

**Combating Terrorism in Kenya:**
Dialogue with determinants of adoption in the multi-agency approach to security

Joseph K. Kibusia & Justus K. Musya
https://orcid.org/0009-0001-8382-6742
Daystar University, Department of Peace and International Studies

**Abstract**
The adoption of a multi-agency approach in combating terrorism in Kenya has been praised as transformative. Despite this positive assessment, the motivation behind this adoption by security actors remain unclear. This article employs a descriptive cross-sectional research design to explore the determinants that led to the implementation of the multi-agency strategy in the fight against terrorism. Data were collected through questionnaires and interview guides, from a sample of 306 participants drawn from Kenya’s disciplined forces who are tasked with the national security. The findings reveal that the decision to adopt a multi-agency approach was significantly influenced by the need to leverage the unique capabilities of each security agency, the documented successes of similar approaches globally, and the necessity to synchronize operations among Kenya’s diverse security agencies. The research study concludes that the relative strengths of each security agency and the imperative for operational synergy were key factors driving the adoption of the multi-agency approach in Kenya’s counter-terrorism efforts.

**Key words:** Capability, Determinants, Multi-agency, Terrorism, Synergy, Synchronization

**Introduction**
The formation of security forces by states is rooted on the thinking that every state is responsible for its own security and survival in a dynamic international system. Global history is replete with cases of breaches of territorial integrity by both state and non-state actors. The biggest challenge comes in when state security agencies have to deal with non-state actors, especially terrorists, who engage in asymmetrical warfare and to whom the rules of war are alien (Sloan, 1998). The threat of terrorism undertaken by a faceless actor and its ever increasing spread and destruction of both human and material resources has caused states to rethink their security strategies, at the national, regional and global levels (Manyange, 2014; Gathogo, 2017). At the national level, states have established joint security teams to respond to the emerging security threats and especially terrorism at an age where home grown radicalization leading to terrorism has created regional security complexes (Buzan, 2003).

Joint security teams tasked with securing the homeland from internal and external threats, including terrorism have generated what this study refers to as the multi-agency approach to security. The concept of a multi-agency approach is used within this study to mean the working together of security policy makers and distinct security agencies, with different legal mandates, in an integrated manner that delivers success in securing national interests. At the core of this concept is collaboration among the different actors in terms of information sharing and operational alignment so as to enhance prevention and response to among other security breaches, acts of terrorism. The concept finds expression in Kenya’s Security
Laws (Amendment) Act 2014 as reported by Atta-Asamoah (2015), a piece of legislation that was enacted at a time the country had witnessed repeated acts of terrorism that sparked a national hue and cry on the capability of the security agencies to secure the country as senior security actors kept on passing the buck. This study argues that the devastating nature of the attacks at the time and the apathy among citizens as to the security agencies’ ability to protect them, caused the state to take action to remedy the situation and manage further damage on the legitimacy of the government of the day.

Theoretical Framework
In democracies across the globe, elected leaders at the level of president or prime minister are vested with the responsibility of commanding a state’s security forces so as to secure the citizens and their property. Realist thinkers such as Waltz (1988) and Morgenthau (1978) concur that a state, which is to be governed by a legitimate government, is the most important actor in matters relating to security in an international system characterized by self-interest and anarchy. The concept of anarchy that realists espouse implies insecurity, yet security is a core interest of all states as argued by Kissinger (1976).

The United Nations charter places the responsibility of national, regional and even global security on governments, hence the reason as to why governments enjoy monopoly on the use of force, provided such force is consistent with municipal and international law. To execute this security mandate, states establish different agencies with different mandates so as to meaningfully contribute in securing and defending the homeland from any acts of internal or external aggression (Waltz, 1988). This effectively implies that no state the world over can comfortably exists and feel safe without a standing defense system, to which the government of the day devotes sizeable budgets annually to ensure such capability is sustained in perpetuity. In Kenya, the core security agencies are the Kenya Defense Forces (KDF), the National Police Service (NPS) and the National Intelligence Service (NIS), each with a distinct mandate from the other. The budgets allocated to these agencies cements the realist argument on self help that only a state can assure itself of its safety and survival. Despite the realist thinkers rooting for disciplined forces in securing states, they do not explore the place of synergy among the security actors in a nation in the drive towards attaining the definitive interest – state security. It is because of this weakness that the paper considered the input of the systems theory in security planning and execution.

