faced challenge was inadequate training and inadequate funding in the security organizations. These tend to act as a limit barrier in not only acquiring but also utilizing modern terrorism equipment. However, unclear definition of law was the least experienced challenge showing that there were no legal barriers in the implementation of the counter terrorism strategies. In a similar way, Opon et al. (2015) on study on the immigration border control discovered that the human resource is amongst the main challenges facing counter terrorism in Kenya. While a study by Oino and Sorre (2014) further added that lack of adequate funding and lack of well-coordinated efforts was the greatest hindrance in compacting terrorist acts in the country.

### **4.3 Challenges that Limit the Implementation of Counter Terrorism Strategies in Kenya**

From the secondary data analysis, several challenges that impede the effective implementation of counter-terrorism strategies in Kenya were identified. These challenges encompass various dimensions of the counter-terrorism efforts, reflecting the intricate nature of addressing security threats in the region. The key challenges include:

#### **4.3.1 Inadequacy of Funds**

According to Kiggundu (1991) availability of adequate funds and resources is very crucial for the development of any particular firm. Particularly, those firms that are well funded experience minimal difficulties in adopting and implementing strategies (Hafez, 2007). They are also able to fully expand their operations and accomplish their set objectives. Therefore, firms having low capital level struggle to survive and are usually at a high risk of being insolvent and collapsing. In this regard, the main challenge facing the implementation of the counter terrorism strategies is due to inadequate funds. Though the Government of Kenya was found to allocate sufficient money through the annual budget in ensuring security is well maintained, the strategies still remain ill funded (Kiggundu, 1991).

Davis (2010) argues that the main cause of this could be due to the mismanagement of funds in the police agencies themselves. The managers and those in charge of these strategies tend to use a larger portion of their funds to satisfy their self-interests. The organizations are therefore not able purchase the required resources and deploy additional personnel. This limits the ability to purchase modernized equipment and gadgets to curb the terrorist activities. Hence, the police welfare is relatively low which refers to their general conditions, not only in the work place but also their personal life.

#### **4.3.2 Dealing with the Enemy Within**

Kenya is faced with the challenge of dealing with the enemy within their territories. The enemy within has executed a number of terror attacks which have gone undetected as the Kenyan defense forces tries their best to fight terrorist form within the borders and outside the country. It has been reported that the Alshabab is recruiting young Kenyans to join their ranks and later execute terrorist activities as they are well aware of how Kenya security system is. The youths who have been recruited by the terror group of the Alshabaab have come from the Somali populations as well as the non-Somali populations (Holmes, 2007).

#### **4.3.3 Discrimination on the Basis of Race, Ethnicity and Religion in the Operations**

The counter-terrorism measures have been biased towards a certain ethnic group living in certain areas of the country. This has presented a lot of challenges as there has been direct opposition towards such strategies. The counterterrorism activities in Kenya have been concentrated in the upper parts of the country and towards the Somali border, and also on the coastal strip which is inhabited by the Muslim Arab Swahili speaking communities (Holmes, 2007). This has been met with a lot of resistance as the communities have seen it as discrimination towards them. There has been external arbitrary arrest of people who have been claimed to be involved in terrorist activities. There has been decrying in the selective application of law in matters to do with terrorism. In addition, there has been cold silence on which law should be applied in dealing with issue to do with terrorism (Jackson, 2005). As a result, the counterterrorism measures have not been effective in dealing with terrorism in particular areas of the country.

#### **4.3.4 Insufficient Training**

Assessment of most security personnel in crime prevention and control reveals that the lapses in adequately responding to crimes results mostly due to the police not being adequately remunerated and ill equipped for their delegated responsibilities. They are not fully aware that in the recent volatile environment, the terrorists are more advanced using modernized equipment and their plans are intelligently planned.

Davenport (2005), argues that these problems may arise due to the policy makers catering for the police welfare such as through training programs. The trainings are thus minimal focusing mostly on riot drills and not mostly on paramilitary. Researchers have also confirmed the presence of low performance among the police agents. Also, the security agents have not been able to embrace use of modern technology in its operations. This is attributed to the fact that they are reluctant to change from the old manual ways. There is therefore low service delivery due to the slow pace in modernization of infrastructure and the failure to amend police regulations so as to allow for proper modernization of police operations.

