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Cross-border Dynamics in Terrorist Mobility and Infiltration along the East African Coastlines



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Executive summary

This paper examines the crime-terror nexus in the coastal and maritime regions of East Africa, with particular emphasis on the Kenyan coastal regions of Kwale, Kilifi, and Lamu Counties. The need to study coastal areas in maritime regions to understand the current crime-terror nexus along the East African Coast as a site for terrorist activities is underemphasized in the East African counterterrorism (CT) literature.

Based on an ethnographic study of two data sets conducted between 2021 and 2023 in the coastal regions of Kenya, the study focuses on the following main question: how do terrorist activities intertwine with criminal networks throughout the maritime regions of East Africa? The intersections of maritime crimes and terrorism in the East African Region include existing patterns of mobility and the use of maritime spaces that lack effective structures of governance by the state and have been exploited by crime-terror networks, in particular by Al-Shabaab and the Islamic State.

The nexus of terrorism and crime is most visible in the lower social strata of the community, where young men and women remain vulnerable to recruitment pathways into crime and terrorist activities. The study is based on a section of the Swahili coast that has the potential to have repercussions for the broader coastal regions due to similar dynamics of criminal and terrorist tactics and membership recruitment pathways.

Résumé

Cette étude examine la convergence des réseaux de criminalité et du terrorisme le long des littoraux et des espaces maritimes est-africains, en prenant pour exemple les régions côtières du Kenya – plus particulièrement les comtés de Kwale, Kilifi et Lamu. Malgré leur centralité pour comprendre l'interconnexion entre criminalité et menace terroriste sur la côte est-africaine, l'importance des littoraux de ces régions maritimes – qui constituent le creuset de nombreuses activités terroristes – n'est pas suffisamment soulignée dans la littérature sur la lutte contre le terrorisme en Afrique de l'Est. À partir d'une étude ethnographique réalisée entre 2021 et 2023 et basée sur deux séries de données recueillies dans les régions côtières du Kenya, cette étude vise à éclairer la problématique suivante : comment les activités terroristes s'entremêlent-elles avec les réseaux criminels dans les régions maritimes d'Afrique de l'Est ?

Les intersections entre la criminalité maritime et le terrorisme recoupent des schémas maritimes préexistants, notamment ceux liés à la mobilité humaine dans la zone et à l'utilisation d'espaces maritimes qui sont dépourvus de structures de gouvernance efficaces de la part de l'État et exploités par des réseaux criminels et terroristes – en particulier par Al-Shabaab et l'État islamique.

Les liens entre terrorisme et criminalité sont davantage visibles dans les structures sociales les plus modestes de la société, qui regroupent de jeunes hommes et femmes vulnérables aux stratégies de recrutement de ces organisations pour des activités criminelles et terroristes. Notre étude porte sur une partie de la côte swahili dont la situation singulière est susceptible d'entraîner des répercussions sur l'ensemble des régions côtières de la zone en raison des dynamiques similaires mises en place par ces réseaux. Ces similarités sont saillantes tant au niveau de leurs tactiques criminelles et terroristes qu'au niveau des stratégies qu'ils mettent en place pour recruter leurs membres.

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Introduction

This paper looks at how terrorism has thrived in the East African region, the evolving nature of criminality and terrorism, and the crime-terror nexus in the coastal and maritime areas of East Africa. The emphasis of the analysis is on the Kenyan coastal regions with a focus on three counties, namely, Kwale, Kilifi, and Lamu.

East African countries are among the 20 countries most impacted by terror threats as a result of state fragility, the prevalence of armed conflicts, underdevelopment, and the growth of extremism.¹ Terrorist networks have extensively exploited the maritime domain of the Indian Ocean. Transnational naval crimes, including maritime terrorism, piracy, human trafficking, smuggling of illicit goods, and Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, reveal the ugly facets of crime flows affecting the blue economies.² Terrorist groups on the East African Coast, such as Al-Shabaab in Puntland, Somalia and Islamic State in Mozambique (ISM),³ are increasingly visible at sea due to poor maritime law enforcement in East Africa.⁴

Coastlines in the East African region have traditionally been viewed as potentially vulnerable sites concerning illegal drugs, arms, and human trafficking, as imagined by states and compounded by heightened fears in the global war on terrorism era.⁵ Securing the maritime coastlines is pivotal for governments in the East African region, such as those of Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Mozambique, as they are considered permeable to terrorist groups, traffickers, and smugglers alike.⁶ Nevertheless, the need to study coastlines in maritime border areas to understand the current crime-

1. T. Omenma and M. Onyango, "African Union Counterterrorism Frameworks and Implementation Trends among Member States of the East African Community", *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 76, No 1, March 2020, pp. 103-119.

2. "All Economic Activities Related to Oceans, Seas and Coasts. It Covers a Wide Range of Interlinked Established and Emerging Sectors", Definition as provided by the European Commission, available at: www.un.org.

3. D. Ginga, "Maritime Insecurity in Sub-Saharan Africa and Its Effects in the Economy of States", *Austral. Brazilian Journal of Strategy & International Relations*, Vol. 9, No. 18, 2020, pp. 196-218; "Stemming the Insurrection in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado", Report No. 303, International Crisis Group, June 2021, available at: www.crisisgroup.org.

4. I. Zyl and T. Lycan, "East African Terror Groups are exploiting the seas: Analysis", *Eurasia Review*, October 16, 2020, available at: www.eurasiareview.com.

5. "Responding to Potential Emerging Maritime Threat from IS in the Indian Ocean", UNODC, 2020, available at: www.unodc.org; A. Rajput, "Maritime Security and Threat of a Terrorist Attack" *Pace International Law Review*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 2022, available at: <https://doi.org>.

6. N. Avdan, "Visas and Walls: Border Security in the Age of Terrorism", Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019; J. A. Winterdyk and K. W. Sundberg, "Border Security in the Al-Qaeda Era", Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2010.

terror nexus along the East African Coast as a site for terrorist activities⁷ is underemphasized in the East African counterterrorism (CT) literature. Difficulties in studying the crime-terror nexus in the coastlines have been compounded by the fact that it has been problematic to distinguish crime activities from terrorist activities⁸ as well as its social embeddedness in the local communities.⁹

Figure 1: Map of the Indian Ocean Coast of Africa



Source: @Wynne-Jones and Fleiser, 2015.

Across the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, Somali-linked piracy networks have threatened ships and crew members, affecting global trade. Incidents related to piracy have significantly declined due to multinational anti-piracy coalitions such as the Combined Task Force 150 (CTF 150).

7. S. Ginsburg, "Countering Terrorist Mobility: Shaping an Operational Strategy", *Report Migration Policy Institute*, February 2006.

8. F. S. Perry, T. G. Lichtenwald and P. M. Mackenzie, "Evil Twins: The Crime-Terror Nexus", *Forensic Examine*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 2009, pp. 16-29.

9. H. Van de Bunt and D. Zaitch, "The Social Embeddedness of Organized Crime", in: L. Paoli (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

However, recent incidents, such as the failed attempt by pirates to seize the Israeli-linked oil tanker *Central Park* on 26 November 2023 off the coast of Aden, Yemen, still reveal the fragility of the region.¹⁰ In the Gulf of Aden region, it is reported that weapons are illegally trafficked to terrorist and organized criminal groups in Somalia and the rest of the Horn and the East African region,¹¹ increasing the potential threat to civilian life, furthering illicit activities affecting vulnerable youth in the coastline areas, and undermining the effectiveness of the partial arms embargo by the UN Security Council.¹² Despite various studies highlighting the prevalence of terrorism in the maritime border areas of the Indian Ocean, only vague or scanty information is available on how the terrorists use the sea and the local community involvement in aiding terrorist networks by providing logistics or harboring alleged terrorist members.¹³ These insecure maritime border regions have ramifications as terrorist activities disrupt socio-political and economic development along the coastlines.¹⁴ The net effect of all these issues is that the vulnerable youth who lack opportunities in the border regions remain susceptible to recruitment into crime or terror networks.¹⁵ For example, maritime security threats by IS-Mozambique may slow down blue economy development in Eastern Africa.¹⁶ Similarly, naval security threats along the Somali and Kenyan coastlines may affect the blue economies of the respective countries.¹⁷

This study aims to fill this research gap by analyzing different patterns of the entanglement of human mobility and local crime in the coastal and seaboard areas to draw a clearer picture of the crime-terror nexus that prevails along the coastlines and maritime seaboards in the East African region. In recent years, the coastal region of Kenya has attracted the attention of both policymakers and law enforcement personnel due to the proliferation of both criminal and terrorist networks. Since the 1990s, the coastal counties of Kenya selected for this study have been the focus of terrorist recruitment, planning, and logistics for terror attacks via sea

10. J. E. Barnes, "U.S. Navy Rescues Ship from Somali Pirate Attack", *The New York Times*, 2023, available at: www.nytimes.com.

11. K. Houreld, "Iranian-supplied Arms Smuggled from Yemen into Somalia, Study Says", *Reuters*, November 10, 2021, available at: www.reuters.com.

12. U.N. Security Council, S/RES/2662, 2022, available at: www.un.org.

13. T. Lycan, C. Faulkner and A. C. Doctor, "Making Waves: Militant Maritime Operations along Africa's Eastern Coast", *War on the Rocks*, November 4, 2020, available at: <https://warontherocks.com>; K. B. Steele, "Maritime Terrorism in the Indian Ocean Rim: Peering into the Darkness", The California State University, 2017, available at: <https://scholarworks.calstate.edu>.

14. D. Mansour-Ille, "Counterterrorism Policies in the Middle East and North Africa: A Regional Perspective", *International Review of the Red Cross*, No. 916-917, February 2022.

15. F. A. Badurdeen, "How Do Individuals Join the Al-Shabaab? An Ethnographic Insight into Recruitment Models for the Al-Shabaab Network in Kenya", *African Security*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 239-261, available at: <https://doi.org>.

16. K. Moss and M. Pigeon, "ASWJ: What We Know. Stable Seas, One Earth Future", *Stable Seas*, 2020.

17. E. Mwachinga, "Lamu Kenya Navy Base: A Big Boost for Maritime Security, Blue Economy", *Capital News*, September 27, 2021, available at: www.capitalfm.co.ke.

routes. Increasingly, the coastal routes have been notorious for illegal drug proliferation and human trafficking networks, making Kenya vulnerable to the networks of various forms of criminality in the East African region. The study strengthens the understanding of the existence of the crime-terror nexus in coastal regions at the local level via an emic perspective for the benefit of Preventing and Counter Violent Extremism (PCVE) and Counter Terrorism (CT) policymakers and law enforcement personnel. The study highlights that effective CT measures call for community engagement to decipher knowledge of the complex *modus operandi* of terrorist and crime networks involving contextual and situational expertise embedded in the sociocultural, political, and economic factors of the local communities.