The systems theory as advanced by Banathy (2000) and Bertalanffy (1972) argues that society is made up of parts, each with a role to play in stabilizing the whole. It is this theory’s assertion that the whole can only function optimally as envisaged by its creators to the extent that there is harmony between the parts. Given that the threat of terrorism is a reality and that each of the security agencies in Kenya has a distinct mandate and unique capabilities, the coordination and synchronization of all the agencies activities’ within the multi-agency approach setting can contribute to the overall optimal functioning of the national security system since the strengths of each agency are leveraged.

Literature Review
Acts of terrorism present major challenges and crisis situations which if not properly coordinated can undermine state security and cause apathy among the citizens as to the state’s ability to protect them and secure their interests. This is despite the citizens understanding that terrorism is typically an irregular warfare. It is therefore imperative for agencies involved in securing a state to be centrally coordinated and their activities synchronized to achieve prompt and efficient action during crises. Various countries are determined to use varying multi-agency security approaches to fight terrorism. These approaches not only range from security apparatus using military strategies but also softer mechanisms which prioritize the human needs. Taking the global perspective, the united Nations member countries have adopted measures to combat terrorism based on the counter-terrorism strategy which was formulated in 2006 (Schmid, 2011). This focuses on promoting national, regional and international counter-terrorism efforts and programs. The strategy was later reviewed in 2014 to include the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and to address such issues.

The present day security challenges across the world demands for inter-agency collaboration, which has evidently grown over the years. Rietjens and Ruffa (2019) argue that achieving coherence during operations is among the objectives at the core of multi-agency operations aimed at resting security and peace in countries dogged with civil and military wars. Borrowing from the concept of ‘fit’ from organizational theory and drawing from the UN peacekeeping missions, these two authors avers that the growing complexity and multidimensional of war and violence across the world has made it difficult and
impossible for any given security agency to work solely and isolation and achieve success. The police cannot work alone and succeed in restoration of peace and security. The same can be said of other security agencies like military.

Multi-agency approach to security, which are effectively partnerships between law enforcement agencies, both public and private, as well as other relevant stakeholders, continues to receive much attention, thus appears to be on the rise. In recent years, multi-agency working has been the focus of many political agendas with regard to addressing national and international security issues. The unanimous overarching objectives of the multi-agency approach are to address complex and deeply rooted security problems which require complex, innovative and comprehensive solutions. Through the examination of the various variations of multi-agency arrangements, Sarma (2018) avers that there are key factors that must be taken into consideration when designing a multi-agency to address security issues. According to Rosenbaum (2002), the multi-agency approach to security is better suited to identify and accurately define the target security problems because of the multi-directional views and perspectives brought in by the different agencies, compared to operations carried out by individual security agencies.

Professional cultures of the different security agencies highly informs the adoption of multi-agency approach to security matters. Every security agency as well as other stakeholders possess some unique cultures and working style that defines their ways of operation. Agencies’ sense of professional culture is informed by their working practices, priorities, and terms of reference, which, in some instances, can be dramatically different between agencies (Kemshall & Maguire, 2001). The Intelligence Unit specializes in collection of critical information relevant for successful operation. The Anti-Terror Unit also has its own unique attributes. Other stakeholders like the judiciary also has unique expertise that they bring to the table. Bringing together a collection of all these different and unique and potentially very different attributes is essential in enhancing synergy among the different participating actors (Magara, 2018).