#### **4.3.5 Lack of Public Support**

Also, it was established that lack of full cooperation from the community members is an issue. The communities mainly perceive the task of countering terrorism to be purely the work of the officers. Therefore, they make minimal efforts to be vigilant especially in relation to terrorism. This is despite the introduction of the “Nyumba Kumi” initiative which aims at promoting community members participation. Most of those appointed as the ambassadors are not conversant with their roles and do lack incentives for motivation Kagwanja (2006). The members of the public are also poorly trained on their role in policing as they have not fully appreciated their role in cooperating with the police so as to ensure that security prevails. Therefore, they do not cooperate with the security in providing vital information which will be helpful in combating terrorism in the region.

#### **4.3.6 Increased Youth Radicalization**

Another challenge that was found to deter effectiveness of the counter terrorism strategies in Kenya is increased youth radicalization. Radicalization acts to increase the number of terrorists operating in the region. Hence, the radicalization aims to exploit the existing fissures and fault lines including relative deprivation, high unemployment, lack of education, political marginalization (Kagwanja, 2006). After radicalization, the youth are taken to Somalia where they are equipped with the expertise, skill and trained to undertake terror activities. Hence, they become lethal and potentially harmful to citizens. They are recruited to perform terrorism thus making it difficult to completely eradicate terrorism.

#### **4.3.7 Lack of Modern Technology**

Krause & Otenyo (2005) postulates that curbing terrorism activities has been hardened greatly by the modernization of technology. Particularly, technology has been found to ease how the terrorists undertake their transactions such as media propaganda, money transfer, and communication and overall terrorist operations activities and attributed to the fact that Nairobi has significantly made strides in the technological advancement it makes it highly prone to the terrorist attacks. Additionally, the terrorists are able to familiarize themselves with the available counter strategies, and how to evade them. The non-availability of modern and sufficient equipment in the counter terrorism sectors tends to handicap it in terms of its law enforcement role. The inadequacy of facilities besides limiting the efficiency of the police also endangers life in case of occurrence of terror. This shows that despite their being resistance among some individuals, it is essential to modernize the activities at the anti-terrorism sectors.

### **V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Conclusions**

These findings demonstrate that Kenya has implemented a multifaceted approach to counterterrorism, encompassing military operations, regional cooperation, legislative measures, diplomatic solutions, and civil society involvement. While significant progress has been made, challenges remain, including resource limitations and the complex nature of counterterrorism efforts. Kenya's determination to address these challenges underscores its commitment to ensuring national and regional security. The study concluded that to prevent conflicts and by extension terrorism then priority must be given in addressing underlying root causes of conflicts such as poverty, unemployment, human rights violation, injustice, corruption, marginalization and impunity. The study also concluded that inadequate training and inadequate funding in the security organizations derails the strategies of curbing terrorism in Kenya. These tend to act as a limit barrier in not only acquiring but also utilizing modern terrorism equipment

#### **5.2 Recommendations**

The study recommendations highlight two critical areas for enhancing counter-terrorism efforts in Kenya. These recommendations emphasize the pivotal roles of public participation and security agency effectiveness in countering terrorism in Kenya. One crucial recommendation stemming from the study is the imperative to bolster public participation as a cornerstone of effective counter-terrorism strategies in Kenya. It is recommended that security agencies actively engage with the public through awareness campaigns, community forums, and educational initiatives. By fostering a culture of vigilance and active citizenship, individuals are empowered to identify and report suspicious activities promptly. This collaboration not only enhances the breadth of information available to security forces but also establishes a sense of shared responsibility in safeguarding the nation against terrorist threats. Furthermore, community engagement can provide invaluable insights into the specific challenges and vulnerabilities

faced by different regions, enabling tailored and more effective counter-terrorism efforts.

The study underscores the necessity for rigorous audits and scrutiny of security agencies to ensure their optimal readiness and capability in countering terrorism. A key recommendation is the establishment of regular and comprehensive assessments of the training, equipment, and operational effectiveness of security forces. These audits should be conducted by independent bodies to ensure impartiality and transparency. Identified gaps in training, resources, or coordination should be swiftly addressed through targeted capacity-building programs and resource allocation. Such proactive measures will not only enhance the preparedness of security agencies but also foster public confidence in their ability to respond effectively to threats.

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