This analysis of the types of criminal activities that intersect with terrorism operations is based on an ethnographic and emic study of these dynamics. Fieldwork for the paper was based on two data sets carried out from January-December 2022 and June-July 2023 in the coastal regions of Kenya. However, the author, having lived in the coastal areas of Kenya for more than ten years and with a prolonged experience of working with these communities as an independent researcher, enabled access to different local communities in the areas studied. Individuals were intentionally selected based on their knowledge and experience of the phenomenon studied, i.e., those knowledgeable about the local communities. They included local community leaders such as village elders, chiefs, and youth and women leaders. Participants included some of those directly affected or associated with the phenomenon, such as local village members, fishermen, boda-boda riders, Beach Management Units (BMUs),¹⁸ local businessmen, Al-Shabaab defectors, and their family members. The first data set comprised 62 interviews. The second data set includes 26 interviews conducted exclusively in Lamu County. Research methods also involved transect walks and field visits in nine specified localities.

Following the Introduction, the first section of the article gives an overview of the rise of terrorism in East Africa. The second section reviews the crime-terror nexus in the East African region. The third section delves into the specific features of the crime-terror nexus along coastal and maritime borders, focusing on the Kenyan coastline. The paper concludes by explaining how the need to find a livelihood and the existence of local criminal network opportunities drove a few community members to become involved in the crime flows in the East African region.

18. BMUs refer to the Beach Management Units established for each fish landing station by the director in accordance with the provisions of the Fisheries Act, focusing on the strengthening of the management of fish landing sites.

The rise of terrorism in East Africa

In East Africa, the transnational terrorist group Al-Shabaab and the Islamic State (IS) are at the forefront of contemporary terrorist activities. Regional and local affiliates of these terrorist organizations have demarcated their terrain in the region. Since the late 1990s, terrorist attacks have marked the region as a global Jihadi bridgehead for terrorism. This includes the concurrent bombing of American embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998, for which Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility. Since then, the region has been marked by episodic terrorist attacks. This section will outline a brief history of terrorism in East Africa and the terrorist organizations from 1990 to the present.

Since the 1990s, East Africa has remained a priority area in Al-Qaeda's global strategy. Al-Qaeda established a base in Sudan when the military-Islamist regime took power in 1989.¹⁹ Al-Qaeda was gradually transformed into an active terrorist group in East Africa via fundraising by running successful commercial enterprises and military training camps mainly located in Sudan. From the late 1990s to the 2000s, the East African region became a crucial hub for terrorist attacks when Al-Qaeda bombed the United States Embassy in Nairobi and Tanzania, killing over 200 people and injuring thousands more. The East African embassy bombings marked a new chapter in Islamist extremism, which laid the basis for networks – the affiliates – which are still pivotal in East African Islamist extremism,²⁰ such as Al-Shabaab. Al-Qaeda played a role in supporting Somali militias against the initial American-led intervention in Somalia in 1990. For instance, since 1992, African regional Al-Qaeda leader Abu Hafs made multiple visits to Somalia from the Al-Qaeda base in Sudan and, working closely with Al-Ithihad Al-Islamiya (AIAI), was able to establish three training camps.²¹ AIAI disintegrated after a rift in the early 2000s, enabling hard-line fundamentalist youth to join forces with the Islamic Court Union (ICU). Later, the Al-Shabaab originated as a wing of the ICU in Somalia.²²

19. D. H. Shinn, "Al-Qaeda in East Africa and the Horn", *Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2007, available at: <https://journals.lib.unb.ca>.

20. A. Vines, "Out of Africa: Exploring the Roots of the 9/11 Attack", Chatam House, September 10, 2021, available at: www.chathamhouse.org.

21. A. Le Sage, "Prospects for Al Itihad and Islamist Radicalism in Somalia", *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 28, No. 89, 2001, pp. 472-477.

22. C. Klobucista, J. Masters and M. A. Sergie, "Al-Shabaab", Council on Foreign Relations, December 6, 2022, available at: www.cfr.org.

Al-Shabaab evolved into an insurgency movement in Somalia in 2006, exporting terror tactics like a tentacle into the wider East African region and beyond. Since the late 2000s, the East African region has experienced an increasing number of attacks led by Al-Shabaab (Figure 3). The Al-Shabaab organization in Somalia, with its regional affiliates, created a favorable terrain for Islamist extremism in East Africa. In Tanzania, a group known as the Ansar Muslim Youth Centre (AMYC), originating from Tanga and led by Sheikh Salim Abdulrahim Barahiyani, was linked directly to Al-Hijra in Kenya and Al-Shabaab in Somalia. It was also alleged that the group had links to the Al-Qaeda East Africa (AQEA) networks that coordinated the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Tanzania and Kenya.²³ AMYC was formed in the 1980s to propagate Salafi Islam, which later drifted towards radicalism allegedly with its association and funding from the Saidi-based charitable foundation Al-Haramayn.²⁴ Similarly, in 2015, a new group emerged, known as Muhajiroun, with links to Mombasa in Kenya and Mwanza in Tanzania, led by Abu Khalid Abu Izz al-Din. Khalid was a former resident of Majengo, Mombasa, in Kenya, and a student of Aboud Rogo (a notable preacher linked to the Al-Shabaab group in Kenya).²⁵

In Kenya, Al-Shabaab affiliates such as Al-Hijra and Jaysh al-Ayman were pivotal in conducting terrorist attacks such as the extended series of small-scale attacks that have been taking place since 2011 in Kenya's two main cities, Nairobi and Mombasa. These included grenade and improvised explosive device (IED) attacks, targeted killings of moderate preachers and security personnel, as well as attacks on churches and sporting events. In early 2012, Al-Shabaab recognized Ahmed Iman Ali as the group's emir for Kenya, implicitly recognizing his Al-Hijra group (Al-Hijra was formerly known as the Pumwani Muslim Youth and the Muslim Youth Centre [MYC]). Al-Hijra was held responsible for financing Al-Shabaab, supporting its foreign fighter recruitment efforts, and facilitating Al-Shabaab's external operations in Kenya.²⁶ Jaysh al-Ayman, a local Kenyan-Al-Shabaab affiliated group, found a foothold in Lamu, setting up bases in the Boni forest. The local affiliate was alleged to be pivotal in the Mpeketoni attack, which resulted in the killing of more than 60 people. This prompted the Kenyan security agencies to launch Operation Linda Boni (Operation "Protect Boni") in 2015 to flush the militants out of the forest.²⁷ Factions of the terrorist group still threaten the region by terrorizing villages and

23. A. Le Sage, "The Rising Terrorist Threat in Tanzania: Domestic Islamist Militancy and Regional Threats", *Strategic Forum*, Vol. 288, No. 1, 2014, pp. 1-15.

24. "Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea", United Nations Security Council, 2012.

25. B. M. Githingu and T. R. Hamming, "The Arc of Jihad: The Ecosystem of Militancy in East Africa", International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR), 2021.

26. C. Anzalone, "Kenya's Muslim Youth Center and Al-Shabab's East African Recruitment", *CTC Sentinel*, Vol. 5, No. 10, October 2012, pp. 9-13.

27. S. West, "Jaysh al-Ayman: A 'Local' Threat in Kenya", *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 16, No. 8, April 23, 2018, available at: <https://jamestown.org>.

attacking police and military personnel, as evidenced in the present series of attacks in 2023.²⁸

While Al-Shabaab has remained to this day a dominant, violent extremist group in East Africa since its emergence in Somalia in 2006, Islamic State (IS) also continues to make inroads into the East African region. Since 2016, the IS has had its own radicalization and recruitment drive in the East African region. This shift of Islamic State gaining prominence in Africa was concurrent with its declining physical caliphate presence in Iraq and Syria.²⁹ IS capitalized on existing factions of local splinter groups of former Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab affiliates, as well as aspiring insurgents and extremist networks. IS local networks facilitated travel by recruits to Syria, Libya, Iraq, or other areas where the movement is active. Subsequently, from 2016 to 2023, IS launched its attacks, branding itself in the East African region as a terrorist movement strengthened by its local affiliates, including taking responsibility for a series of attacks in Uganda, Mozambique, and Tanzania.³⁰

At present, African IS affiliates are pivotal in supporting the IS narrative of a global caliphate despite significant setbacks in the Middle East. Islamic State in Somalia (ISS) was formed in October 2015 after Abdidadr Mumin (a Specially Designated Global Terrorist) and about 20 of his followers pledged allegiance to the Islamic State. The group claimed responsibility for a May 2017 suicide bombing at a police checkpoint in Somalia, leading to the death of five people and injuring 12 others. ISS also claimed responsibility for the February 2017 attack on the Village Hotel in Bosaso, Puntland, Somalia, a hotel frequented by foreigners. It is alleged the ISS facilitates shipments of fighters and arms from Yemen to Somalia. ISS comprises IS in Puntland, IS in Mogadishu and South-Central Somalia and IS in Somaliland.³¹

In Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Islamic State formed its alliance with the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), strengthening the Islamic State's Central African Province (ISCAP).³² ADF, formed in 1995, was an insurgency movement led by rebels to oust President Museveni's government, who later fled into the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Since 2013, the group has been implicated in kidnappings and large-scale widespread civilian killings. In 2018, ADF

28. "Kenya Somalia Border: Rising Al-Shabaab Threat in the wake of ATMIS Drawdown", ACLED, September 1, 2023, available at: <https://acleddata.com>

29. B. M. Githingu and T. R. Hamming, "The Arc of Jihad: The Ecosystem of Militancy in East Africa", *op. cit.*

30. F. A. Badurdeen, "Decentralization of Terrorism: The Case of the Islamic State (IS) in Africa", 2023.

31. The Global Strategy Network, "The Islamic State in East Africa", European Institute of Peace, September 2018, available at: www.eip.org.