Decisions to take a multi-agency approach in addressing security issues is also informed by resource availability (Pratt, 2012). Fellows, Percy, Jones, Brook and Gates (2010) aver that multi-agency security operations is a necessity for attaining an adequate level of national security while maximizing the available resources in a collaborative effort. Individualized security operations tend to be expensive especially in instances where every arms of the security agencies is required to bring in their input. Take for instance the fight against terrorism and even drug trafficking. In such contexts the involvement of different security agencies is quite critical. In order to cover and even significantly reduce the general operating costs of establishing and sustaining the level of funding and resources required for successful operation, multi-agency arrangements which involve integration and formalization is necessary. However, in instances where there are efforts to create a distinct ‘brand’ and increased separation between the different units, these costs are likely to be higher. Additionally, increased permanence (long term stay), can also prove to be more resource intensive.

Developing a shared purpose, Atkinson, Jones and Lamont (2007) argue, rationalizes multi-agency arrangement to not only addressing security issues but also in successful operation of any organization. In multi-agency arrangements, this is essential in building a collective sense of shared purpose among the different agencies involve and connecting all individual involved in a mission to the mission and vision of the joint security team. Further, the need to meet the need offer comprehensive and effective actions is also an impetus for a multi-agency approach. The recognition and appreciation that the mission to be accomplished needed to be brought together in a coordinated and an integrated way because of coinciding goals and interests (Atkinson, Wilkin, Stott, Doherty & Kinder, 2002).

With regard to multi-agency approach in military operations, Hoffman (2010) advances the significance of forming fluid organizational arrangements among partners to enhance sharing intelligence and information across the board. In studying the adjustments and shifts that are taking place in the global security landscape that demand for expeditionary military operations, the author argues that the multi-agency approach enables different security actors to bring together the appropriate skill sets. In tackling coastal and marine borne insecurity for instance, the expeditionary capability allows able states to use strategic leverage across the land while at the same time allowing maritime powers the opportunity to exploit their mastery of the seas to their advantage. These perspectives are corroborated by those of Fellows, Percy, Jones, Brook and Gates (2010) who established that fusion of intelligence between respective government agencies was critical in addressing the onshore security challenges that the United States of America had been experiencing. The study postulates that intelligence fusion centers effectively merge the various intelligence databases of the various respective agencies participating in securing the nations maritime space. By bringing together databases of the Coast Guard’s Maritime Information Safety and
Law Enforcement system, the Automated Regional Justice Information System and intelligence from the local Joint Terrorism Task Force, Fellows et al (2010) determined that operations were almost seamlessly streamlined, thus enhancing capability in securing the country’s maritime space.

According to Egnell (2006) integration of British military and civilian personnel coupled with extensive inter-agency cooperation and coordination is crucial in the complex expeditionary operations. This integration of civil-military relations enhances, the study argues, the military’s ability in planning and implementation of comprehensive campaigns as well as cultural and political understanding of the civilians by troops to increase their success levels during operations. Similarly, Zartsdahl (2018), in a separate study, observed that response to new wars (the contemporary world wars) has led to unprecedented levels of civil-military synergies within the European Union countries and this has successfully been used, at least with external partners, to achieve synergy and address the challenges security facing the European Union.

A study carried out in the United States of America by Rand (2019) established that the US had made tremendous progress in terms of coordinating various agencies to roll out an effective counter-terrorism strategy. The study established that state agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the department of Justice among others collaborated with each other in the areas of training, developing inter-agency quality assurance processes and sharing of information to ensure readiness and an integrated approach to the fight against terrorism. The study further reported that state agencies worked with non-state agencies in concerted efforts to ensure the fight against terrorism was all inclusive and synchronized, but also reported areas of difficulty in bridging the operational gap between the formal security agencies and the civilian actors whose collaboration was needed.

