



COMMUNITY RESILIENCE TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN KENYA

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ABOUT THE REPORT

Focusing on six urban neighborhoods in Kenya, this report explores how key resilience factors have prevented or countered violent extremist activity at the local level. It is based on a one-year, mixed-method study led by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and supported by Sahan Research.

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Cover photo: People carry placards as they attend a memorial concert for the Garissa University students who were killed during an attack by gunmen, at the "Freedom Corner" in Nairobi, Kenya on April 14, 2015. Kenya gave the United Nations three months to remove Dadaab camp, housing 350,000 registered Somali refugees, as part of its response to the killing of 148 people in nearby Garissa by a Somali Islamist group. Reuters/Thomas Mukoya Image ID: rtr4xbqv.

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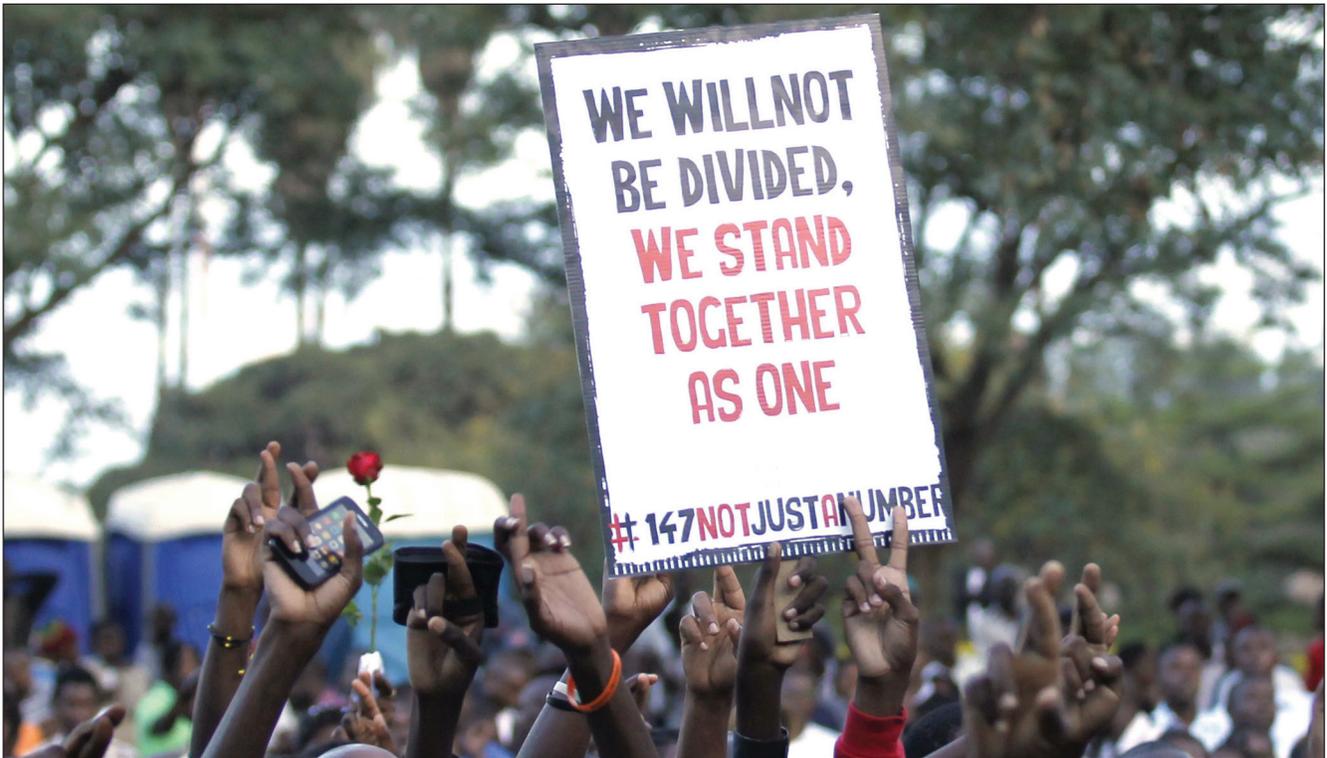
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[Communities facing violent extremist threats need to develop resilience capacities and strategies. Without commensurate capacity and action, threats can overwhelm even highly resilient communities.]

Summary

- Over the years, Kenya has conveyed an idyllic public image of a peaceful society in a region of conflict-ridden states. A much more contested narrative of a violent past exists, however.
- Despite initiatives related to Christian-Muslim conflicts in the 1990s, a new regional security threat emerged, mainly revolving around the activities of al-Shabaab.
- Groups like al-Shabaab understand and use a combination of political realities, socioeconomic factors, and individual characteristics that render many vulnerable to recruitment.
- Qualitative studies show a relationship between heavy-handed counterterrorism operations by security forces and radicalization of Kenya's Muslim population.
- A paradox has emerged, where emphasis on winning the hearts and minds of target populations has collided with the dominance of hard military and security approaches to countering violent extremism.
- The challenge with a concept like resilience to violence, which is both ambiguous and dynamic, is—for analytical purposes—to identify a concrete and measurable relationship.
- Communities that prevent the emergence of violent conflict, or rebound more quickly after it, have everyday capacities to successfully harness against extremist violence.
- Communities with genuine associations with religious members from different groups experience less violent extremist activity.
- Fluid religious and ethnic identities, which might lead to higher tolerance of and openness to members of other religions and tribal groups, do not explain community resilience to violent extremism.
- Communities facing violent extremist threats need to develop resilience capacities and strategies. Without commensurate capacity and action, threats can overwhelm even highly resilient communities.
- Heavy-handed security approaches not only increase the risk of violent extremist activity, they also undermine community resilience factors and relationships.

