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

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**Abstract.** The porous border of Kenya/ Somalia has always been problematic to the Kenyan government, ever since the Somali government's fall in 1991. This study was based along the Kenya- Somalia boundary in Mandera County. The study examined border security challenges between Kenya- Somalia from 1991-to 2017. One specific objective guided it: to discuss challenges to border security strategies along with Kenya- Somalia border. The study was guided by descriptive survey research design and experimental research designs. This research used several sampling strategies: convenience, systematic, snowball, random sampling, and purposive techniques. The researcher selected a sample size of 398 that comprised heads of families.

Further, 85 critical informants of private and public responders were chosen from the two case studies. Primary information was gathered using FGDs, survey tools such as questionnaires and observations and interviews. On the other hand, secondary data was retrieved through relevant articles and publication content analysis. Descriptive and inferential statistics proved vital in analyzing preliminary information, while content analysis was utilized when analyzing qualitative data. Tables and figures present the data analyzed. The study established that 86 % of the respondents stated that regional politics, power politics and geopolitical conflicts were significant impediments to border management strategies. It was concluded that geopolitical disputes were the main challenge encountered in border management strategies. The study recommends that Kenya partner with like-minded stronger countries in Africa's horn, affected by the Somali problem like Ethiopia, and develop a common approach to learning from them on dealing with the border issue.

**Keywords:** Border; Border Security Management; State Security; Terrorism; Structural Realism; Border Security Theory; Securitization.

## INTRODUCTION

The current body of literature on refugees is predominately concerned with the negative impact of refugees. According to [1, 2], refugees being hosted at the Daadab refugee camp, closer to the Kenya-Somalia border, have heightened the tension levels within the surrounding Daadab refugee camp. Refugees are creating suspense and aggression among the host communities. As a result, high levels of violence are a crucial feature within the refugee camp [2]. Furthermore, the above-cited studies have shown that armed robbery is on the rise and an accusing finger points to the refugee situation around the Daadab refu-

gee camp. This violence is mainly directed at the refugees, aid workers and agencies working around Dadaab and travelling vehicles that ply the Mandera route. Armed robbers steal from the travellers, coupled with reported sexual violence directed towards women and girls within the refugee camps. Cases of rape are primarily in the deserted areas within the centre. Therefore, violence within and without the Dadaab refugee camp is a crucial security concern that should be addressed [3].

However, contrary to the findings above, only one quantitative study by [4] In Uganda advocated that not all refugee-host relationships are con-

flictual. He observes the positive effects of hosting refugees, as both economic and educational. Other scholars have demonstrated the economic benefits of hosting refugees to the host communities. According to [5], hosting refugees contributes to raising the host community's economic levels through securing employment opportunities for the host communities. Author [5] furthermore points out that there is an outflow of food and other goods from refugee camps and humanitarian aid organizations to members of the host community. Established trade networks develop the host community more; There are clear channels of gift exchange, friendships, and intermarriage between the host communities and the refugees.

Though several scholars have predominately presented and documented the negative impacts of refugee camps on local host communities, there seems to be a contradiction in the reviewed literature. The researcher observes that beneficial relations are bound to emerge mainly from economic opportunities associated with refugees.

As a result of the current Government policy directive on refugee refoulment, more specifically about Somali refugees, there is a likely rise in the range of benefits that refugees provide to host communities, thus the need to examine this gap critically. The researcher observes that studies conducted on refugees are limited in an inability to understand the role refugees play in host communities. Therefore, this study attempts to narrow these gaps by examining whether refugees challenge border security strategies along the Kenya- Somalia border. The researcher observes that as the number of refugees continues to rise, while at the same time resentment toward refugees is on a downward decline, there emerge substantial benefits associated with hosting refugees. Refugees' contributions are more deliberately cultivated and strategically enhanced. The negative attitudes associated with hosting refugees are beginning to change; therefore, such research may inform policy initiatives relating to refugee-host integration.

Numerous scholars on the invasion of Somalia by KDF in October 2011 to confront Al-Shabab observe that it was the most significant security gamble undertaken by the Kenya government since independence. The operation known as "Operation Linda Nchi" proceeded with inadequate and inefficient political, diplomatic, and military preparation from the Kenyan context.

Kenya failed to consider its ability to be bogged down, which was extremely high. Other security agencies failed to consider the possibilities of Al-Shabab retaliatory attacks, which were real and extremely dangerous [6].

The assumption that the intervention would be swift was fictitious. After a few cases of cross-border kidnappings, the invasion was approved quickly, without considering the full effects of the attack on Somalia. The perception of the military strategists was that it would be a quick invasion, which would yield immediate results; however, challenges regarding the unfamiliar terrain emerged no sooner had the attack been launched. Moreover, the cost and timing of the launch were poor; the poor road conditions coupled with flooding impeded the mobility of the KDF[ 7].