Reporting in a study he conducted on the efficacy of the multi-agency approach in the fight against terrorism in Nigeria, Eme (2018) noted that the multi-agency approach to counter-terrorism was ingrained in the state’s national counter-terrorism strategy. The study established that Nigeria deployed the use of carrot and stick to drive her counter-terrorism agenda, an approach that gives a glimpse into the variations of the multi-agency approach as designed by various countries to ward off terrorism from both proactive and reactive standpoints. The study however notes the existence of jurisdictional conflicts among the various state security actors, personality clashes and a coordination drawback, an eventuality that has hindered the fight against terrorism and especially the homegrown terror group the Boko Haram. Odoma (2014) also reported that inter-agency conflicts had exposed the country to threats and insecurity as insurgency groups and criminal network sought to capitalize on the feuds.

Kenya’s threats from terrorism in the recent past have had casualties as demonstrated by the 1980 attack of Norfolk hotel that claimed 20 lives (Mogire & Agade, 2011) and the 1998 bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi in which over 290 people were killed and many others wounded. In the last decade, a spate of devastating terror attacks such as the Westgate terror attack in 2013 that left a death toll of 67 and the Garissa University attack that claimed 148 lives (GoK, 2016) forced the country to rethink the threat of terrorism and devised a counter-terrorism strategy to prevent and combat the threats. One of the innovations in the strategy was the establishment and operationalization of the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) that embodies the concept of a multi-agency approach, principally to coordinate anti and counter-terrorism efforts. The NCTC was originally established in the year 2004 in response to the sharp escalation of the terrorist threat to Kenya. The formalization of the institution would however come ten years later with the adoption of the Security Law (Amendment) Act 2014. The approach brings together representatives from the National Intelligence Service (NIS), Kenya Defense Forces (KDF), the National Police Service (NPS) and other state organs (Kivunzi & Nzau, 2018). The multi-agency approach was facilitated by various state efforts such as the swift amendment of the Security Law in 2014 that was passed and signed into law within ten days (Goitom, 2014) to demonstrate the threat that faced the country then and the need to have an enabling legal framework to base the counter-terrorism measures the country was putting in place.

Methodology
The research was anchored on a descriptive cross-sectional research design. The data was collected from a sample size of 306 obtained form a target population of 1021 officials drawn from Kenya’s disciplined forces such as the Kenya Defense Forces (KDF), National Police Service (NPS), the Directorate of Criminal Investigations and the National Intelligence Service (NIS) who are integrated in a multi-agency team tasked with leading the fight against terrorism. The sample size of 306 represents 30% of the target population, a sampling approach that is consistent with Mugenda and Mugenda (2012) recommendations. The
sample was distributed among the agencies and sub-agencies comprising the multi-agency team using purposive and proportionate stratified random sampling techniques. Each of the agency or sub-agency was treated as a stratum. The agency head or his designated representative were purposefully identified for key informant interviews as the rest of the members in the stratum were randomly selected and issued with questionnaires comprising of open and closed-ended questions to enable collection of primary data.

Before administering the research instruments, a pilot study was conducted with 10 participants whose profiles matched those of the target population to ascertain the instruments’ validity and reliability. The collected quantitative data were checked for accuracy and completeness, then coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 24. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, percentages, and frequency counts, were used to analyze the data. Content analysis was applied to the qualitative data obtained from open-ended questions in the questionnaire and key informant interviews. The findings from the analysis were presented using tables, prose, and verbatim excerpts.