Introduction

Violent extremism often spreads through localized conflict in which extremist groups manipulate local grievances to gain position and traction. Both the international community and national governments have long had difficulty working in such small-scale and diverse contexts because of how rapidly conflict dynamics, cultural factors, and scale and sustainability issues change. Mitigating and preventing extremist violence effectively may demand new approaches, such as resilience practice, that emphasize community adaptation and collective action. Understanding how communities undermine and regulate violent extremist groups contributes to a more accurate assessment of local risk and vulnerability and improved, targeted support. Core capacities and successful strategies identified across communities could form an evidence-based foundation for successful prevention programming in and beyond Kenya.

This study builds on Ashutosh Varshney's research on community resilience to communal violence in India, Ami Carpenter's analysis of the resilience of Baghdad communities to sectarian violence, and Marshall Wallace and Mary Anderson's comparative analysis of nonwar communities.¹ These studies show consensus on aspects of resilience, but each study also makes unique contributions. For example, all three note the importance of both bridging relationships among diverse community groups in preventing or mitigating violence and *collective efficacy*, or a community's belief that it has the power to achieve shared goals. Wallace and Anderson make a special contribution in identifying the importance of specific leadership styles. Carpenter identifies the crucial role of *overlapping ties*, or relationships community groups have with groups outside their community. For example, sectarian groups entered Baghdad communities based on familial relations between rural and urban tribes. In aggregating their findings, this study tests a framework for community resilience to violent extremism.

Kenya was selected as the study site because it is accessible and relatively safe and because it has a growing extremist problem. Since the military's invasion of Somalia, Kenya has seen an increase in activity, including violent attacks, by Somali-based Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen, commonly known as al-Shabaab; recruitment for the war in Somalia; the radicalization of youth; the infiltration of local mosques; and illicit financial transactions. At the same time, the heavy-handed security response to growing levels of violent extremism has antagonized Kenya's local communities and angered youth, increasing their vulnerability to radicalization and recruitment. The experience of Kenya demonstrates again the need for effective prevention alternatives to traditional law enforcement and intelligence approaches to violent extremism and terrorism.

Over the years, Kenya has conveyed an idyllic public image of a peaceful society in a region of conflict-ridden states. A much more contested narrative of a violent past exists, however, deriving from Kenya's wars of colonial resistance in the late nineteenth century and of independence in the 1950s. Immediately following independence, a violent outburst against Kenya's first postcolonial government erupted, supported mainly by residents of the Somali-dominated northeastern region (then known as the Northern Frontier District). The official response, known as the Shifta (bandit) War, included a state of emergency that lasted until 1991. During this period, reports emerged of state-led massacres against residents of the Mandera (1981), Wajir (1984), and Garissa (1983) counties.

On the Kenyan coast, a less violent confrontation with Kenya's postcolonial government involved demands for secession of an undefined territory, supported mainly by the region's Swahili (Afro-Arab) and Arab-Muslim populations. The supporters of what became known as the Mwambao (coastline) Movement feared potential alienation and disruption of their culture by the government of an independent Kenya dominated by up-country Christian elites. Coastal

Mitigating and preventing extremist violence effectively may demand new approaches, such as resilience practice, that emphasize community adaptation and collective action.

Muslim politics would remain quiet until 1991, when the Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK) was formed in Mombasa.

The official criminalization and co-optation of Muslim activists in the mid-1990s occurred at the same time that extremist groups operating out of Somalia and Sudan increased their inter-linked and underground planning and strategizing. These groups became responsible for many attacks in the region.² The earliest one known was the al-Ittihad al-Islami, a Somali Islamist and nationalist political group with links to al-Qaeda. With the help of former IPK activists, al-Qaeda set up its East African cell in Kenya during the 1990s, which staged two major attacks in Kenya in 1998 and 2002. After these attacks, Kenya became a recipient of significant financial and logistical aid from Western countries (particularly the United States and United Kingdom) and was seen as an important ally in America's Overseas Contingency Operations, more commonly known as the global war on terrorism.

Despite these initiatives, a new regional security threat emerged, mainly revolving around the activities of al-Shabaab. The first Kenyan recruit of al-Shabaab is reported to have left for Somalia in early 2007, a year after the group was formed. In March and December 2011, Kenyan authorities released the names and photographs of Kenyan suspects who allegedly had either been trained in Somalia or were believed to have left the al-Shabaab stronghold of Kismayo to carry out attacks in Kenya. A decision was also made in 2011 to send the Kenyan Defense Forces to Somalia to tame this threat.

Following the Kenya-Somalia intervention, al-Shabaab proceeded to make real its threat of retaliatory attacks, launching about one hundred fifty operations inside Kenya and vowing not to stop until the government withdrew its troops from Somalia. Most of these attacks have been launched by Kenyan nationals, who joined the membership ranks of al-Shabaab through an expanding al-Shabaab Kenyan network that was mostly active from 2009 to 2012, as noted in reports of the United Nations monitoring group for Somalia and Eritrea. This network included a series of notable mosques and preachers: Masjid Musa in Majengo, Mombasa; Pumwani Riyadhha Mosque in Pumwani, Nairobi; and Masjid Al-Ahmar Mosque in Eastleigh, Nairobi.

The success of this network, particularly in the recruitment of Kenyans, rests on a pervasive and well-circulated victimization narrative that has gained traction on the basis of unaddressed historical injustices, particularly socioeconomic and political exclusion, skewed development, and past injustices around land allocation. Groups like al-Shabaab understand and make use of a combination of political realities, socioeconomic factors, and individual characteristics that render many people, especially youth, vulnerable to recruitment.

In countering this new security threat, a paradox has emerged, where emphasis put on the significance of winning the hearts and minds of target populations has collided with the dominance of hard military and security approaches to countering violent extremism (CVE). The most prominent of these include Kenya's Operation Linda Nchi and subsequent involvement in the African Union Mission in Somalia and the operations of the Anti-Terror Police Unit. Many actors in this new but rapidly expanding field—a much debated concept referring to a broad range of preventative and noncoercive initiatives—decry the impacts of hard military and security approaches in fostering radicalization and mobilization to violence. Despite the paucity of empirical evidence, qualitative studies show a relationship between heavy-handed counterterrorism operations by security forces and the radicalization of the minority Muslim population in Kenya.

