

Kenya's National Security Resilience: Way Forward

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Abstract

This article examines the expanding role of Kenya in addressing emerging security threats in a complex and unpredictable environment, where state response to security threats is being challenged by a wide range of actors and the salience for national security resilience is being awakened. Contemporary security threats to Kenya originate from other states, non-state actors, and disasters. They include; cyber-attacks, misinformation, transnational crimes, terrorism, pandemics, and radicalization. These threats are increasingly pressuring national security institutions and negatively impacting society. National Security Resilience therefore becomes an essential element in ensuring that the state is capable of responding, recovering, and adapting to security tragedies and disasters. The article posits that the whole government approach to security resilience can be further strengthened by expanding the resilience of citizens and communities. It implores that national security resilience not only requires government efforts but also individual and constituent communities' inputs. Contemporary Kenyan society is vastly networked, interdependent, at risk, and more vulnerable to the effects of emerging security threats and events. This makes it vital to have citizens and communities as the cornerstone of national security resilience efforts. It recommends that security efforts should focus on strengthening individual and community resilience.

Keywords

National Security, Resilience, Emerging Threats, Community, Individuals.

Introduction

The ability of a state to detect, prevent, mitigate, respond, and recover from national security threats and events has continued to gain salience since the turn of the century. This concern has been attributed to the emergence and expansion of 'novel' security threats, risks, and attendant vulnerabilities associated with increased global connectivity, uncertainty, and interdependence (Fjäder, 2014). In 2004, a high-level security panel of the United Nations identified six security threats and challenges that would face the world in the following decades. They included: Interstate conflicts; terrorism, economic and social threats, transnational organized crime, intra-state conflicts, and Radiological, Nuclear chemical & biological weapons (United Nations, 2004). These threats have ensued and still pose significant challenges across the globe. Furthermore, new threats have emerged including pandemics, climate change, and cyber threats (Gupta, 2018).

Similarly, state competition, increased propensity to ignore international norms, and shifting global power balance, have multiplied the conditions of uncertainty and increased vulnerability across states complicating national security response. Consequently, the national security of contemporary states is expected to be proactive and adaptive. This has prompted a security discourse on making nations, communities, and citizens more security resilient in the 21st century (Joseph, 2018; Juntunen & Hyvönen, 2014).

In the same vein, Kenya has not been exempted from the attendant security challenges. It faces a myriad of security threats attributed to its location and proximity to highly volatile regions in Africa. This has ensured that its threat profile has remained dynamic and complex. Instability in the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes conflict, geostrategic threats from East African neighbors, and internal challenges are portending an upsurge of state and non-state-based threats (Nyadera et al., 2021). They include;

cyber security threats, transnational crimes, terrorism, and drug trafficking. Correspondingly climate change and COVID-19 pandemic have also negatively impacted the state.

These challenges call for a consideration of new approaches to national security to strengthen the whole government approach and encourage the development of domestic resilience. Likewise, it calls for the nation's improved understanding of how to respond to emerging security threats and risks. In particular, the significance of building broader partnerships with the public; communities, and individuals as a way to mitigate security risks and build security resilience. This paper argues that of community approach is essential to building national security resilience. Using open sources, it seeks to understand Kenya's national security resilience.

Following the introduction, the paper is organized as follows. First, the Research design and methodology used will be highlighted. Second, resilience will be introduced and key terms defined. Third, Kenya's security resilience will be brought into focus and the whole government approach analyzed. Fourth, the whole community approach will be introduced and analyzed. Finally, a conclusion and recommendations will be made.

Research Design and Methodology

The study relied on open-source material that included journals, books, public documents, blogs, newspaper articles, and the author's experience in the Kenyan security environment to probe and understand national security resilience. Purposive sampling was used to identify suitable documents for the study. Content analysis technique was utilized to identify data that addressed the study.

Resilience in the 21st Century

Resilience is the new buzzword that continues to gain prominence in security policies, at the national and international level (Pospisil & Gruber, 2016). This has been attributed to the increasing frequency of exposure to terror attacks, cyber threats,

disasters, and wars, which has put resilience discourse firmly on the national security agenda. Climate change impacts are spreading fast with natural disasters occurring frequently with greater intensity. Similarly, terror attacks are becoming easier to execute than in the past, while domestic security threats are becoming frequent. This in turn has increased the expectation from individuals and communities in preparing, learning, mitigating responding, recovering, and adapting to shocking security events. More so in the contemporary time where individual action may ameliorate or mitigate the impact of a security event such as a lone wolf attack. Individuals and communities need to be more resilient.