32. C. Weiss, R. O'Farrell, T. Candland and L. Poole, "Fatal Transaction: The Funding Behind the Islamic State's Central Africa Province", The George Washington University, June 2023, available at: <https://extremism.gwu.edu>.

pledged their allegiance to IS.³³ However, the IS-ADF relationships have a longer history since 2017, with ADF members affiliating themselves with the IS.³⁴ The ISCAP has spread its influence in Mozambique (Islamic State Mozambique – ISM). However, ISM operates locally as ‘Al-Shabaab’ and has conducted attacks in Mozambique.³⁵

In Kenya, it is reported that the presence of IS was mainly via the presence of Jabha East Africa (JEA). JEA started as a small Islamist group in Somalia and was allegedly established by a Kenyan medical intern named Mohamed Abdi Ali, aka Abu Fida. In May 2016, the Kenyan police arrested Abdi Ali in Kenya and his wife, Nuseiba Mohammed Haji, as well as another woman in Uganda, on suspicion of planning an attack.³⁶ The Kenyan police claimed that the attack was planned by a network facilitated by Abdi Ali that involved individuals from Kenya, Libya and Syria. It was also reported that Abdi Ali managed a recruitment network, mainly via universities, helping fighters from Kenya to migrate to Libya, Syria and Somalia to join IS. Among the IS-associated attacks in Kenya is the attempt by the three-member female Islamic State cell consisting of Tasnib Yaqub Abdullahi Farah, Fatma Omar Yusuf and Mariam to burn down Mombasa Central Police Station in 2016.³⁷

Attacks conducted by the franchises of IS and Al-Qaeda in the region indicate that violent radicalization and extremism are gaining momentum in East Africa, as described in the following table.

Figure 2: Attacks carried out by terrorist organizations in the East African Region

Year	Attacks
1980	Twenty were killed and more than 80 injured during the Norfolk Hotel attack in Nairobi, Kenya. It was alleged that the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) or Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) carried out the attack.
1998	Truck bombs exploded at U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania simultaneously, killing more than 200 people and wounding more than 4,000. The attacks were later linked to the terrorist group Al-Qaeda.
2010	On the night of the FIFA World Cup final in July 2010, twin suicide attacks ravaged Uganda’s capital, Kampala. As a result, 74 people died, 70 were injured. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attacks.

33. A. Arieff, “The Allied Democratic Forces, an Islamic State Affiliate in the Democratic Republic of Congo”, Congressional Research Service, September 1, 2022, available at: <https://crsreports.congress.gov>.

34. D. Mahtani, “The Kampala Attacks and Their Regional Implications”, Crisis Group, November 19, 2021, available at: www.crisisgroup.org.

35. P. Bofin, “Islamic State Mozambique (ISM)”, ACLED, October 30, 2023, available at: <https://acleddata.com>.

36. B. M. Githingu and T. R. Hamming, “The Arc of Jihad: The Ecosystem of Militancy in East Africa”, *op. cit.*

37. The Global Strategy Network, “The Islamic State in East Africa”, *op. cit.*

2013	September 21, the Westgate Mall attack in Westlands in Nairobi, Kenya, killed 68 people, injuring more than a hundred. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attacks.
2014	In June 2014, 50 heavily armed militants targeted the Mpeketoni area of Lamu County, Kenya, killing 48 people, all non-Muslims, and killing another 29 in the Hindi area two weeks later.
2015	The attack on Garissa University, Kenya, in April 2015 killed at least 147 people, mostly students. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack.
2016	In September, three women attacked a police station in Mombasa, Kenya. The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack.
2019	The attack on Nairobi's Dusit D2 hotel complex in Nairobi, Kenya, killed 21 people and injured 30 others.
2019	By the end of 2019, ISIS's affiliate in Mozambique had carried out numerous attacks in northern Mozambique and Tanzania, resulting in the estimated deaths of 350 civilians and the internal displacement of 100,000 people.
2020	Al-Shabaab Terrorists attacked the US-Kenya Military Base in Lamu, Kenya, killing three American citizens.
2020	On October 14, an estimated 300 ISIS-Mozambique fighters attacked Kitaya village in Mtwara Region, Tanzania, which borders Mozambique. Attackers killed an estimated 20 people, including two security personnel.
2020	On October 20, the Islamic State officially claimed responsibility for an attack on Kangbaya Central Prison in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) that freed over 1,300 prisoners.
2021	On 16 November, a trio of suicide bombers targeted Kampala, Uganda, one detonating his vest outside police headquarters and two more blowing themselves up near parliament. The attacks killed at least four people and wounded 37. IS affiliate ADF claimed responsibility for the attack.
2023	A deadly attack at a school in Uganda on June 16 left 42 students dead. Islamic State affiliate Allied Democratic Forces was held responsible for the attack.
2023	Militants attacked Lango la Shamba village, Lamu County, Kenya, killing two people and setting houses on fire.
2023	A Ugandan militia group linked to the Islamic State killed two foreign tourists and their local guide at a national park bordering the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Crime-terror nexus in East African coastline areas: factors and consequences

This section looks at the entanglement of terrorist activities and maritime crime, such as illegal drug trafficking, arms trafficking, human smuggling, and illegal fishing, to draw a clearer picture of the crime-terror nexus that prevails along the coastlines and maritime borders of the East African region.

The East African coast stretches 4,600 kilometers from southern Somalia to the Natal coast of South Africa. The Horn and the East African coastline border the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Indian Ocean. Over 8,300 km of the East and Horn of Africa continental coastline stretch from Sudan to Tanzania. Somalia has Africa's longest national coastline (3,025 km), with an estimated shelf area (depth 0–200 m) of 32,500 km². This vast expanse makes the region diverse and essential in world maritime trade and communications. The massive extent of the coastlines makes them complicated to govern by each country alone, necessitating regional interventions and commitment. The Indian Ocean harbors the world's third most important Sea Lanes of Communication (SLCs),³⁸ and the Western Indian Ocean SLCs account for the passage of 30% of the world's crude oil.³⁹ The importance of sub-Saharan maritime traffic is exploited by criminals to engage in illicit activities, making use of regional corruption loopholes and thereby threatening different forms of maritime crime, including terrorism, in the coastal areas of this region.

This section aims to highlight what factors influence the crime-terror nexus in the coastal and maritime border regions, the existing patterns of mobility and crime flows, lapses in state governance of the maritime regions, and how maritime criminal and terrorist networks have exploited these.

38. H. Soilihi, "Maritime Insecurity Across Africa: The Case of Eastern and Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean", Anti-Piracy Unit of the Indian Ocean Commission, 2018.

39. J. P. Coelho, "African Approaches to Maritime Security: Southern Africa", *Peace and Security Studies*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Mozambique, 2013.

Factors of influence

Crime flows via movements between the African continent and the Arabian Peninsula via the Gulf of Aden are not new and have emerged as the world's busiest smuggling routes for humans, arms, and illegal drugs, linking northern Somalia, Yemen, and other regions of East Africa.⁴⁰ The East African coastlines have been vulnerable to illicit drug smuggling, revealing the weakness of governance structures aggravated by the remoteness of much of the region's extended coastal areas. The study "The Heroine Coast: A Political Economy along the Eastern African Seaboard" highlights how small harbors and islands serve as landing points for heroin smugglers using dhow routes to traffic drugs from the Makran coast to the African shore. These movements are still largely shaped by the monsoons and masked by regular activities of ancient fishing villages and the enduring (licit) small-scale dhow trade from Asia.⁴¹

The coastlines of the East African region, from Kismayo to Cape Town, are marked by the illegal drug trade, especially the heroin trade, which has become embedded in local communities. These illegal trade networks are often linked to political elites, who take advantage of the lapses in governance of state institutions. The study highlighted the trafficking routes of the East African market for heroin as it was first shipped to Africa on motorized, wooden seagoing dhows. These vessels are then loaded with between 100 kg and 1,000 kg consignments of contraband off the Makran coast of southern Pakistan. The dhows anchor off the coast of Africa in international waters, and flotillas of small boats collect the heroin and ferry it to various beaches, coves, or islands or offload it into small commercial harbors. The research reveals that dozens of such sites are used to land consignments along the entire eastern coastline, from north of Kismayo, Somalia, to Angoche, Mozambique.⁴²

Likewise, the porousness of East African coastlines opens up spaces for different forms of crime, such as arms trafficking and IUU fishing, which directly or indirectly support insurgencies or terrorist activities. For example, Jay Bahadur accounts for cases involving the nexus between arms trafficking and IUU fishing in the seaports of Yemen, Iran, and Somalia. Based on the 2015 maritime seizure of the dhow MV Nasir, evidence revealed a possible nexus between arms trafficking and IUU fishing. On September 24, 2015, the Nasir was interdicted by the Australian naval

40. J. Bahadur, "An Iranian Fingerprint? Tracing Type 56-1 Assault Rifles in Somalia", *Research Report*, The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crimes, 2021; N. Florqin, S. Lipott and F. Wairagu, "Weapons Compass: Mapping Illicit Small Arms Flow in Africa", Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, January 2019.

41. S. Haysom, P. Gastrow and M. Shaw, "The Heroine Coast: A Political Economy along the Eastern African Seaboard", *Research Paper*, No. 4, ENACT, 2018, available at: <https://enact-africa.s3.amazonaws.com>.

42. *Ibid.*

vessel HMAS Melbourne while transporting anti-tank guided missiles and other weaponry reportedly destined for the rebel Houthi administration in Yemen. The master of the dhow⁴³ was an Iranian national, Javed Hoot. Hoot claimed ownership of seven dhows. These dhows were used by Hoot for independent arms trafficking operations into Somalia. Hoot was also involved in the Somali fisheries sector.⁴⁴

In 2020, the seizure of the Al-Bari 2 dhow in the Gulf of Aden by the Saudi Naval forces reported the Somali-Iran transnational trafficking network involved in the transfer of arms from Iran to the Houthis in Yemen.⁴⁵ Furthermore, weapons were alleged to have arrived from Yemen, with speedboats being used to move them from Al Mukalla, Bir Ali, Balhaf, and Ash Shihr on the Yemeni coast to Somalia. Some of these weapons are further trafficked into Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, South Sudan, and Central African Republic, and the value of these goods increases significantly.⁴⁶

Similarly, the nexus between maritime crimes such as arms trafficking, IUU fishing and terrorism is highlighted in the case of the two business partners, Mohamed Hussein Salad and Ahmed Ali Sulaiman Mataan. It is alleged that Salad and Mataan are part of the Al-Shabaab smuggling and weapon trafficking network in Yemen. Mataan owned a fleet of dhows and, between 2017 and 2020, profited from the transported weapons and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), among other equipment. In late 2021, it was reported that the Al-Shabaab placed an order with Mataan for weapons and IED materials from Yemen. Salad was involved in facilitating the weapons shipment to Somalia. Salad is also alleged to be in contact with at least two companies that engage in IUU fishing. These companies were part of a forced labor fishing operation, and the contact with a prominent arms trafficker does provide a preliminary nexus between IUU fishing and arms trafficking networks.⁴⁷

43. A thin boat or ship with one or two masts is common in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. These wooden boats are not easily detected by radars.