Replication of this study—its terms, concepts, and identified resilience capacities—could lead to a more generalized understanding of community resilience that could in turn significantly inform CVE practice and programs. This larger effort will determine whether resilience

capacities and competencies are the same for different types of violence or whether different capacities are required to regulate, for example, political violence versus violent extremism.

Key Terms

In thinking about and approaching violent extremism, and thus harnessing the capacities and actions of front-line communities, a common understanding of terminology and concepts is critical to national and international actors.

Ideology

What distinguishes violent extremism from other forms of violence (whether secessionist, criminal, or something else) is that extremism is at its core an ideological struggle, as opposed to other types of contestation, such as those over land or resources. What is ideology in the first place? What makes an ideology an extremist ideology?

Although no universal definition of ideology is agreed upon, the one Paul Steger and Manfred James propose is useful: ideologies are “patterned clusters of normatively imbued ideas and concepts, including particular representations of power relations. These conceptual maps help people navigate the complexity of their political universe and carry claims to social truth.”³ In other words, ideology is an all-encompassing worldview that presupposes its own political and social truth, most often in relation to other ideological frameworks.

Extremist Ideology

What differentiates ideology from *extremist* ideology? The distinction sometimes used for extremism (as being far from the norm) is a loaded definition: “Most simply, [extremism] can be defined as activities (beliefs, attitudes, feelings, actions, strategies) of a character far removed from the ordinary.”⁴ If, for example, the ideology of the Islamic State has become accepted in certain parts of Iraq and Syria, does it follow that the ideology is no longer extremist?

To avoid this normative trap, this study defines extremist ideology as ideology that has become inflexible and dogmatic. Extremist ideology is all-consuming and cannot accept or coexist with other ideologies.⁵ The goal is ultimately to eradicate other ideologies and belief systems and those who adhere to them. The relative support enjoyed by any ideology—extremist or not—is outside the scope of this study’s research question. Two quotes further illustrate this understanding of extremist ideology:

Supporters of extremist movements tend to be fanatical, intolerant, noncompromising, and single-minded, believing that only they are in possession of “truth” and that they alone have the solution to pressing social problems.⁶

Ideological extremists turn a deaf ear to the cognitive dissonance of signals that contradict their analysis of reality.⁷

Extremist ideologies can be political, religious, economic, environmental, or social. They do not presuppose any one doctrine or type of doctrine. However, the existence of a noncompromising ideology is central to extremism.

This distinction has political and practical ramifications. For example, in Kenya, the Mombasa Republican Council, which could be described as employing terrorist field techniques, according to this definition, is separatist and not extremist because it is focused on a discrete set of political or territorial goals and not on an all-consuming political ideology. So, notably, terrorism and extremism are not synonymous under this view.

The existence of a noncompromising ideology is central to extremism.

Extremist ideology is not just about the ideology itself, but the way adherents would like to see it implemented. Most often, this implementation comes through coercion and violence.

Violent Extremism

The 2011 White House strategy to counter domestic extremism defines violent extremists as “individuals who support or commit ideologically motivated violence to further political goals.”⁸ This study considers the appeal or pressure of violent extremist groups and moves beyond isolated individuals who may become radicalized. Again, with this understanding of violent extremism, this study focuses on groups who describe their violence as motivated by an inflexible, extremist ideology: “The core problem that extremism presents in situations of protracted conflict is...the closed, fixed, and intolerant nature of extremist attitudes, and their subsequent imperviousness to change.”⁹

Resilience

Resilience, for this study, does not refer to the restoration of the status quo, but rather to learning and adaptation. Resilience is the ability of a community, people, state, or region to adopt new processes, norms, and strategies for conducting their lives and new societal relationships in response to a violent shock or uptick in aggression and brutality in order to prevent, mitigate, or recover from violence. These innovative ways of relating and functioning demonstrate the capacity of a social system to self-organize, the implication being that certain parts or subsystems may become irrelevant or transform as a community seeks to establish a new peaceful equilibrium. Adaptation in the face of change may drive not only new structures and relationships within the system but also new functions. For example, if the function of a state-community system is to maintain a mutual relationship to provide citizen security, and the state security institutions begin to erode or disintegrate, then a community can self-organize to replicate the system’s security function. To effectively analyze resilience in complex, adaptive systems, it is vital to understand “the resilience of what system or sub-system to what change.”¹⁰

The systems perspective has gained significant attention in recent years. In 2013, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) published “A Framework for Analyzing Resilience in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States.”¹¹ Rather than focusing on the individual and group levels of analysis, the study took a systems approach, hypothesizing that five types of external shocks—economic, environmental, security, political, and social—interact with one another and with three bases of community resilience—institutions, resources, and adaptive facilitators—to produce systemic outcomes. This framework helps bridge the levels of analysis problem and illuminates the complexity of resilience: “Instead of detailing a linear cause and effect relationship, the complex systems approach examines the influence/impact of interacting factors in response to a shock or stress.”¹² Despite the undoubtedly many causal pathways to extremism for individuals and communities, a systems approach helps illuminate the varying risk and resilience factors in particular situations.

Resilience to Violence

Studies of resilience to violence are not new, but they are limited. In Varshney’s seminal work on the relationship between the structure of civil society and the outbreak of ethnic violence in India, he studied six cities broken down into three pairs coupled by similar ethnic makeup to analyze why, when experiencing an exogenous shock, one community within each pair

remained peaceful and the other did not. His conclusion was that cities with institutionalized peace systems could absorb such shocks without outbreaks of communal violence. Although Varshney does not explicitly focus on resilience, his conceptual framework does relate closely to the formulation of resilience and adaptive systems. An important component of community resilience to violence is existing local networks of civic engagement among ethnic groups. Associational forms of civic engagement (that is, organized networks bound together by working trust across ethnic groups, such as business associations, labor unions, and organized clubs) are more resilient to violence than intercommunal quotidian, or daily associations, such as interactions at markets, soccer games, or festivals.