However, other studies on the same by [8, 9] have pointed out positive contributions from the invasion of Somalia. According to the above-cited scholars, the attack paved the way for oil exploration along the coastal waters of Somalia. Oil is viewed as an emerging strategic resource within the East African region. Further, the area under investigation lies within Somalia waters; the invasion was, therefore, a strategy to secure such sites to facilitate Kenya's smooth and uninterrupted exploration. Furthermore, politically the attack was linked to the upcoming general election in Kenya. It was viewed as a rallying call for support for the government and politicians who desired to defend its citizens. Regionally, it expressed Kenya's ability to communicate its military capability and exert its position in handling a critical regional security threat issue.

Further, the above-cited scholars state that; Somalia had descended into a terrorist haven, in which terror suspects operated with ease both regionally and internationally. Kenya had, in numerous instances, suffered from terror-related incidences. Therefore, the invasion was a strategy to curtail terrorism and its network in the country.

There is a need to understand more about the contribution of the KDF invasion. The rationale for their activities and whether this invasion is viewed positively or negatively regarding its impact on border security strategies. The various findings from the literature reviewed pointed out grey areas that need to be further researched. The researcher observes that the views cited by the various scholars above have not thoroughly

examined the array of challenges that are perceived to exist along with Kenya- Somalia, thus necessitating more study.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

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

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

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Respondents were asked to state whether refugees were a source of insecurity in the region. Findings show response rates of 350(87%) who observed that refugees were a source of insecurity, while 48 (13%) observed that refugees are not a source of insecurity. The 87 per cent response rate can be attributed to the influx of hundreds and thousands of Somali refugees into northern Kenya and Nairobi in the early 1990, which exacerbated animosity between the Reer and Kenyan Somali, even though many shared the same clan and sub identity. For Kenyan Somalis, the Reer Somali presence in Kenya could be attributed to the high and unprecedented levels of crime and insecurity in Mandera. They created a significant demand for the available non-governmental organizations to provide for their social and economic requirements. Consequently, the Somali refugees were a reason for the whole Somali community in Kenya to be branded as sources of insecurity in the region.

Furthermore, recent reports have linked refugees to the increasing number of terrorist activities in Kenya. From the interview response, one official noted as follows:

*The centre offers sanctuary to terrorists to plan and launch attacks within Kenya. The presence of refugee camps in the country is one breeding ground for terrorism and radicalization and terrorist points for terror elements from Somalia to Kenya (Interview with NGO female officer in Mandera, 9th September 2018). One of Kenya's most significant terrorist attacks occurred due to terrorists hiding in the camp and scheduling their evil deeds, i.e. the Westgate attack.*

While Kenya hopes to have a stable neighbour, Kenya is alive to the current refugee crisis that emanates from Somalia. The fall of the Somalia government under Said Barre in 1991 led to Somalis' massive relocation from Jubba land in Somalia. So far, Kenya is among many states that have put in place laws, policy measures and a range of programs to raise the barriers to entry for migrants into their territories, tightening border controls and generally discouraging asylum entries Mwakasege [6]. While it may be argued that these measures prevail mainly in industrialized countries, the backlash has affected policies and practices on refugee protection across the globe, seriously undermining the quality of refugee protection. The presence of the Daadab refugee camp has drastically transformed Mandera's security situation. The centre hosted over 200,000 Somali refugees; this impacted to a great extent the local community in a significant way. Though the Daadab refugee camp has been integrated at local and international levels, it has always been associated with insecurity [7].

Refugee presence is a crucial source of insecurity along the Kenya- Somalia border. The refugee crisis in Kenya and Somalia impacts the two countries' security relations. As a host country, Kenya has become quite resistant to hosting refugees since there are no longer looked upon as short–term challenges but rather long-term security challenges that the host community is left to tackle. According to [4, 6], refugees' existence is a source of Tanzania's political, economic, and social challenges. Further, refugee camps have been viewed as fertile groups through rebel groups and insurgent groups' training grounds.

## Regional Politics

The study sought to determine whether regional politics affect border management programmes in the research. The majority of 365 (91%) indicated that regional and power politics affect border management programmes in the study area. In comparison, 39(9%) indicated that regional politics do not affect border management in the study area. It was interpreted to mean that a high percentage of the study area residents, 86% observed that regional politics affected border management, compared to 9% of the respondents who indicated that regional politics had no influence on border management in the study area.

More than 360 household head representatives observed that regional politics affected border management strategies in the study area. As narrated to the researcher by most residents, the current dispute over the maritime border between Kenya- Somalia over a rich resource triangle area in the Indian Ocean has impacted border security relations. The influence of economics and politics over the disputed oil-rich resource in the Indian Ocean has affected border strategies.

One respondent in Mandera town said:

*There has been some diplomatic tiff between Kenya-Somalia. Three Somali diplomats were barred from attending a cross-border conflict management conference in Nairobi over visa issues. Demonstrates a conflictual relationship between two neighbouring countries, worsening the border management relations (Interview with a businessman in Mandera town on 22nd August 2019).*

According to the findings from FGD, clannism, leadership, and local politics, especially between the two leading communities, the Anuran clan in Kenya and Garrre in Somalia, have negatively impacted border management programmes. Since both significant communities speak on behalf of most other small communities, both leading communities undertake the positions, dramatically affecting the management of border programmes. Most of the works undertaken by both communities have negatively impacted border policy programmes. This is despite the increase in terrorist attacks in Mandera.