44. J. Bahadur, "Fishy Business: Illegal Fishing in Somalia and the Capture of State Institutions", The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crimes, July 1, 2021.

45. J. Bahadur, "Snapping Back Against Iran: The Case of the Al Bari 2 and the UN Arms Embargo", The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crimes, November 30, 2020.

46. M. Horton, "Arms from Yemen Will Fuel Conflict in the Horn of Africa", *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 18, No. 8, April 17, 2020.

47. "Treasury Designated Al-Shabaab Financial Facilitators", Press Releases, US Department of the Treasury, October 17, 2022, available at: <https://home.treasury.gov>.

Terrorist activities in East African coastline areas

In the past, these sea routes have been exploited by the Al-Qaeda terrorist network and its affiliates. The sea was used to transport explosives to attack their targets in East Africa. It was revealed that Al-Qaeda used vessels to transport explosives to bomb the USA embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998 and the Mombasa attack in 2002. Al-Qaeda used the sea for its logistical operations, such as in the 2002 coordinated attacks in Mombasa, Kenya, against the Israel-owned Paradise Hotel and the Israeli passenger jet. The attacks were coordinated with long-term planning, which involved the use of sea routes for the smuggling of weapons and explosives to Kenya and facilitating the attackers' own infiltration and escape. The attackers, the MANPADS (Man Portable Air Defence System), and the explosives used in the attack were smuggled into Kenya from Somalia aboard a commercial fishing boat. The maritime smuggling industry increasingly used local dhows and local affiliates, who were mainly the owners of the dhows in Lamu. These owners were familiar with the naval routines and navigation skills and blended inconspicuously into the maritime activities. Preparations for the event included the smuggling of shoulder-launched SA-7B missiles shipped from Yemen to Somalia and then smuggled into Kenya. Some of the preparations for escape after the attack were made in Lamu well in advance, where they purchased boats and safe houses to assist their escape after completing the mission.⁴⁸

Terrorist operatives of the Al-Qaeda network, such as Fazul Abdulla Mohamed, blended well with the lifestyles of local coastal communities by marrying a local woman, establishing businesses, NGOs, or entrepreneurial opportunities such as the building of boats, assisting with fishing ventures, and even starting up local football clubs. Fazul was designated as the mastermind behind the 1998 Al-Qaeda terror attack that led to the bombing of the US Embassy in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. Fazul's fishing activities on Faza Island in the Indian Ocean were an essential link between Somalia and Lamu and instrumental in bringing in the explosives and other weaponry of the terror group.⁴⁹

Since the 2000s, transnational terrorist organizations such as Al-Shabaab have relied more and more on maritime cross-border mobility to carry out their operations in the East African region. With the longest shorelines in East Africa, Al-Shabaab has exploited its ports of Kismayo and Mogadishu to strengthen its maritime strategy of taking control of legitimate and illegitimate businesses via the port. Even after losing control

48. J. Figel, "Al Qaeda Mombasa Attack 28 November 2002", The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, June 16, 2011, available at: <https://wikileaks.org>.

49. W. Keller, "Anatomy of a Terrorist Attack: An in-Depth Investigation into the 1998 Bombings of the U. S Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania", Matthew B. Ridgeway Center, University of Pittsburgh, 2005.

of the ports due to the African Union Mission to Somalia-led offensive strategies, Al-Shabaab maintained its maritime presence via its engagement with the illicit economy, exploiting its maritime targets to strengthen the group's financial stability. Lycan, Faulkner, and Doctor describe the success of Al-Shabaab's use of naval operations:

“First, poor maritime awareness in the past allowed the militant group to carve out a permanent presence in both licit and illicit economies. Second, the success of Al-Shabaab's financial growth and adaptability through its maritime activities indicates the value militant groups may place on seaborne activities for organizational longevity and vitality. Third, the group relies on Somalia's ports and coastal waters to support its land-based operations by receiving arms and supplies and moving its fighters into position.”⁵⁰

The maritime crime-terror nexus is profitable, considering that Al-Shabaab's involvement in charcoal smuggling strengthened its resilience as an organization in the 2000s. It was estimated that Al-Shabaab profited by an estimated 70-100 million USD annually from the charcoal trade.⁵¹ The UN Security Council's ban on charcoal exports in 2012 impacted the charcoal trade. However, the charcoal trade persisted, camouflaged as originating from other countries, and was strengthened by corruption in the maritime transport networks. Once the charcoal reaches the Gulf States, the middlemen sell and distribute the charcoal to retail outlets and restaurants.⁵²

After the charcoal ban, Al-Shabaab developed different trades, such as sugar smuggling and mafia-style taxation systems. Raw sugar was shipped from Brazil into Somali ports controlled by Al-Shabaab-linked entrepreneurs and then moved overland across the border via Kenya to be resold.⁵³ Further, Al-Shabaab established an elaborate Mafia-style taxation system with connections to Somalia's largest port, Mogadishu. Al-Shabaab's infiltration of commercial shipping agents and port institutions has allowed it to obtain cargo manifests on imported goods, enabling the levying of taxes.⁵⁴

50. T. Lycan, C. Faulkner and A. C. Doctor, “Making Waves: Militant Maritime Operations along Africa's Eastern Coast”, *op. cit.*

51. K. Petrich, “Cows, Charcoal, and Cocaine: Al-Shabaab's Criminal Activities in the Horn of Africa”, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 45, No. 5-6, 2022, pp. 479-500.

52. This includes Al-Shabaab alleged businessmen such as Ali Ahmed Naaji (Jamame Brothers Company in Somalia); Bashir Khalif Musse and Mariam Barreh (Bushra Bachir Shipping and Logistics Services L.L.C); Abdulwahab Noor Abdi (the Al Nezam Al Asasy General Trading L.L.C); I. Gridneff, “Burning Somalia's Future: The Illegal Charcoal Trade Between the Horn of Africa and the Gulf”, in: H. Verhoeven (ed.), *Environmental Politics in the Middle East*, Oxford: Academic, 2018, pp. 121-148; United Nations Security Council, “Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea Submitted in Accordance with Resolution 2111 (2013)”, 2014.

53. K. Petrich, “How Crime Is Closely Linked to Al-Shabaab's Survival Strategy”, *The Conversation*, April 8, 2020; T. Lycan, C. Faulkner and A. C. Doctor, “Making Waves: Militant Maritime Operations along Africa's Eastern Coast”, *op. cit.*

54. T. Lycan, C. Faulkner and A. C. Doctor, “Making Waves: Militant Maritime Operations along Africa's Eastern Coast”, *op. cit.*

Al-Shabaab uses the Indian Ocean for financial gains and operational support. The group's infiltration into port operations gives it a strategic position to monitor imports and access a variety of improvised explosive devices using sea routes. Al-Shabaab maintains its presence in Puntland by using small boats to move its members in the region.

Similarly, IS Somalia in Puntland works with Somali pirates, namely Mohamed Garfanje's Hobyoo of the Haradhere Piracy Network, where boats are used to procure weapons and move members via maritime routes.⁵⁵ In 2019, IS Somalia coordinated its support via its Karrar hub to other regional affiliates in Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique, Congo, and South Africa.⁵⁶ Since 2020, Islamic State Mozambique has increasingly targeted the coastal Islands of Cabo Delgado. In April 2020, individuals were taken hostage, and five individuals were reported to have been killed on Quirimba Islands, near Pemba in Mozambique. The perpetrators could pass as regular civilians in small boats crossing from the mainland to the archipelago.⁵⁷ Since then, part of the broader maritime strategy of IS Mozambique or Al-Shabaab has included targeting and attacking numerous islands, including Ilha Vamize, Ilha Metundo, Ilha Mechange, and Ilha Mionge. This island-hopping maritime strategy of IS Mozambique has enabled the control of significant maritime infrastructure, such as the port of Mocimboa da Praia, and tapped into existing transnational illicit trade routes to enhance the terrorist network's financial viability.⁵⁸

Smuggling networks have been used as early as 2006 by the Al-Shabaab in Kenya, where both sea and land routes facilitated travel by Kenyan militants from the Pumwami Muslim Youth (later referred to as Muslim Youth Centre) to Somalia.⁵⁹ Likewise, in the early 2000s, the Ansaar Muslim Youth Centre (AMYC), based in Tanga, Tanzania, and headed by Sheikh Salim Abdulrahim Barahiyanin, engaged in radicalization, recruitment and fundraising on behalf of Al-Shabaab. It also had operational and tactical partnerships with Tanga-based criminal networks involved in smuggling and drug trafficking. For example, the UN Security Council Report 2012 of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea highlighted that many young people were ferried from Pongwe (Tanga) to Kismayo (Somalia). Other Al-Shabaab recruiters used boats from Korogwe

55. Australian Government, "Islamic State Somalia", *National Security*, 2023, available at: www.nationalsecurity.gov.au.

56. C. Weiss, R. O'Farell, T. Candland and L. Poole, "Fatal Transaction: The Funding Behind the Islamic State's Central Africa Province", *op. cit.*

57. "Mozambique: Terrorist Attack in Quirimba Island", *All Africa*, April 13, 2020, available at: <https://allafrica.com>.

58. K. Moss, "A Hop, Skip, and a Jump: Ansar Al-Sunna's Island Hopping", *Stable Seas*, October 13, 2020, available at: www.stableseas.org.