In Carpenter's assessment of the sectarian conflict in Baghdad, she identifies a two-part framework for conflict resilience: regime characteristics—"the strengths and abilities of a system that enable it to respond adaptively to change" and community competence—"the ability of a system to modify or change characteristics or behavior to cope better with actual or anticipated stresses." The general capacities, or regime characteristics, that Iraqi communities tapped into for resilience to sectarian violence include

- *political and social structures*—salient norms, social institutions and networks, and the political system;
- *economic resources*—economic resources to sustain community well-being, capacity to adapt to the changing environment through access to diversified economic assets, and proximity to strategically important economic assets (transportation hubs, trade routes, infrastructure);
- *information and communication*—sources of information, spaces for sharing information, and interpretation of events by and communicative ability of leaders; and
- *social capital*—sense of community, citizen participation, and community attachment that enable people to work together for a common purpose.¹³

When citizens had the capacities to self-organize, their communities were able to resist sectarian groups. This community competence has both psychological and behavioral components. The psychological aspects of resilience include collective efficacy and inward orientation—a perspective on community security that motivates residents to protect neighborhood boundaries (as opposed to competitive strategies against perceived adversaries that would lead to a spiral of attacks and counterattacks). The behavioral components are the strategies communities adopt in the face of sectarian violence:

- organizing nonsectarian security groups,
- preventing neighborhood security groups from adopting sectarian identities,
- advocating violence prevention, and
- patrolling neighborhood borders.¹⁴

An underlying theme of Carpenter's work is "the relationship of resilience to brittleness, which highlights that flexibility is often a key quality of resilience"; rigidity or hardening of perspectives occurs as conflict escalates, especially in relation to how groups or individuals begin to perceive the other.¹⁵ Group changes, such as evaluating interactions with the other in zero-sum terms, are driven by a cognitive and emotional stiffening (such as dehumanization, reduced empathy, deindividuation) as a result of exposure to violence. With this in mind, resilience understood as flexibility is a great inhibitor against inflexible (violent) extremist ideology.

Marshall Wallace and Mary Anderson's comparative case study of bright spots—communities that should have succumbed to violence due to proximity or characteristics (demography,

An important component of community resilience to violence is existing local networks of civic engagement among ethnic groups.

economic status, and the like) shared with warring neighbors but did not—identifies a set of common capacities and strategies that enabled them to opt out of war. Their analysis studied collective action; communities that were resilient to violence analyzed, strategized, and responded using inclusive and transparent processes. There was no denial or prevarication. These communities conducted a collective calculation of the costs of violence versus nonviolence, developed options, adopted a pragmatic nonwar identity that resonated with their culture and history, and communicated group values that distanced them from war and violence. They collectively organized early warning systems and other activities based on relative risk and remained cohesive in the face of threats, keeping community life normal. They did not take the fight to external fighters, but rather focused on community solidarity and survival. According to Wallace and Anderson, the key factor in a community's capacity to opt out of war is legitimate leadership. Leaders who had established extensive networks in the community, regularly engaged with residents, and valued brainstorming and problem solving with community members were critical to resisting war.¹⁶

Risk Factors

Recognizing that risk factors for violent extremism are commonly separated into push (structural or environmental) and pull (individual recruitment) categories, this report examines risk factors more holistically because a resilient community may be able to withstand both. Both push and pull factors are relevant to recruitment, but CVE programming seems to focus predominantly on pull factors. Community-level risk factors, however, are most often push factors. For example, poorly governed areas, violation of a group's rights, and protracted local conflicts are all push factors against which a community may develop and exercise resilience. Push factors such as endemic corruption, harsh government repression and human rights violations, and youth marginalization and underemployment are likely to be present in most if not all of the sites under study in Kenya, combined with certain pull factors. One example of an often-seen community-level pull factor was a misinterpretation of Islam, perpetuated by charismatic leaders in mosques or *muhadharas* (street corner religious debates). This study tested the prevalence of push and pull factors in Kenyan urban communities, using drivers identified by USAID.¹⁷

Methodology

The primary objectives of this study were, first, to test and further develop a nuanced analytical framework for community-level resilience to violent extremism to better understand community vulnerability and risk and resilience capacities and, second, to determine whether significant or correlated resilience factors identified across communities directly limit or mitigate the activities of violent groups. To accomplish this, the research, which was conducted in Nairobi and Mombasa, sought to understand the interplay between community capacity and strategies by comparing communities that had similar risk factors (push and pull) but different experiences (some were resistant to violent extremism and others not). Although many resilience studies focus on a static list of characteristics of resilient communities, this report recognizes that resilience encompasses a process of learning and adaptation. As Carpenter writes, "Community is not simply urban space—it is what people do within that space."¹⁸ In short, resilience is a noun and a verb. Thus, both the structural and agent-centered sources of community resilience to violent extremism should be examined. The drivers were tested as an initial list of risk factors, with community members self-identifying which ones are evident in their communities.

***Resilience encompasses
a process of learning
and adaptation.***

The Control

Controlling for other factors to explain the differentiation in violent extremist activity was essential to determine which resilience factors or combination of factors made the difference. Structured as a comparative study, the team selected and paired six neighborhoods to measure the impact of resilience factors on the dependent variable (the level of violent extremist activity) (see table 1).

Table 1. Community Pairings

Similar Risk and Externalities	More Violent Extremism	Less Violent Extremism
Group 1: Nairobi	Eastleigh	Pumwani
Group 2: Mombasa	Majengo	Tononoka
Group 3: Mombasa	Kisauni	Kongowea

Source: Author's compilation

Neighborhoods with similar levels of risk (push and pull) and shared externalities—for example, geography (proximity to strategic assets, urban or rural); demography (population levels and ethnic and class composition); and governance structures (shared administration at the local and national levels)—were paired to narrow the analytical focus to resilience capacities, strategies, and tactics. This helped isolate resilience factors from other factors, such as one community, and not another, being proximate to a strategic asset or porous border. The neighborhoods paired were similar in terms of ethnicity, age demographics, and religious diversity; were geographically proximate; and had shared systems of political administration. Regarding the dependent variable, Pumwani, Tononoka, and Kongowea were identified as having relatively lower levels of violent extremist activity in comparison to Eastleigh, Majengo, and Kisauni.