One of the chiefs in Mandera town said:

*The Bula Hawa residents in Somalia have, for a long time, continued to pull down the border wall. Many residents state that the border wall inter-feres with family and trade. According to the residents, the barrier has divided families, clans and family members (Interview with a chief in Mandera town on 25th August 2019).*

Many of the chiefs and divisional officers in most of the divisions and locations where the study was conducted observed that some sections of the security wall had been pulled down, concrete posts removed, and heavy mesh and razor wire removed. The researcher was informed of cases where security officers on patrol along the Kenya- Somalia border were attacked. The above study's findings have presented a different view of regional politics' influence on border management strategies.

One of the chiefs in Mandera town said:

*We must shift the blame from Alshabaab and look within us critically; insecurity is mostly homegrown. Evidence gathered from security agencies, and actionable intelligence demonstrates and points to a more insidious agenda propagated by the local political class. Border insecurities tend to build up as we gear toward general elections. This was witnessed during the 2002, 2007, 2013 and 2017 general elections. An electoral process like voter registration and delimitation of boundaries by-elections is targeted to be exploited by politicians to further their political agenda. (Interview with a chief in Mandera town on 25th August 2019).*

According to the researcher, beneath the role played by terror suspects. There seems to be an active role played by politics. This form of politics is an informed desire for conquest and ethnic mobilization that propagates ethnic supremacy among the various border clans, clan chauvinism and the need for balkanization advanced by the furtherance of individual ego-centric interests. Border violence is entrenched through a culture of defiance of legitimate authority. This is viewed as some form of heroic practice. Political thuggery is, therefore, a practice that propagates criminal activities in the border region. The exploitation of the poor by the leaders, in which they are used as collateral in supremacy wars. Cases of engineered hooliganism have become the mode of operation in the county of Mandera. Providing a vacuum in which political leaders run away from accountability and integrity matters more in using constituency development funds, devolved funds, and the misuse of public resources entrusted to politicians. The researcher observes a need for creating an informed public

that would be able to smoke out politicians hiding behind wretched cultural rites to hide their leadership deficiencies and high incompetence levels. Incidences of vicious border conflicts are the border area point toward incitement by vital political actors that exploits border violence to propagate their political, economic and criminal interests.

Furthermore, the researcher demonstrates an unhealthy retrogressive symbiotic relation between the role of local politics and cross-border crime and insecurity. Therefore, terror elements are used as an excuse for the soaring mayhem. The political class ends up profiting through smuggling goods along the border while the masses pay the high price through loss of lives and livelihood in the region. Prominent political leaders are known to own most of the numerous business empires that straddle the border area. Therefore, the financial and material rewards such politicians reap from perpetuating border insecurity imply that it is not in their best interest to achieve sanity.

Political leaders have been accused of hiring mercenaries to propagate border insecurity. There are accusations that foreign militias are critical players in the local border violence. They are supported by diverting public resources from benefiting the local populace. The foreign militias' puzzle is: Who funds them with weapons, uniforms, and logistical support? Who orders them to act in the manner they do? Who coordinates their entry into and out of the porous borders? The local politicians have exploited the long porous border and facilitated the illegal access of renegades of the Somali National Army and Juba land forces.

One assistant county commissioner observed:

*We have confiscated some military fatigue that resembles the Somali National Army uniforms, relief food, and numerous military items from some key suspects. We believe these suspects will provide detailed information on who finances them. There is a rise in violence at the border area, which correlates with funds from the national treasury. Furthermore, proposed projects never take off or are typically overpriced. We were implying that funds meant for such projects are diverted. Our take is that militias are funded through this diversion of funds (Interview with assistant county commissioner in Mandera town on 25th August 2019).*

There seems to be a high level of nepotism being practised in most of the county offices. This leaves room for speculation that politicians are employing proxies planted in public offices to diversify funds in arming such groups. In addition, these militias are assumed to offer some politicians protection.

One security officer stated that:

*We have made numerous arrests of some criminal gangs in the county; however, the same politicians call and demand the release of these members of the criminal gangs—stating that such members are responsible for protecting their communities from attacks by neighbouring communities. Some government officers use their position to intimidate security officers with transfers to get things done. During periods of low cash flow from the politicians, community leaders collect protection fees on behalf of the politicians. We have evidence of families contributing Ksh 2,000 monthly as protection fees; we firmly believe this fund ends up in the hands of the local vigilante and militias in the area (Interview with the security officer in Mandera town on 25th August 2019).*

The researcher believes that calling for an inquiry into the guilt of the county's elected leaders is critical in establishing the connections concerning the violence commonly witnessed in the border regions. Those found to have a role in propagating violence need to be prosecuted.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study's main objective was to examine challenges to border security strategies along with Kenya- Somalia border. The study found out from the household head representatives that most respondents stated that regional politics, power politics and geopolitical conflicts were significant impediments to border management strategies; it was concluded that geopolitical disputes were the main challenge encountered in border management strategies.

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