59. C. Anzalone, "Kenya's Muslim Youth Center and Al-Shabab's East African Recruitment", *CTC Sentinel*, Vol. 5, No. 10, October 2012, pp. 9-13.

to Kismayo via Mombasa and Malindi. It was also reported that locations like Lamu, Malindi, and Kwale became pivotal hubs for Al-Shaabab movements' sea routes. Fishermen who owned boats such as Yusuf Madi (a.k.a Yusuf Bakar, an Al-Shaabab affiliate of the Muslim Youth Centre) from Lamu were engaged in the smuggling of goods and men and facilitated the ferrying of Al-Shabaab members and new recruits from Tanzania to Kismayo and Barawe in Somalia. Some "facilitators" became notable – such as the Tanga-based Muene family network headed by 'Cholo' – and engaged in transporting AMYC members between Tanzania and Somalia. The Muene network was heavily involved in the illicit drug trade, illegally importing khat from Kenya into Tanzania and trafficking hard drugs (heroin) via the Tanga coast to Mozambique and South Africa. The network employed local fishermen and fishing vessels for a variety of purposes, including the transportation of AMYC recruits to Somalia, the smuggling of Al-Shabaab members from Somalia via Tanga to other destinations in Africa, and the network's lucrative smuggling activities of hard drugs and other goods.⁶⁰ Therefore, combating cross-border terrorist infiltration has become essential to counter-terrorism strategies.

60. *Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea*, UN Security Council, 2012.

A focus on the crime-terror nexus of the Kenyan coast

Cross-border transit sites in the counties of Lamu, Kwale, and Kilifi in Kenya have been designated for the movement of accused terrorist suspects. The Kenyan government has focused increased attention on border policing and surveillance. This section describes the crime-terror nexus in the coastal region of Kenya. It describes terrorist mobility patterns as intertwined in environments with increased mobility flows due to trade and livelihoods, social kinship networks, and cultural requirements.

Specific features of the crime-terror nexus in the coastal areas of Kenya

The crime-terrorism nexus refers to cooperation or collaboration to carry out activities between organized crime and terrorism.⁶¹ This translates into several terrorist groups beyond Al-Shabaab engaging in drug or human trafficking and/or other criminal activities such as money laundering to finance their operations.⁶² The crime-terror convergence in Kenya has been emphasized in the literature.⁶³ However, minimal emphasis has been placed on how this convergence plays out in the local communities, particularly on the coast. The obscure nature of the crimes and their links with terrorism makes it challenging to distinguish the crime-terror convergence⁶⁴ in the coastal peripheries of Kenya.⁶⁵ This sub-section describes the maritime crime-terrorism nexus, particularly emphasizing its salient features in Kenyan coastline areas.

Vanga, Shimoni, and Lunga Lunga in Kwale County in the coastal region of Kenya have been placed under the constant watch of law enforcement authorities, mainly the Kenya Coast Guard, who are on the

61. P. Williams, "Terrorism and Organized Crime: Convergence, Nexus or Transformation?", in: G. Jervas (ed.), *Report on Terrorism*, Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Establishment, 1998, pp. 69-92.

62. ESAAMLG, "Anti-money Laundering and Counter-terrorist Financing Measures – Kenya", *Second Round Mutual Evaluation Report*, Dar es Salaam, September 2022.

63. "Kenya to Curb Sugar Smuggling That Funds Extremism", Africa Defense Forum (ADF), January 20, 2016, available at: <https://adf-magazine.com>; M. Daghar, "Drug Trafficking: Permitting the Regional Khat Trade Could Stop Its Smuggling", ENACT, 2021, available at: <https://enactafrica.org>.

64. L. I. Shelley and J. T. Picarelli, "Methods Not Motives: Implications of the Convergence of International Organized Crime and Terrorism", *Police Practice and Research: An International Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 2002, pp. 305-318.

65. M. Daghar, W. Okumo and O. Simon, "Port Expansion Could Expose Kenya to More Crimes", Institute for Security Studies, 2022, available at: <https://issafrica.org>.

lookout for criminals and militants who may want to return via the Indian Ocean. This recent peak of surveillance comes after a series of attempts by security agencies to thwart an attack in Mombasa in August 2021. Increased vigilance on the porous borders via the sea means increased patrolling of the borders of Kenya and Tanzania and the sea routes where criminals and militants made their way into Kenya from Tanzania, Mozambique, and Somalia. The media reported that the Kenyan authorities believed that terrorism suspects who had joined the ISIS-affiliated network in the Mozambique province of Cabo Delgado may return to Kenya to carry out militant activities.⁶⁶

Similarly, Lamu County has been flagged for the past two decades for terrorist activities. Being in the Indian Ocean, the islets in Lamu (Pate, Manda, and Lamu) have been a focus for security by the Kenyan Defense Forces against Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab activities.⁶⁷ In a study on Al-Shabaab recruitment, I have previously highlighted how Al-Shabaab used human trafficking networks to transport their recruits from Kenya to Somalia using the sea routes, as discussed in the previous section.⁶⁸ The Lamu islands have become a haven or conduit for terrorist activities, such as the abduction of Western tourists from Kiwayu Island in 2011.⁶⁹ An original map has been created to show better the locations discussed in the paper and the crime-terror routes and fluxes described in detail in this section.

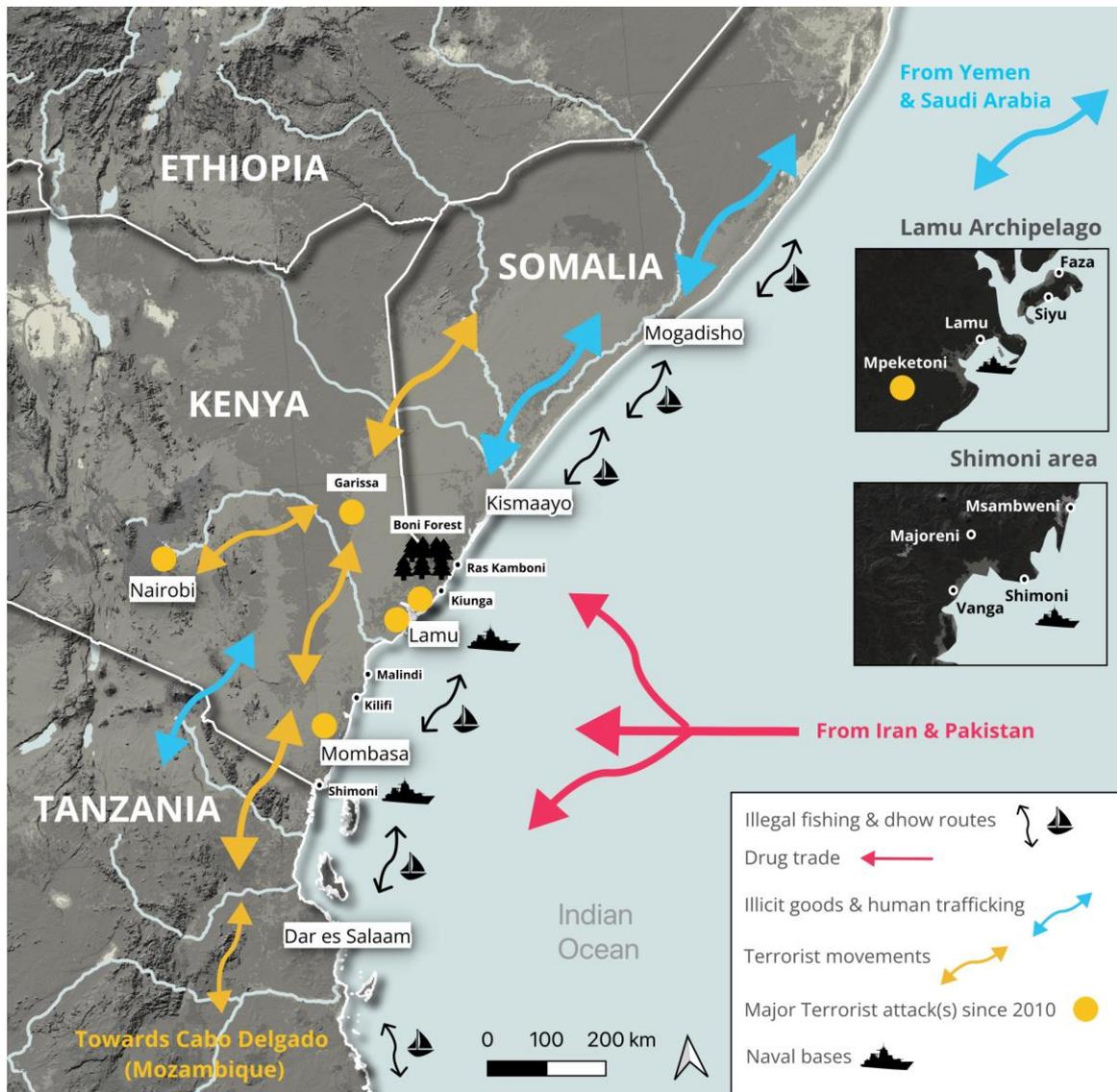
66. S. Cece, "Security Agencies Put Kenya-Tanzania Border on Terror Watch List", *The East African*, August 31, 2011, available at: www.theeastafrican.co.ke.

67. O. G. Mwangi, "Five Reasons Why Militants Are Targeting Kenya's Lamu County", *The Conversation*, February 14, 2022, available at: <https://theconversation.com>.

68. F. A. Badurdeen, "How Do Individuals Join the Al-Shabaab? An Ethnographic Insight into Recruitment Models for the Al-Shabaab Network in Kenya", *African Security*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2021; "Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea", *UN Security Council Report*, 2012.

69. T. Nyagah, J. Mwangi and L. Attree, "Inside Kenya's War on Terror: The Case of Lamu", Saferworld, 2017, available at: www.saferworld.org.uk.