For group 2, the principal research instruments—community surveys and focus group discussions—revealed that though the study could control for first-order externalities (physical location, proximity to strategic assets, demographics, economic status, and governance), it could not control for second-order externalities. For example, Tononoka's middle class was primarily ex-government workers. This meant that the community enjoyed good relations with national and county (devolved) government officials and strong collective efficacy. Therefore, based on analysis of the survey and qualitative data, Tononoka and Majengo were not found to be similarly at risk for violent extremism. Thus, it was the difference in risk that explained the different levels of violent extremist activity in these two communities, eliminating group 2 as a control group for determining and analyzing community resilience factors.

Mombasa

Land claims in **Kisauni** have been highly contested, shaping both its politics and social relations. The area, situated north of Mombasa Island, was marked an agricultural zone during the colonial period. At the end of this period, freehold titles were issued to a group of Arab families (or those

who were thought to have Arab ancestry) for agriculture. However, most of these families did not proceed to live on or use the land for agricultural purposes. Groups of hinterland communities (mostly Mijikenda) moved in as peasants, entering into patron-clientage relationships with the Arab landowners. This development laid the foundation for a protracted contestation, with the Mijikenda claiming primacy over the land based on ancestry and Arab landowners claiming legal ownership. Much later, the Mijikenda (a group of nine ethnicities, including traditionalists, Christians, and Muslims) were joined by the Bajuni (a Muslim community originating from the Lamu archipelago area), other coastal groups, and up-country groups. These newcomer groups bought the land and built rental houses, or some just rented. The area developed without much state intervention and, therefore, became characterized by highly informal housing, social, and economic sectors.

Kongowea, like Kisauni, has a diverse community but with more Christians than Muslims and more youth. Following the preelectoral violence in 1997 in Kenya—targeting up-country residents (mostly Luo and Luhya) in Likoni (a neighborhood south of Mombasa Island)—Kongowea experienced a notable increase in its population as people moved from Likoni. Immediately after, villages with a distinctive up-country outlook were established within Kongowea, evident by some of their names (such as Kisumu Ndogo, or small Kisumu, named after the lakeside city of Kisumu). Due to its location, the Kongowea market, Mombasa’s largest market, then became dominated by up-country business people, who have connections with a much more fertile up-country Kenya, mostly bringing in to Mombasa vegetable produce and fruit. Older settlements in Kongowea still exist—Muslim communities of Swahili, Bajuni, and Arab descent—but with a recent in-migration of up-country communities, some of these earlier residents have relocated to other parts of Mombasa and the coast.

Majengo, like Majengo in Nairobi, developed in two phases. In the 1920s, it was an old informal settlement of potters, casual laborers, and petty traders, with most of the land owned as freehold by the then colonial governor of Mombasa. As the local economy expanded throughout the colonial period, most of the land was appropriated for public works (for example, the building of schools, roads, the government clinic, the chief’s post) and sold to private developers for the building of rental houses, thus ushering in the second phase of Majengo’s development. This phase of new building, particularly after World War II, gave the place the name Majengo (which is Swahili for “buildings”). The inhabitants, most of whom had lived in the area for an extended period of time, had mostly become “detrribalized” and Islamized, and most were categorized as Swahilis and a few as Arabs. This gave Majengo its distinctively Islamic character, similar only to the Kibokoni (old town) neighborhood of Mombasa. Majengo’s population has been increasing, with residents originating from up-country Kenya and Somalia. This migration, in some ways, is fueling the ongoing marginalization of Majengo residents, as the somewhat dynamic up-country groups are rapidly changing the area’s social makeup.

Tononoka is an old civil servants estate with smaller sections of informal settlements of coastal townspeople or “detrribalized natives” (variously referred to as Wamiji or Swahili). Because of the presence of civil servant families and older inhabitants, the number of Christians and Muslims is about equal. Tononoka has experienced a significant influx of newcomers, some claiming themselves to now be the majority. In Tononoka, traditional Swahili housing, essentially residential compounds, has been preserved. Here, newcomers, primarily up-country immigrants, live together with established Tononoka families and associate across ethnic and religious lines.

Nairobi

Eastleigh has long been a Somali settlement—first in the 1920s by demobilized soldiers from the King’s African Rifles. However, these ethnic Somalis were largely drawn from British Somaliland and, as such, present a different clan profile than those from Kenya’s northeast. Urbanization accelerated after independence, Eastleigh’s Somali population augmented by large numbers of settlers from the Kenyan countryside (up-country) who flocked to towns in search of economic and other opportunities. Eastleigh’s population also includes a large refugee population from surrounding countries after the regional conflict of the 1990s. This refugee population also includes nationals from Ethiopia, Eritrea, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Muslims, mostly Somali, are the predominant religious group, though Christians are also well represented.

Pumwani, like Eastleigh, was one of the earliest urban settlements in Nairobi, settled largely by Muslim demobilized soldiers from the Kenyan coast. These settlers are seen as indigenous to Pumwani, particularly to the Majengo neighborhood. Today, Pumwani maintains its original Muslim identity, although urban migration has augmented the original settler populations with largely Christian immigrants from the Kenyan hinterland. Pumwani therefore has a mixed ethnic and religious demographic. However, despite their early settlement of the area, Pumwani’s coastal Muslim indigenes have been increasingly displaced by their up-country counterparts who today dominate economic opportunities in the area, particularly in the sprawling Gikomba market, the most vibrant economic center in the area. Pumwani community members are now consigned to informal and short-term labor as porters and garbage collectors.

This study was conducted only in urban sites and in communities removed from the Kenya-Somalia border. The initial intent was to include two rural communities in Kenya’s north, but the attacks on the University of Garissa and general concerns for the security of enumerators and their ability to conduct community surveys and focus groups led to a reconsideration. The research findings, therefore, have limited application and should not be applied broadly to dissimilar environments.