To date, two main disciplines have been responsible for the understanding of resilience; biophysical sciences related to the resilience of ecosystems and health/psychology linked to mental health. Underpinning ecosystems strand, resilience is concerned with the capacity of a system to constantly change and adapt in the face of threats. In this strand, the focus is on how systems persist in change and withstand shocks. On the other hand, from the psychological perspective, resilience is centered on the ability of individuals to recover from adversity. In this approach, the focus is encouraging recovery by limiting further damage and restoring the former state. The two strands have three things in common; they focus on recovery, change, and adaptation from adversity. Resilience is therefore centered on being able to self-organize, adapt, transform, and survive when faced with adversity (Humbert & Joseph, 2019).

Resilience may be simply considered to be the capacity of a state, its citizens, and communities to persist in the face of adversity. National security resilience therefore encompasses the ability of the state to prepare for, mitigate, respond, recover, and adapt to shocking security events. The 2011 World Trade Center attack in the United States and increasing incidences of terror-related attacks in various parts of the world are awakening the need to improve citizen and community preparedness for security catastrophes. Hence, in the contemporary discourse on security resilience, the focus has

shifted from state response to not only enabling individuals and communities to cope with adversity but also enabling them to adapt to the changing environment.

In the post-9/11 period, many countries especially in the West are realizing that government response alone is not enough, individuals and communities need to be security resilient. When crises, disasters, and security catastrophes occur, the public expects an immediate and swift response from the government. In reality, it takes time for the government to organize itself and respond, this results in amelioration of suffering for unprepared communities and individuals. And when it responds, priority is given to the most vulnerable people and those facing the greatest danger. On the contrary, well-prepared and resilient communities not only respond first but also mitigate security threats or events. For example, evidence from addressing gun violence challenges in American schools shows that community-based strategies play a substantial part in reducing homicide rates in schools (Pearce & Alleyne, 2023). Accordingly, each citizen and community must be prepared to respond and overcome security challenges.

It is in this context that several countries such as the USA, South Korea, Thailand, Philippines, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Australia, Maldives, and Canada have realized the importance of building national security resilience and explicitly included it in the national security strategy/ policy. Other states have either kept it secret or are yet to embrace the national security resilience concept. A concern especially in developing countries where security matters remain restricted to government officials. The public cannot support government security efforts if they are not empowered. It is against this context that the examination of Kenya's national security resilience becomes vital.

Kenya's Security Resilience

Kenya's location in East Africa places it at the core of regional security challenges associated with ongoing instability in the Horn of Africa. For the last two decades, it has experienced foreign-influenced terror attacks and was negatively impacted by ongoing internal problems in Somalia, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Sudan. In particular, frontier counties have come under attacks from the Al-Shabaab terror group from Somalia. Some of the major terror attacks in the last two decades include; the 2002 Paradise Hotel attack, the 2011 Dujis attack in Mandera, the 2013 Westgate Mall attack, the 2014 Mpeketoni attack, the Garisa University massacre in 2015, and the 2019 Dusit Hotel attack (Nyadera et al., 2021). Other multiple attacks have repeatedly occurred in various parts, with Lamu, Mandera, and Garissa counties being the most affected. This, therefore necessitates that existing security resilience mechanisms be strengthened to support national security efforts. Furthermore, with the growing security risks strengthening the role of communities becomes crucial in national security efforts.

To increase the effectiveness of the government in addressing national security challenges, and enhancing national security resilience, the government adopted the whole-of-government approach to national security. The whole-of-government approach is a public management concept that was first observed in Britain around 1997, which involves enhanced 'coordination and integration strategies' among government agencies to increase efficiency in service delivery (Christensen & Lægheid, 2007). Central to the concept is increased coordination within government and among stakeholders to eliminate competition and duplication of efforts, ensure efficiency in the utilization of resources, and create synergy in service delivery. Christensen and Laegreid further note that with rising concerns about the occurrence of disasters, crises, and terror threats in the world, many countries have embraced whole government measures.

Increased terror threats in Kenya, prompted the adoption of a multiagency framework among state security agencies to address emerging security challenges (Boit & Mutungi, 2023). In this framework, the government sought to streamline security agencies' response to threats, while at the same time enhancing government partnerships with stakeholders from the private sector (Kibusia, 2020). Key state organs involved include; the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU), Kenya Defense Forces (KDF), National Intelligence Service (NIS), National Police Service (NPS), Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) Kenya Coast Guard Service (KCGS), and the State Department of Interior (NGAO).

From the national level to the county level, security agencies have been operating under the multi-agency framework enhancing information sharing, coordinated interventions, threat evaluation, and efficient utilization of national resources to address national security threats. Furthermore, the collaboration has enabled capacity building amongst security institutions through joint training, hence promoting coordinated security response to threats, especially terror acts (Lusiola, 2021). This has enabled the nation, to thwart a significant number of security threats in the ensuing period. Accordingly, this has seen increased information sharing between security agencies and the public, as well as widening public support for security-related activities by the government. Confidence and trust within security institutions and communities have been built, promoting government efforts to tackle insecurity. However, while these gains are commendable, a gap exists in the desired capabilities of communities and individuals to effectively respond to security threats beyond the sharing of threat-related information with security agencies. In Europe and the United States of America, national security efforts emphasize the development of local-level citizens and community capabilities to survive in the face of adversity (Edwards, 2009). The focus here is complementing state efforts by utilizing the resources of the community and individuals. Safety and security are from bottom to top rather than top to bottom.