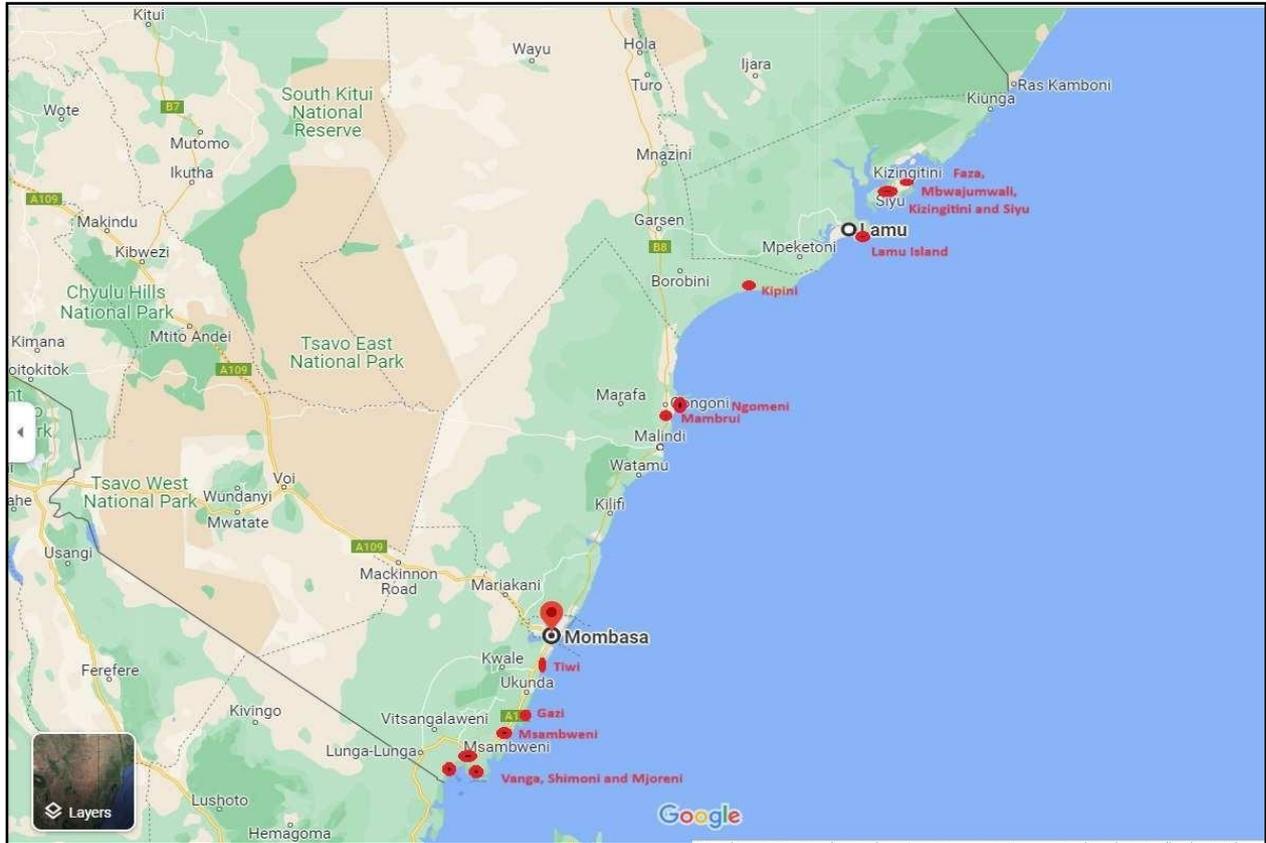
Figure 3: The map illustrates the main fluxes, locations, and maritime routes of the East African crime-maritime nexus



Source: José Luengo-Cabrera & Author, 2023.

This ethnographic study involved in-depth interviews with 96 individuals and field visits to eleven specified localities. These towns were referred to by the local community members to the researcher as spaces for legal and illegal activities known as border transit points. Before the fieldwork, the researcher and her research assistants conducted a series of 11 interviews with gatekeepers such as village elders, NGO personnel, and youth leaders. The initial discussions facilitated the researcher’s ability to identify selected areas deemed hotspots in Kenya for different forms of criminality, such as smuggling and human trafficking. Due to the sensitive nature of the study, names and specific localities are withheld to maintain participant anonymity.

Figure 4: This map illustrates the key locations of the crime-maritime nexus in the Kenyan coastal region that were researched by the author between 2021 and 2023



Source: Author via Google Maps.

During the fieldwork in the coastal region of Kenya, the researcher asked what participants from the local communities would consider as maritime crimes. Beyond piracy and human trafficking, considered as crucial concerns, Kenyan participants in the study highlighted additional maritime crimes that threaten the stability and economy of their communities in their localities as well as in the broader region. Illegal fishing and smuggling of goods (sugar, oil, soap) and contraband items (illicit drugs) were the most frequently mentioned activities that the interviewees felt were illegal. Due to fears associated with information leakages either to government authorities or to criminal networks, very few discussed crimes related to the smuggling of illicit drugs or narcotics, with human and arms smuggling or with terrorist activities. However, narratives enabled an understanding of the specific features of the crime-terror nexus.

In exploring the characteristics of the crime-terror nexus, it is important to understand the motives of those engaging in criminal or terrorist activities, how they are involved with terrorist networks or vice versa, and their *modus operandi*. Criminal gangs are absorbed into the Al-Shabaab network for

financial motives. Their connectedness with Al-Shabaab may also involve money for drug use, weapons, protection from the police, and even to maintain power in their localities. Most of the criminal gangs involved with drug use and drug peddling were considered to be deeply involved with local Al-Shabaab networks, too. First, these local gangs needed the money for drug use and hence were able to do anything to hustle their daily drug needs. Second, these individuals become important foot soldiers for both the criminal gangs and Al-Shabaab in these peripheral communities. Third, each criminal syndicate provides safe havens for each other to hide or carry on their activities in their respective localities.

Sharing spaces for activities by criminal and terrorist networks signifies that the two types of organizations agree to collaborate in their respective localities. Terrorist activities tend to collaborate with crimes that are connected with street-level criminals. Locals explained a thriving environment for drug and human trafficking and Al-Shabaab recruitment in localities with a high rate of gang activities, such as Mambrui, Faza, Kiunga, Mbwajumwali, and Majoreni. Often, when Al-Shabaab activities were evident, locals or media highlighted it as ‘just an activity of a local criminal gang’⁷⁰ because of the fear of speculating about the presence of Al-Shabaab in their locations as well as the need for substantial evidence to term individuals as Al-Shabaab members.

Likewise, localities such as Ndau and Kiwayu are infamous for criminal gangs and Al-Shabaab recruitment. Locals stated that ‘Most Wanted’ criminals or gangs come and hide in these towns. The areas do have Al-Shabaab sympathizers and provide a safe haven for recruiters, traffickers, and smugglers alike. Criminal or Al-Shabaab operatives work clandestinely. For members of the local community, distinguishing whether these members are human traffickers, trafficked individuals, Al-Shabaab recruiters, or Al-Shabaab defectors is not easy due to their clandestine nature.⁷¹

The two criminal organizations collaborate to keep law enforcement personnel away from their operational localities. For both – the criminal gangs or the Al-Shabaab network – the police are viewed as the common enemy. The two syndicates join together to attack the police or local government administrators, who may threaten the flow of their activities in their respective localities. In 2019, two local administrators were killed by gang members in Lamu. This included the deaths of Mbwajumwali Chief Mohamed Famau and Myabogi sublocation Assistant Chief Athman Shee. It was alleged that drug gangs were involved.⁷² In 2020, a police officer was

70. Interview with women’s leader, Faza, July 2022.

71. Interview with women’s leader, Lamu, June 2022.

72. C. Praxides, “Drug Barons Killed Lamu Administrators, Police Says”, *The Star*, December 12, 2019, available at: www.the-star.co.ke.

killed in Tchundwa village in Lamu County by local gang members.⁷³ Similarly, in 2019, a police officer's body was discovered in the mangrove forest in Kizingitini, alleged to have been murdered by drug barons.⁷⁴ Comparable cases of law enforcement personnel killed by criminal or terrorist groups have occurred in other localities, such as the Northern and North Eastern regions of Kenya,⁷⁵ suggesting the possibility of a synchronized crime-terror nexus.

Operational and tactical activities were imitated or used by criminal or terrorist networks to strengthen their activities. For example, criminal gangs in Kiunga (Lamu) used Al-Shabaab tactics to threaten people in the community to enable them to carry out their activities, such as drug peddling or human trafficking. An NGO staff member reported on how local criminal gangs in Kiunga distributed threatening leaflets signed as Al-Shabaab to keep people away from specific localities to enable them to carry out their activities. Locals in these terrified communities refrained from going outside their homes. Later, community members felt these leaflets had nothing to do with Al-Shabaab, but they did not want to take any chances as these localities were known to harbor Al-Shabaab members. Hence, the Al-Shabaab name was used by criminals and juvenile gangs to mask their operations.⁷⁶ Similarly, Al-Shabaab members often hid in local criminal gangs to seek protection from the police. This was also true in the case of Al-Shabaab defectors, who would usually take refuge among criminal gangs to prevent them from getting caught.⁷⁷ Being among criminal groups also enabled these Al-Shabaab defectors or returnees to navigate around legal offenses. Getting arrested for criminal offenses as a criminal gang member was considered less traumatic than getting arrested as an Al-Shabaab member, where terrorism charges may apply.⁷⁸

Headhunting by these networks for the right individual entailed voluntary or involuntary recruitment.⁷⁹ Voluntary recruitment for terrorism/terrorist activities involves the willingness to join the network due to intrinsic or extrinsic factors. Involuntary recruitment refers to those forced to join the network via deceptive practices or trafficked into the network. Youth disappearances were evident in these localities, and the local term 'being sold' [*kuuzwa*, in kiswahili] was a term used for boys or

73. A. Ochieng, "Lamu Police Officer Killed in Tchundwa Village by Unknown Assailants", *Kenya News Agency*, June 9, 2020, available at: www.kenyanews.go.ke.

74. K. Kazungu, "Lamu Police Officer Was Killed by Drug Dealers: Security Boss", *Nation*, November 13, 2019, available at: <https://nation.africa>.

75. "Cop Fatally Shot, 3 Injured in Shootout with Suspected Gunmen in Isiolo", *Kahawa Tungu*, September 12, 2023, available at: <https://kahawatungu.com>.

76. Interview with Religious Leader, Kiunga, June 2022.

77. Interview with youth leader, Faza, June 2022.

78. Interview with NGO Personnel, Lamu, June 2022

79. F. A. Badurdeen, "Women Who Volunteer: A Relative Autonomy Perspective in Al-Shabaab Female Recruitment in Kenya", *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 2020, pp. 616-637, available at: <https://doi.org>.

girls who were betrayed and trafficked or recruited against their will by Al-Shabaab. Involved in these crimes, whether by criminal organizations or terrorist networks, are those skilled in the use of their fishing vessels to transport illegal goods or the use of ports to dock and whose navigation skills are used to remain undetected by law enforcement surveillance. Local fishermen usually bring household items from Tanzania to Shimoni (southern Kenya). When they bring illegal goods, they switch off their boats' lights at night until they finish loading them. Once unloaded, the lights on their ships are switched back on. This prevents surveillance by the maritime police or the Navy, such as in Shimoni, a crucial maritime military base at the joint border of Kenya and Tanzania. Similarly, goods hidden under the boats or beneath the fish caught on the day are not visible during patrolling. Ships and boats pass these surveillance points due to the fishermen being known as belonging to the local community.⁸⁰

Criminal networks also recruit local fishermen for their knowledge and expertise of the seas and maritime landscapes, such as their knowledge of the location of mangrove shelters or the local surveillance patrols. For example, in Vanga and Majoreni, smugglers mostly use mangrove shelters as they provide safe spaces that give ample time for changing boats, stayovers, hiding goods or people, and boat refueling.⁸¹

Figure 5: On a boat with a local fisherman to Kizingitini



These mangroves are known as contested spaces for crimes in Lamu County.