The Inquiry

The challenge with a concept like resilience to violence, which is both ambiguous and dynamic, is, for analytical purposes, to identify a relationship that is concrete and measurable. Borrowing from Carpenter, this study measures the relationship between a community’s capacity (noun) and action (verb) and the level of existing violent extremist activity, specifically, the capacity and actions of a community to regulate violent extremist activities in that community.

Capacity encompasses the already embedded characteristics of communities that can be activated or harnessed for collective action that directly affect the presence or level of violence in a community. Thus, capacity comprises two components: embedded characteristics and community competence (the beliefs and behaviors that propel collective action). The relational action—to regulate—is a deliberate choice. All communities in this study have been affected by violent extremist activity. It is a more interesting and illuminating exercise to understand the interplay of extremist and community groups—a more realistic perspective on violent extremism in that the risk factors are often borne within the community as well as outside it. Other types of interaction could, of course, be chosen for analysis—such as prevention, mitigation, or eradication.

This study measures the relationship between a community’s capacity (noun) and action (verb) and the level of existing violent extremist activity.

Communities that prevent the emergence of violent conflict, or rebound more quickly after it, have everyday capacities to successfully harness against violence.

Resilience Factors

Communities that prevent the emergence of violent conflict, or rebound more quickly after it, have everyday capacities to successfully harness against violence. These capacities are identified and cross-validated in the works of Varshney, Carpenter, and Marshall and Wallace and are tested in this study of community response to violent extremism in Kenya. Communities can have these engrained capacities but fail to use them to mitigate risk or avert or recover from threat. Where latent capacities existed, how were they mobilized to actively and effectively mitigate the violent extremist threat?

Resilience Capacity + Community Competence \cong ¹⁹ Risk = Reduced/Increased Level of Extremist Activity.

The everyday capacities that follow are identified by several studies that looked at why certain communities are resilient to violence. Communities activate these capacities to develop appropriate and relevant strategies. Surveys in Kenya tested the validity of these capacities and competencies as resilience factors for regulating the activity of violent extremist groups in a community.

Community Resilience Capacities

The first set of community capacities includes social capital, leadership, information, economic resources, and place attachment.

Social Capital

As identified by both Varshney and Carpenter, *bridging ties* are the values of working trust and engagement toward other ethnic, religious, generational, or newcomer groups throughout the community. These relationships can be associational (people of different groups work together, for example, through charity groups or business associations on a project or to resolve a community problem) or quotidian (incidental or mundane interactions across community groups at markets, sports events, playgrounds). Both associational and quotidian bonds correlate with lower levels of communal (Varshney) and sectarian violence (Carpenter), but associational ties have a greater effect in lowering levels of violence or even preventing it.

Bonding ties are values of trust, cooperation, and engagement within an ethnic, religious, or generational group. Particularly relevant for the study on violent extremism in Kenya was an assessment of bonding relationships within religious and ethnic communities—that is, how inwardly focused and exclusionary the groups were. In several studies on religious and ethnic conflict, deep group bonding has been associated with increased levels of violence, as bonded groups tend to develop a sense of their own superiority and a group righteousness that dehumanizes and stereotypes other groups perceived as a threat to their existence.²⁰

Overlapping ties bond members of one subgroup to other members of a subgroup. Overlapping tribal ties, as identified by Carpenter, made certain communities in Baghdad vulnerable to infiltration by al-Qaeda and thus increased levels of communal violence. Al-Qaeda entered Baghdad communities through urban-rural tribal ties. In this way, overlapping ties affected the levels of sectarian violence and community resilience in Iraq.²¹ This study tested for values of trust, cooperation, and engagement toward members of the same subgroup living outside the community (for example, tribal or ethnic, diaspora, religious, business ties).

Leadership

This study's survey asked several questions regarding leadership style, which Wallace and Anderson identify as central to resisting violence. In a comparative study, they outline specific qualities of leadership found in communities that successfully opted out of the wars and conflicts surrounding them. Although Marshall and Wallace do not themselves use the term, this report considers this leadership style as adaptive. The qualities strongly overlap with the concept of adaptive leadership:

- directly confront the reality of any situation—do not deny that bad things could happen;
- objectively assess the costs and benefits of strategic situations;
- avoid propaganda and absolutism in favor of pragmatic and undogmatic visions of the future;
- remain agile and flexible as the community navigates difficult paths; and
- favor broadly inclusive processes of conflict analysis and strategy development.²²

Wallace and Anderson also identify another leadership style critical to a community's ability to resist or be resilient to violence—networked leadership. Ann Holohan, a hard-hitting critic of leadership in Kosovo's peace transition, confirms the efficacy, in violent environments, of both leaders who network and networks of leaders.²³ Holohan compared two district leaders: a *guider* who “connected all the elements of local authority” and a classic hierarchical administrator. The former not only effectively advanced reform, but was also resistant to manipulation by conflict parties. With his vast network and connections, he was not beholden to or vulnerable to manipulation by any one group. The hierarchical counterpart, who remained office-bound and focused on his own institutional management—and made no connections with other institutions and the local population—failed to achieve critical reforms and often capitulated to the demands of the strongest in society because of his lack of connections and alliances. This coercive appeasement resulted in incidents of violence and an environment of intimidation and fear.

Wallace and Anderson find networked leadership to be highly relevant, and that leadership in nonviolent communities was diffused, multilayered, and shared.²⁴ This study also tested for networked leadership, asking participants whether their leaders were out among the people, connecting to them and making connections among them. Interviewees were asked about the leadership qualities of their political, administrative (chief or elder), community, and religious leaders. Similarly, it tested for how actively a community engages with and uses forums organized by leadership; a resilient community not only has effective leadership, but also energetic, involved followers.

The third leadership category is the extent to which community members felt that various leadership levels were representative of the ethnic and religious makeup of the communities. Respondents were asked about representation at the immediate, community administrative leadership level, involving elders and chiefs. They also commented on whether office holders at the county level reflected the ethnic and religious composition of their communities. Equity in political representation is not only important for the leadership categories described above (a diverse leadership structure has access to and can mobilize all sectors of a community); it also influences the depth of community grievances, including access to services, justice, and economic development.