The whole of Community Approach to National Resilience

The whole Community strategy is a concept that involves government efforts to enable communities to make informed decisions and take the right actions during disasters and emergencies. The focus of the strategy is enhancing the resilience of the entire nation based on the combined efforts of the government, citizens, non-governmental organizations, industries, and communities (Joseph, 2018). These efforts are vital to recognizing security threats, stopping their occurrence, being able to recover from security events, defeating terrorist activities enhancing critical infrastructure protection, and improving transport and border security to maintain national resilience in the face of adversity.

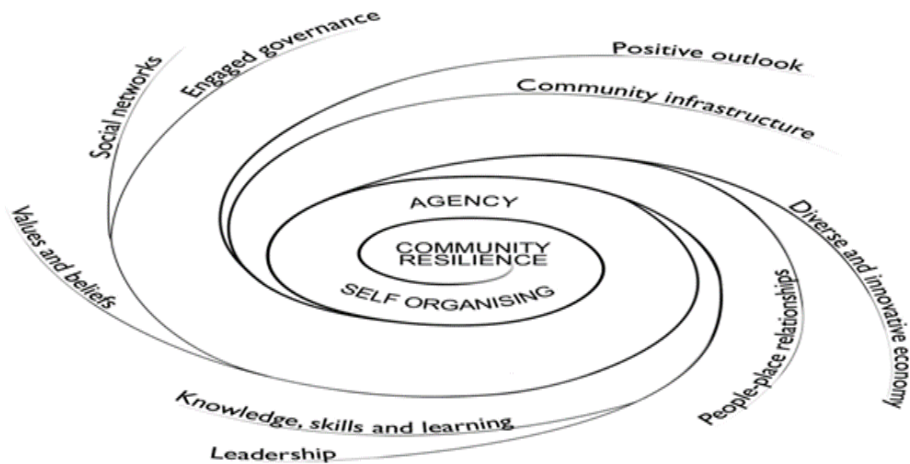
This shifts reliance on only the government to provide security resilience, by devolving it to all levels; from state to individuals and communities. The government shifts capabilities downwards by creating strategic partnerships, enhancing collective strength, and sharing efforts in the community. In this approach, the government shapes the desired direction of security efforts, while the community takes action to enhance the personal and collective capacity of its members to overcome adversity (Edwards, 2009). The government, citizens, and communities complement each other. The individuals and community possess critical assets and characteristics that include; local knowledge and resources, motivation, innovation, culture, beliefs, social networks, and values that can contribute to security efforts (See Figure 1). These can be harnessed for national resilience. Central to the approach is what the community can do with its resources in the face of adversity. It's not about creating new communities but communities managing events that affect them to increase resilience (Berkes & Ross, 2013).

In Kenya, the community-based policing approach to security; the Nyumba Kumi Initiative can form a suitable starting point for embracing the whole of community

approach to national security resilience. Nyumba Kumi initiative is a community-based policing approach adopted by the government of Kenya in the first decade of the 21st century that aimed to bring together the police, civil society, and local communities to reduce crime (Mwangang et al., 2020). Following the rise in terror attacks from Alshabaab, the approach has become vital in creating synergy between law enforcers and the people. Importantly it has enabled the public to assist the police address security challenges, particularly through the sharing of information. However, that can further be strengthened by embracing the whole of community approach.

Figure 1

Factors for Community Resilience



Source: F. Berkes and H. Ross 2013

Community resilience concepts apply best to place-based communities and less fully to communities where people make their living outside the geographic area. However, some communities of interest have resource ties and displaced communities may retain social bonds (Maida, 2013). Individuals and communities can transfer their energy to activities that ensure their survival. They know their geography, resources, challenges, and strengths more than the government and would be better placed to prepare and respond to issues such as terror attacks and surveillance. They can see the

unseen. Individual action at the local level can prevent catastrophes and influence the survival of the community and the state.

Conclusion

Securing the state and overcoming adverse security events remains an important feature of the contemporary time into the future. Collective efforts by citizens, communities, and government remain important due to the increasing connectivity and interdependence across societies. Individuals and communities are better placed in not only preventing the occurrence of security events but also recovering from them due to their unique place-based capabilities and strengths. The state should endeavor to leverage exploiting community-based strengths to advance national security efforts. It is recommended that security efforts at all levels recognize these unique capabilities and exploit them to further national security efforts.

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