Source: Author, 2023.

80. Interview with youth leader, Majoreni, Kwale, January 2022.

81. Interview with fisherman, Vanga, Kwale, January 2022.

Noor's story illustrates how skilled individuals such as boatmen were recruited (voluntarily or involuntarily) based on the needs of the criminal or terrorist network. These networks depend on transporting members or goods from one place to another or assisting their tactical operations using sea routes. Noor's involvement with criminal gangs and knowledge of navigating the local police's surveillance tactics due to his prior drug peddling experience probably strengthened his use of the terrorist network.⁸² Individuals with previous knowledge of local surveillance and who can navigate surveillance and use deceptive strategies are vital for tactical operations. Illegal drugs and weapons make their way despite the highly patrolled sea routes. Even smuggled people hide underneath goods to bypass surveillance. Most criminal operations occurred at night or during high tide seasons to avert surveillance. Most people risked their lives in these illicit undertakings to bypass surveillance at night and during high tide seasons.⁸³

In a few cases, it was evident that social networks such as families and friends of those involved in crime or terrorist networks assisted passively or actively in their local tactical operations. Families are employed by these criminal networks to conduct their clandestine activities. A few participants reported that in areas such as Majoreni, families were involved in human trafficking networks. The son or the father may bring the individual using *boda bodas* [motorbike transport] to the next point or may host victims of human trafficking in their houses for a couple of days until they are taken by their boats to the next destination. The women in these houses catered to their hosts' daily sustenance needs until the day the migrants could travel.⁸⁴ In areas such as Kizingitini, families played a crucial role in harboring Al-Shabaab or gang members and their weapons and assisted them in traveling from one place to another till they completed their activities.⁸⁵ Local homes were used as guesthouses to host smuggled or trafficked individuals. Abdul, a native of Faza, explained how some of the local houses or guesthouses in Faza and Kiunga were instrumental in hosting criminals [traffickers, smugglers, and terrorists]. Specific local houses were known as homes for criminal networks. House space can be provided for days, weeks, or months till the completion of their activities. Some house owners were aware of the network, while some guesthouse owners were naïve, unaware of the tenants' activities as these individuals just rented out their premises.⁸⁶

82. Interview with boat owner, Lamu, June 2022.

83. Interview with fisherman, Majoreni, Kwale, January 2022.

84. Interview with village elder, Majoreni, Kwale, January 2022.

85. Interview with fisherman, Lamu, June 2022.

86. Interview with businessman, Faza, July 2022.

Crime-terror nexus thrives among sympathetic or terrorized communities

Sympathetic communities in specific localities, such as in Lamu, knowingly or unknowingly assisted the members of the crime networks due to ethno-religious communal ties. Traffickers or smugglers often exploit the local ethnic or religious markers by playing the sympathy card or creating a communal responsibility to assist one's fellow community. A community leader from Mambui explained how some community members viewed helping foreign migrants seeking their assistance to cross over from Kenya to Tanzania or vice versa as a humanitarian or communal duty: "When you see a person suffering, running away from his country and he is your fellow brother [Muslim] we can't turn a blind eye. He is suffering; he may be running away from his country due to the war or any other trouble. So we are trying to help him have a better and safer life. So, whether this person is a criminal, gang member, or a terrorist, we will not know."⁸⁷

Most fishermen and the community were aware of the people who travel back and forth in their waters. Still, there was not much the fishermen could do as human smuggling was entirely normalized in some of their localities as locals revealed a 'don't care' attitude to this practice.⁸⁸ People refrained from questioning newcomers about their destinations due to personal safety considerations. Rashid, a fisherman, revealed his experiences by explaining how he and his crew members assisted another boat ferrying passengers to Kiunga [Lamu County]. The fisherman and his crew knew that the boat owner was heading to Ras Kamboni [Somalia] despite the boat crew not giving them much information. The boat owner refrained from talking about the destination and said they needed to rest in Kiwayu. All that Rashid was told was that the young men in the boat were heading for jobs in Somalia. The men were mainly Tanzanians and Kenyans. The boat crew also revealed that their next stop was Kiunga, where they had to pick up two other men. Boatmen and fishermen often assisted one another at sea and in ports, as it was common practice to help their fellow fishermen. In such cases, even if the destination were known, not many fishermen would ask the strangers any questions due to fear of the network. Rashid revealed that he just assisted the other boat crew: "We acted like it is not of our concern. We just shared our food and had a friendly chat with them."⁸⁹

Criminal gangs, which may involve juvenile gangs as well as illegal drug-related gangs, often use violence to keep communities at bay so that their activities can thrive in their localities. Terrorizing populations enables

87. Interview with Community Leader, Mambui, April 2022.

88. Interview with boat owner, Lamu, August 2022.

89. Interview with fisherman, Lamu, July 2022.

both criminal and terrorist networks to carry out their local operations. Armed gangs protect drug or weapon cartels and those who buy and sell these products. A local ecosystem for organized crime syndicates exists in these localities, often making it difficult for law enforcement personnel to nab suspects in increasingly intimidated communities.⁹⁰ A local businessman from Kizingitini explained how weapons are sold and how young boys can be recruited to Al-Shabaab in the locality. Young men who believe in easy money and are not afraid of getting involved in risky jobs such as trafficking or drug peddling are eager to join gangs.⁹¹ Meeting the right person from the gang enables the recruit to join the network, whether it is to acquire drugs or weapons. A similar recruitment strategy applies to those who want to join Al-Shabaab voluntarily. Despite some community members knowing about these crime networks, recruitment pathways, or criminal activities, they refrain from reporting them to the police due to their fear of the crime networks.⁹²

Crime-terror networks use fear to intimidate community members or specific individuals into supporting or contributing to their activities.⁹³ Fazul narrated the horrendous ordeal of a colleague who was a boat skipper involved in ferrying passengers to Lamu Island. In February 2021, his friend took a trip to ferry passengers from Kiwayu. The passenger [possibly a Swahili Arab] asked for the trip but did not specify the exact location. The friend had started from Kiwayu and had to pick up around four girls with the two foreigners. From Kiwayu, he was forced to go to Kiunga as they were willing to pay the boat owner. Later, they stopped mid-way and asked to return to Kiwayu. Due to various stops, this took his friend close to six hours in the speedboat. The friend explained that he had heard complaints that the girls were promised jobs in Saudi Arabia, but they had been hopping from island to island, not knowing where they were heading. The girls were crying and were tired. They wanted to go home but had no way out as the two men controlled them. The man directed where they should head, and the boat owner had to comply as he feared for his life. The boat owner knew that the girls' lives were at risk as they would end up as forced labor or Al-Shabaab recruits; he was not sure which. However, the boat owner could never go to the police as he feared for his life and his family: "Most often when these outsiders reach you, they know all about you. They know exactly how you would remain quiet."⁹⁴

90. See for youth gangs protecting areas where governments are less visible. R. S. Sobel and B. J. Osoba, "Youth Gangs as Pseudo Governments: Implications for Violent Crime", *Southern Economic Journal*, Vol. 75, No. 4, 2009, pp. 996-1018.

91. H. Nguyen, T. A. Loughran, C. Morselli and F. Ouellett, "Offending Frequency and Responses to Illegal Monetary Incentives", *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, Vol. 38, No. 1, 2022, pp. 239-265.

92. Interview with youth, Kizingitini, July 2022.

93. J. Lane and J. W. Meeker, "Fear of Gang Crimes: A Look at Three Theoretical Models", *Law and Society Review*, Vol. 37, No. 2, 2003, pp. 425-456.

94. Interview with boat owner, Lamu, June 2022.

Overall, the prevailing “don’t care” attitude and reluctance to report to law enforcement locals regarding clandestine activities was tied to the fear of associating with these networks. Ali, a *boda boda* transporter in Lamu, explained that locals feared these criminal or Al-Shabaab networks as the operations often involved violence. Some local fishermen and businessmen were involved and took a crucial role in facilitating local smuggling chains asserting their own circles of control.⁹⁵ Local residents involved in these networks varied in their positioning within the smuggler-trafficker networks. Some were facilitators for planning, while others were just involved in logistical support. Some of those involved in carrying out petty jobs of logistical support did not even know the complete syndicate, as explained by Salim, a youth fisherman from Kiunga: “It’s a matter of what you are expected to do and not to questionback. You are paid for your work. They have their own code of conduct to adhere to.”⁹⁶ Therefore, once one is in these networks, the fear of the network makes one comply with their organizational confidences.

The culture of intimidation inculcated by these syndicates prevents locals from reporting to the authorities. In 2019, a Red Cross volunteer, Amina Bakari, from Mbwajumwali, Faza in Lamu, was killed by alleged criminal gang members. She was a *Nyumba kumi* [local community policing unit] official and played an active role in rehabilitating drug users in Faza Ward.⁹⁷ Some community members explained that her death was tied to her links with the local administrative chiefs and the police, so gang members feared an information leak and, hence, had to kill her.⁹⁸ Similarly, Razak, a fisherman living in Lamu, explained how locals who had reported on gangs or Al-Shabaab had been threatened by drug lords or how some Al-Shabaab members had even lost their lives.⁹⁹ Lack of trust in the police is reflected in stories of police abuse and harassment in these localities where the police are viewed as corrupt. Delayed responses to violent incidents in their localities by the police have further undermined the trust in law enforcement personnel.¹⁰⁰

95. Interview with boda boda rider, Mambui, May 2022.

96. Interview with youth, Kiunga, July 2022.

97. J. W. Mugambi, “25-year-old Red Cross Volunteer Amina Bakari killed in Lamu”, *The Saturday Standard*, 2019, available at: www.standardmedia.co.ke.