Information

Information is integral to collective action in response to violence or its threat. *Opting Out of War* details how, across country cases, an active and trustworthy information network, led by an

Information is integral to collective action in response to violence or its threat.

engaged leader, was crucial to community self-organization and implementation of its nonviolent strategies.²⁵ Carpenter also highlights the importance of communication spaces—where community members can share vital information and engage in collective understanding of the conflict—to informing a community response: How do our collective strategies reinforce communal principles and values? What kind of community are we? What is our story and how does that shape our response to violence?²⁶ In Kenya, communities were asked how they received and shared information on violent extremism, how accurate those information sources were, and how they made sense of that information.

Economic Resources

This study also looked at how well communities were able to leverage their economic resources and relationships in direct response to violent groups and incidents in their neighborhood. For example, can the provision of security for key economic hubs (such as markets or malls) prevent or counter violent groups? Can media outlets and social media be harnessed to report accurately on their actions?²⁷ Business ties can often cut across ethnic, religious, and sectarian groups; the presence and activism of intergroup business associations in India were directly correlated to levels of communal violence in urban riots from 1950 to 1995.²⁸

Place Attachment

Place attachment, as Carpenter defines it, is an emotional connection to one's neighborhood or city and is separate from connections to the people who live there. It is an attachment to the history, architecture, geography, and social settings of a community that give residents of that community a sense that their place of living is unique and should be preserved and conserved. Among Kenyans, there is a sense of attachment to place, although many often refer to their up-country ties. As Carpenter found in her study of Baghdad communities, the sense of attachment to a place is stronger for residents whose families have inhabited a neighborhood for generations—neighborhoods in Kenya like Majengo, Mombasa, and Pumwani, Nairobi. Given the large migrations of up-country and refugee populations into urban communities in Kenya, place attachment seemed to be a key factor in mobilizing a community to preserve integrity of place.

Community members were asked about the presence of newcomers to the community. Did they contribute to diversity—that is, what ethnic groups did they represent, and were they predominantly of one group or another? Carpenter finds that place detachment, defined as a low emotional connection to a particular community, was brought on by enclave housing and other mechanisms of social segregation between community groups. The effects include less intensive social interactions, less dense social networks, and by extension, lack of working trust.²⁹ Kenya is an extremely transient society, people migrating from the rural areas to urban centers to find employment and then returning to the rural areas after retirement and with refugees migrating from bordering countries, including Somalia, Uganda, and Tanzania. When ties to ethnic or refugee subgroups are stronger than the bridging attachment to groups in their new community, people are more likely during crisis to seek protection from those subgroups, which encourages social fragmentation that extremist recruiters use to pit people against each other.

Community Competence

Resilience to violence is the ability of a community to harness existing capacities (outlined above) to adopt mutually agreed-on strategies and self-organize collective action to act against

The sense of attachment to a place is stronger for residents whose families have inhabited a neighborhood for generations.

a specific threat posed by violent actors in a community (in this case, violent extremists). Community competence is part belief and part action; it is a belief in the efficacy of the group to change and influence issues critical to that group and the activities a community engages in to prevent or mitigate the threat of violence.

Resilience Capacity + Community Competence \cong (related to) Risk/Threat = Reduced/
Increased Level of Extremist Activity.

Communities were asked about how strongly they believed in their own agency (versus being passive on core issues), how they were organizing to regulate and prevent violent extremist activity in their communities, and how they were tapping into resilience capacities to organize.

Collective Efficacy

Communities can have the engrained capacities described earlier but fail to use them to mitigate risk or avert or recover from threat. Collective efficacy is a fundamental mediating variable between existing capacities for and the adoption of collective action to prevent or mitigate threats. Communities that view themselves as having agency and the ability to control outcomes may exhibit greater resilience to violence than communities that are passive or frame themselves as victims. In this case, causal linkages and feedback loops between the belief in agency and community organization and preparation, or collective action, are quite clear. As groups engage successfully with violent actors, their efficacy increases, which drives better planning and strategies.

Community Activism

Community activism refers to citizen organization and engagement on issues important to the community as a product of its social capital and an indicator of its communal health.³⁰ It asserts that how routinely community members work together to achieve common goals and their belief in their ability to engage and influence government officials on behalf of community issues can provide an effective buffer to conflict escalation after a violent incident.³¹ Examples of citizen participation in efforts to regulate violent extremism include engaging with government officials and advocating new policies and approaches to violent extremism.

Peace or Religious Engagement

Peace or religious engagement refers to advocacy initiated by community residents and religious leaders to prevent violent extremism or engage potential perpetrators or victims (for example, youth) for peace. Activities can include community marches for peace, intergroup dialogue to facilitate greater understanding of group perspectives on violent extremism and recruitment, and the engagement of religious leaders to promote peaceful interpretations of the Quran and to encourage their communities to practice tolerance and moderation.

Security

Community security requires the presence of community-based early warning and information management systems (dispelling rumors) and formal policing and protection measures (that is, not vigilante groups). The security operations are also *inwardly focused*, as Carpenter describes it,³² meaning that they are protective of the entire community, not just particular groups or people, and do not carry out activities against groups in other communities (external attacks).

Community competence is part belief and part action; it is a belief in the efficacy of the group to change and influence issues critical to that group and the activities a community engages in to prevent or mitigate the threat of violence.