**Presentation of Findings and Discussions**

The study sought to determine the factors that informed the decision by security actors to adopt the multi-agency approach in the fight against terrorism in Kenya. Respondents were given a set of six statements, in the form of a Likert scale, with 3 options each, ranging between 1 and 3 where 1=Agree, 2=Neutral and 3=Disagree. The findings were as presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Factors influencing adoption of the multi-agency approach in the fight against terrorism in Kenya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent do you agree with the following statements as they relate to the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motivation behind the adoption of the multi-agency approach in the fight against</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>terrorism in Kenya:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Its success in other countries such as the United States of America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To manage the high costs involved in security operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To leverage on the capabilities of the various agencies in the security sector.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To synchronize activities and avoid duplication of roles among security agencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. To coordinate the flow of information so as to win public support and minimize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anxiety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. To centralize operations and minimize friendly fire during combat situations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study findings indicated that the principal factors informing the adoption of the multi-agency approach were the need to manage the high costs involved in security operations as reported by 82% of the respondents, a view that was opposed by 18% of the respondents who did not think that this was an important consideration. This finding is consistent with Fellows et al (2010) assertion that modern security management was a resource intensive undertaking. This means that there is need to utilize the available resources in the most prudent way to optimize on the benefits being pursued. The foregoing findings on security spending were consistent with those of a study by Kemshall and Maguire (2001) who argued that intensifying inter-agency cooperation is important in common security and defense policy operations, including in the management of the attendant costs. While details of security expenditure remain confidential in the interest of national security as happens in all countries, the study takes note of the fact that this sector has ranked among the highest recipients of state resources as per the annual budget estimates presented by the Treasury to parliament for approval.

The item on the possibility of leveraging the capability of each player constituting the multi-agency team as a determining factor attracted a positive majority response from 80% of the respondents who agreed with it even as 18% of them disagreed while a further 2% registered neutrality. This response was consistent with the views gathered from the interviews, during which interviewee 4 reported thus:

Each of the security teams in Kenya has a different curriculum of training guided by the legal mandate establishing that service or unit, hence a unique skill set. For instance, National Intelligence Service (NIS) gathers information which is then sent to the Joint Counter Terrorism and Analysis Centre (JCTAC) for analysis and dissemination to relevant teams for action. Other than technical skills in particular areas, the security services/forces have different equipment which can be deployed to thwart or counter a given security threat such as an act of terrorism. Simply put, each agency has different expertise and equipment which comes in handy within a multi-agency team, as each is harnessed for national good. (Interviewee 4, 16/6/2021).
The finding may be interpreted to mean that prior to adoption of the multi-agency approach, each member of the team was working on their own, resulting in a disjointed and inefficient approach because where a certain skill set was missing in a team during operations, the country was more exposed to danger. Achieving synergy while complementing each other implies that with their different specializations and strengths, the multi-agency team is likely to be more effective in the fight against terrorism as opposed to each of them working on its own. This finding is consistent with Veljovski and Dojchinovski (2017) who argued that contemporary security programming requires the synergy emanating from the contribution of each member forming the overall national security team. Synergy is the central argument advanced by Banathy (2000) in his systems theory that has been used to anchor this study.

Asked whether the success that had been recorded in those countries that had used the approach in securing themselves could have influenced its use in Kenya, 72% of the respondents agreed as 22% disagreed and a further 6% remained neutral. The implication of this finding is that the security agencies in Kenya had been bench-marking their efforts and procedures with what other countries elsewhere across the world were doing in fighting terrorism and based on the narratives of success in those countries, security actors deemed the multi-agency approach to security appropriate in addressing the terror problem at home. A key informant reported as follows with regard to this study item:

We are living at a time when the world has been reduced into a global village. The terror challenges we are facing are not unique to Kenya. As a a member of the global system, we have partners with whom we collaborate on security matters and from whom we learn as they also learn from us. So yes, we benchmark what other states are doing and pick that which we feel can help us alleviate the challenges we face. We have benefited a lot from interacting with and borrowing successful practices from our counterparts from across the world (Interviewee 1, 15/6/2021).

Categorized as a developing country, Kenya had and still has a lot to learn from other nations of the world, especially the developed nations, on how to best secure its borders and citizens from potential terror attacks and how to react in the eventuality that the country is attacked by terrorists. Some of the best practices from across the world inspired the nation’s security leadership to adopt the multi-agency approach in order to enhance its fight against terrorism. Success stories from countries like the US, the UK and Israel in using a multi-agency approach to secure their homeland from terrorism motivated Kenya to put in place a similar mechanism.