98. Interview with woman’s leader, Lamu, June 2022.

99. Interview with fisherman, Lamu, June 2022.

100. Interview with woman’s leader, Lamu, June 2022.

Poverty, structural injustices, and poor governance on the coast

Contemporary maritime threats emerge in regions that exhibit poor governance, deteriorating state-citizen relationships, poverty, perceived marginalization, or political instability in the East African region.¹⁰¹ Poor governance makes coastal areas susceptible to maritime crimes such as piracy, as in the case of Somalia, drug and weapon trafficking, human trafficking and smuggling, and terrorism, as in the cases of Kenya, Tanzania, and Mozambique.¹⁰² As explored in the study on Kenyan coastlines, these localities are part of wider areas where the state has little presence and means of control, which are often characterized by control by gangs, shadow economies, corruption, and existential local conflicts.

In some localities where community members grapple with historical injustices such as land ownership grievances or the lack of adequate governance, residents may perceive the national government and politicians as unfair regarding local development or the state's perceived marginalization. Such contexts open up opportunities for locals to be involved with non-state actors, particularly extremist groups, as a means of taking revenge or fighting the state.¹⁰³ Marginalized local contexts provide home bases for terrorist groups within emerging reciprocal relationships between local crime groups and terrorist networks operating within the local communities.¹⁰⁴

Areas lacking proximity to police stations or delayed interventions or responses by police officers to local crimes pushed individuals to trust local vigilante groups, where some local vigilante groups may also be local gangs who may often be linked to local drug lords. This provides a conducive environment for drug lords to operate in specific environments with the passive support of the community.¹⁰⁵ For some participants, law enforcement personnel were seen as the main perpetrators of the deteriorating police-community relationships. The need to bribe their way out of issues to do with illegal fishing or other petty illegal activities was viewed as 'constant harassment by the police.'¹⁰⁶ Bribing their way out was considered normal in some of the localities studied. In some areas, the high rates of bribery and corruption impeded some of the fishermen and boda-

101. T. Omenma and M. Onyango, "African Union Counterterrorism Frameworks and Implementation Trends among Member States of the East African Community", *India Quarterly*, Vol. 76, No. 1, 2020, pp. 103-119.

102. One Earth Future, "Challenges and Solutions for Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean. One Earth Future", *Stable Seas*, March 5, 2019, available at: www.stableseas.org.

103. Interview with village Elder, Kizingitini, July 2023.

104. L. Shelley *et al.*, "Methods and Motives: Exploring Links Between Transnational Organized Crime and International Terrorism", U.S. Department of Justice, 2005.

105. Interview with women's leader, Faza, July 2023.

106. Interview with BMU personnel, Shimoni, January 2022.

boda drivers from earning a decent living.¹⁰⁷ As the need for bribes increases, corruption increases in a context where locals need to find ways to maneuver around the laws and engage in illicit activities, often paving the way for criminal syndicates to cooperate in the localities.¹⁰⁸

Measures to help understand the legal and illegal definitions of crime in respective communities are necessary for gradual trust-building processes. For some participants interviewed, illegal fishing was considered “not illegal at all”. A participant described the term “illegal fishing” as the lifestyles of fishermen and their known techniques, which were practiced through generations. There was also concern that fishing methods used in Lake Victoria were being emulated as successful fishing techniques in coastal communities.¹⁰⁹ As fishing is the main livelihood in these localities, there is a need for more nuanced, locally compliant, culturally appropriate approaches and justifications by the Kenya Fisheries Services and the Coast Guard Services to help residents understand specific technologies associated with fishing. Empowering Beach Management Units (BMU) and local communities in the coastal region would greatly assist local fisheries governance.

In areas like Ngomeni, Ndaou or Mbwajumwali, the youth had very few options as legitimate businesses interacted with criminal and terrorist activities as a means of livelihood and survival. They would use their illegal earnings obtained mainly by trafficking, smuggling, or engaging with terrorist networks to support their families. They would channel this money to support their legal businesses, such as fishing or running kiosks, uplifting their families and communities in underdeveloped regions. Businessmen and even local politicians thrive on these criminal activities as they run these syndicates, pressuring local youth to become foot soldiers in conducting their illegal businesses. These businessmen may often be prominent in the area or local politicians, having control of their spheres of influence and assisting local families and communities.¹¹⁰ Hence, illegal businesses are almost always associated with legal enterprises because of the need not only to launder money but also to sustain the cycle of criminal activities. The resulting boundary between legal and illegal activities, therefore, on the one hand, creates big business people who thrive legally via these crime syndicates. On the other hand, petty criminals and major criminal factions are incorporated into these local illegal activities, whether it is within organized crime syndicates or terrorist activities.

107. Interview with youth, Majoreni, January 2022.

108. Interview with fisherman, Majoreni, January 2022.

109. Interview with fisherman, Lamu, July 2023.

110. Interview with woman's leader, Ngomeni, May 2022; and interview with religious leader, Vanga, January 2022.

The study reveals the presence of thriving trafficking and criminality networks all the way down the Swahili coast. Some of these networks have increasingly used the sea. The coastal region, notoriously highlighted as the “heroin coast,”¹¹¹ has been receiving drug cargo from the Makran coast of Iran and Pakistan. The net effect has been to further play into the erosion of state authority and control on the coastlines to prevent the narcotics trade. At the bottom of these crime-terror networks are young men who are involved in the final stages of trafficking cargo to the shore on their fishing boats and skiffs. Some of them are absorbed into the activities of terrorist networks in the coastal periphery.¹¹² The nexus of terrorism and crime is not visible at the higher levels due either to scanty data or to the difficulty in understanding the nodes on these crime-terror networks. However, the participation of young men in crime and violent extremism at the lower levels is visible. Research data lacks evidence to suggest that the leadership of terrorist groups is engaged in narco-trafficking but that the story is rather one of those at the bottom of the crime-terror nexus being sucked into both activities.

111. S. Haysom, P. Gastrow and M. Shaw, “The Heroine Coast: A Political Economy Along the Eastern African Seaboard”, *Research Paper*, No. 4, ENACT, 2018.

112. Similar findings are reflected in ‘Al-Shabaab’ in Mozambique. The bulk of the militant group’s rank and file are Mozambicans, including poor fishermen, frustrated petty traders, former farmers, and unemployed youth. Their motivations for joining and staying with the group are diverse but less shaped by ideology than by the desire to assert power locally using violence and to obtain the material benefits of being in Al-Shabaab as a good career move. See: “Stemming the Insurrection in Mozambique’s Cabo Delgado”, *Report*, No. 303, International Crisis Group, 2021, available at: www.crisisgroup.org.

Conclusion

Isolated from the main towns, the coastlines mark spaces of unemployment, poverty-stricken households, and a slowed trickle-down of economic opportunities, which locals consider to be the marginalization of the peripheries of the Kenyan state.¹¹³ The need to find a livelihood or make some extra income and the existence of local criminal network opportunities propelled a few members to engage in the crime flows in the East African region. Intersections of the activities of criminal gangs and terrorist networks in these localities represent crime-terror convergence. Fuelled by intimidation and fear, the two syndicates operated in the coastal peripheries, where communities faced pressure to comply for their survival.

Significantly, coastal livelihoods were embedded in criminal syndicates. Depending on the crime threshold, this social embeddedness in the crime syndicate varied in function of individual involvement. Most often, involvement in crime was justified as a necessity for survival along with their daily livelihoods. In contrast, others described their involvement as not being known or not significant in the local crime flows.

The presence of discontented youth and drug abuse facilitates a conducive base for criminal gangs and terrorist networks to recruit and operate in the coastline communities. Lack of opportunities for young men and women coupled with the desire for material things, cash, fashion, sophisticated lifestyles, peer pressure and rapid social mobility were considered causes of involvement in various types of crimes and delinquency for easy money.¹¹⁴ Drug addiction and drug availability among community members made individuals susceptible to using money to buy drugs, peddle drugs, or engage in other types of criminal activities such as theft, robbery, mugging, or killings.¹¹⁵

Organized crimes and terrorist networks tend to flourish where local law enforcement standards are considered low. Successful community policing is limited due to existential trust deficits. For some participants, law enforcement personnel were seen as the main culprits for the deteriorating police-community relationships. The high rates of bribe-taking and corruption impeded some of the fishermen and boda-boda riders from doing their normal work. As the need for bribes increases, corruption increases, paving the way for criminal syndicates to operate in the localities.

113. Interview with the village elder, Ngomeni, July 2022.

114. Interview with women's leader, Mambui, June 2022.

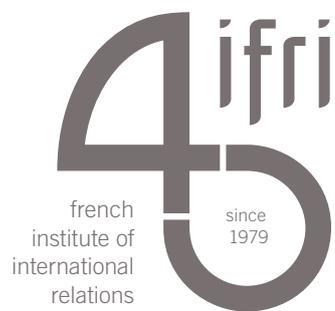
115. Interview with youth leader, Faza, July 2023.

Community awareness-raising training programs on countering crime and violent extremism on the coastlines by Kenyan law enforcement authorities such as the Maritime Police, Coastguard and civil society organizations should be able to highlight specific recruitment pathways as well as the *modus operandi* for criminal and terrorist networks in peripheral communities. Often, locals are entrapped in the syndicate due to existential vulnerabilities. Once entrapped, the members are unable to move out of these criminal or terrorist networks. Hence, knowledge of the *modus operandi* may enable individuals to be cautious of the syndicates. Knowledge building needs to be deployed on reporting mechanisms so that locals will know where to report and when to report such crimes. Lack of knowledge of reporting procedures and mistrust of the police prevent locals from bringing out information that could potentially strengthen the local intelligence gathering apparatuses.

Efforts made by law enforcement to curb maritime organized crime and terrorist activities, such as naval patrolling at the regional and local levels in the East African region, are much in evidence. However, there is a need for a deeper understanding of the complex *modus operandi* of the different criminal organizations. Different maritime crimes attract different interventions via regional frameworks. For example, piracy has been the focus of regional and international legal frameworks sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council for a very long time. A similar concerted effort is lacking for maritime terrorism.¹¹⁶ Often, regional efforts in collective security against maritime crimes and terrorism come up against issues of sovereignty and national state boundaries.¹¹⁷ Knowledge of the complex East African *modus operandi* involves contextual and situational knowledge over time and space and mobility dynamics embedded in local socio-cultural, political, and economic factors of the localities.

116. B. Hill, "Maritime Terrorism and the Small Boat Threat to the United States: A Proposed Response", California: Naval Postgraduate School, 2009.

117. K. Yaoren, R. Dass and J. Singh, "Maritime Malice in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines: The Asymmetric Maritime Threat at the Tri-Border Area", The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2021.



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