Other factors found to have also contributed in the adoption of the multi-agency approach in the fight against terrorism in Kenya were the need to coordinate the flow of information so as to win public support and minimize anxiety as reported by 58% of the respondents, the opportunities the approach presented with respect to synchronization of activities among the agencies so as to minimize duplication of roles and uphold prudence in scarce resource utilization as reported by 53% of the respondents and the need to centralize operations, hence minimize friendly fire according to 41% of the respondents. A key informant responding on the centralization of operations to minimize friendly fire noted as follows:

Every security agency has its own standard operating procedures. You cannot rule out the tensions among the different agencies – some as mundane as inferiority or superiority complexes! Sometimes there were difficulties in coordinating the activities of the various agencies when responding to an act of terrorism as team members were reporting to different commanders. While that is still the case, the level of coordination at the commanders level was not coherent, leading to lapses in our responses. But now with better leadership structures in place, and other programs such as joint training, the various agencies are playing complementary roles, thus minimizing duplication of roles, incoherence in responses and elimination of friendly fire. (Interviewee 8, 16/6/2021)

The 27% of the respondents returning a neutral response in respect of centralization of operations to minimize friendly fire were considered significant because if they were to combine with the 32% disagreeing, then this particular item would be rendered an unimportant consideration in the adoption of the multi-agency approach. Comparatively, these three sets of findings were significant because they implied that there had been issues relating to flow of information, duplication of roles and the existence of different operational command centres that were not coordinated thus, contributing to the recurrent, successful acts of terrorism prior to the adoption of the multi-agency approach. In particular, the unacceptable performance by the country’s security agencies during the Westgate terror attack in September 2013 brought to the fore the damage of non-coordination (Musoma, 2020), overlap of work, inefficiency and lack of responsibility and accountability among the different security agencies. Some of the casualties from the Westgate terror attack were attributed by the public
and experts in the security sector to poor coordination of the security agencies in response to the attack, an indictment that cost the security agencies their credibility in the eyes of the general public. Thus, the multi-agency approach was perceived as a pathway to among others, securing the country and her people from terrorism and regaining public confidence.

Conclusion
The study findings demonstrated that the factors informing the decision by security actors in Kenya to adopt the multi-agency approach to the fight against terrorism were the appreciation of the specialized nature of each of Kenya’s security agencies and hence the need to leverage on the capabilities of each agency, its relative success in other countries that had faced similar security challenges to Kenya’s and the need to ensure proper management of the operational costs involved in security programming. The need to centrally coordinate all the actors to deliver on the safety and security of citizens as well as investors was paramount and pressing, given the negative publicity the country was attracting at the height of the recurrent terror attacks between 2013 and 2015. Other factors included the desire to synchronize operations and avoid duplication of roles as well as coordination of flow of information to win public support and minimize anxiety. The study recommends continued review of the workings of the various security agencies with a view to aligning the individual mandates and standard operating procedures of the security agencies so as to maximize on the available capabilities and resources in securing the country from acts of terrorism. The reviews should further be informed by the changing dynamics at the global level aimed at countering terrorism.

References

Acknowledgement:
The author sends special thanks to all respondents in the field who responded on matters under consideration, and for the various librarians who aided the task. They also salute the JEOSHS for shaping it up to the level of published works.

Conflict of interest:
The authors have declared that they have no conflict of interest as they researched on this article, as the agenda was the quest for knowledge.

Ethical pledge:
The researchers wishes to confirm that they followed full ethical considerations and acknowledged their sources appropriately without plagiarizing or duplicating other people’s works unprofessionally.

Competing Interests:
The authors have also declared that they had no financial or personal relationships or undue interests that may have inappropriately influenced their writing of this research article.

Author(s) contributions:
The researchers have conceded that they are the sole authors of this research article that creatively contributes to the world of academia.

Disclaimer:
The views and opinions expressed in this research article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the Journal.

Ethical considerations statement:
This research article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects. No ethical clearance was needed and/or required for this article.