Community VE: Risks and Activities

This study systematically analyzes the push and pull factors relevant to the neighborhood case studies in Kenya and the community-identified violent extremist threats.

$$\text{Resilience Capacity} + \text{Community Competence} \cong (\text{relative to}) \text{Risk/Threat} = \text{Reduced/Increased Level of Extremist Activity.}$$

The risk and threat factors used are taken from USAID (see table 2).³³

Table 2. Violent Extremist Risk Factors

Porous borders	Relevant (community and country) borders that can be easily crossed or penetrated
Insularity	Living an isolated existence
Institutionalized marginalization and government repression	Denial of political rights and civil liberties, including racial and cultural profiling
Bad neighborhood	A community's proximity to violent conflict in other neighborhoods or countries
Radical ideologies	Presence and exposure to uncompromising ideological narratives
Cultural threat perceptions	The deeply held belief of domination by another group, the West, or an oppressive international order that threatens locally held customs and values
Poor education	Lack of critical thinking skills to discern manipulation by violent extremist actors
Youth poverty and unemployment	Although personal poverty is not directly related to membership in violent extremist groups, poverty's effects of idleness, low self-esteem, and the breakdown of family support networks are highly correlated
Protracted violent conflict	Engagement by a group or community in a long-standing violent conflict that drives individuals and groups to more extreme measures and groups to resolve their situation, and the acceptance of violence for dispute resolution
Historical injustices	The deeply held belief that a group has been victimized historically by other groups and that victimization continues without a response by the international community that espouses protection of human rights or by national and local governments that are in a position to arbitrate their grievances
Search for adventure, financial gain, sense of belonging, or status	The material and emotional benefits that individuals and groups who have long viewed themselves as victimized and marginalized can derive
Availability of means and targets to perpetrate violence	Availability of weapons, access to sites/persons, and financial and material support

Source: Author's compilation

The study also asked communities about specific violent extremist threats in their community (see table 3).

$$\text{Resilience Capacity} + \text{Community Competence} \cong (\text{relative to}) \text{Risk/Threat} = \text{Reduced/Increased Level of Extremist Activity.}$$

The complexities in measuring these activities by geographic location (groups may not perpetrate attacks where they live, causing displacement effects, and so on) are significant.

Table 3. Types of Community Violent Extremist Activity

Activity	Definition
Exposure/contact with recruiters	Through physical presence or through information channels
Violent extremist attacks	Grenades, bombs, and shootings
Use of community as operational base	Sleeper cells, financial hubs or conduits, and arms
Harassment	Verbal abuse of individuals perceived to be violating Islam’s principles and morals

Source: Author’s compilation

Data Collection and Analysis

After the research inquiry, framework, and site selection were completed, a first-round survey was conducted in all six communities, interviewing twenty respondents in each community in six groupings generally affected by violent extremism: community leaders, youth, victims, human rights advocates, women, and religious leaders. One group was selected from a list generated by local universities and nongovernmental organizations. The other group was an approximated randomized sample, conducted in street interviews or through snowballing (asking those interviewed for a list of potential respondents in the selected categories). The interview protocol was open-ended, which allowed questions to be asked in a culturally appropriate discussion style, for the enumerators to pursue promising lines of questioning, and for the communities to define resilience capacity and violent extremism for themselves.³⁴ The goal was to conceptualize community resilience to violent extremism as it is understood by the community.

The first-round results were mixed. The data confirmed the efficacy of the site selection process; communities identified through a desk review as having lower or higher levels of violent extremist activity and similar levels of risk also self-identified as such.

However, there were not enough data to test the significance of individual resilience factors. The lack of data stemmed from the difficulty of translating a concept as complex as resilience for enumerators; the inexperience of local enumerators, who often opted not to probe participant responses; and technical difficulties, such as reliable access to the internet, that pushed enumerators to shorten survey responses. The surveys did yield unique qualitative stories for each community that were used in focus group discussions to ask deeper questions. These focus group insights were used to develop more specific hypotheses to Kenya that were tested in a

Communities with less violence had complex, interconnected patterns of resilience factors and an accumulation of resilience factors.

second-round survey, which was expanded to include questions on community resilience and risk factors to violent extremism to help fill the data gap.

The quantitative data from the second-round survey, including in-depth interviews of twelve respondents in each community, revealed that no single resilience factor (such as economic resources, information, leadership, or social cohesion) could explain why certain communities had higher or lower levels of violent extremist activity. This makes sense in that resilience to violent extremism is a complex interplay of factors.

However, a structured qualitative analysis of the data revealed that communities with less violence had complex, interconnected patterns of resilience factors and an accumulation of resilience factors that explained differing levels of risk and activity not captured in the binary coding of individual factors. Communities with less aggregate violent extremist activity had high levels of Muslim bonding, coupled with strong Christian-Muslim association; multiple community-led and -focused security networks working together and with the government; and the ability to discuss violent extremism openly to correctly diagnose the threat.

These findings were submitted to a blind review. A researcher with no previous affiliation to the project was provided the data sheets and the set of hypotheses on complex patterns of resilience found in less violent communities that were not seen in more violent communities. The reviewer was not told which communities had more or less violence to ensure the reviewer was not predisposed to certain patterns in particular places. The reviewer was also provided the following three null hypotheses:

- Communities that have less violent extremist activity have fluid religious and ethnic identities.
- Communities that have less violent extremist activity have few/no connections between criminal and violent extremist groups.
- Communities that have less violent extremist activity have mechanisms to manage youth-elder tensions and hostility.

These community interactions did not have explanatory value either because the patterns were found in all communities (fluid ethnic and religious identities) or because community surveys overwhelmingly discounted the hypothesis, such as the hypothesis suggesting a nexus between violent extremist and criminal networks. The blind review validated the researchers' findings that communities with lower levels of extremist activity had more capacity and that the relationship between resilience capacity and violent extremist activity and risk was inverse.

Findings

Violence is a complex phenomenon; the capacities and strategies needed for resilience to violence are correspondingly multifaceted and interrelated. This section dives deeper into the quantitative and qualitative analyses to deliver weighted research findings and results. The numerical analysis of resilience factors shows a relationship between aggregate levels of violent extremist activity in communities and aggregate levels of resilience. This aggregation of resilience factors, however, tells only part of the story. Establishing a research control helps to analyze which resilience factors matter when communities have similar levels of risk but different levels of violence. In other words, what resilience capacities or strategies made the difference in the three community pairings?

Aggregate Analysis

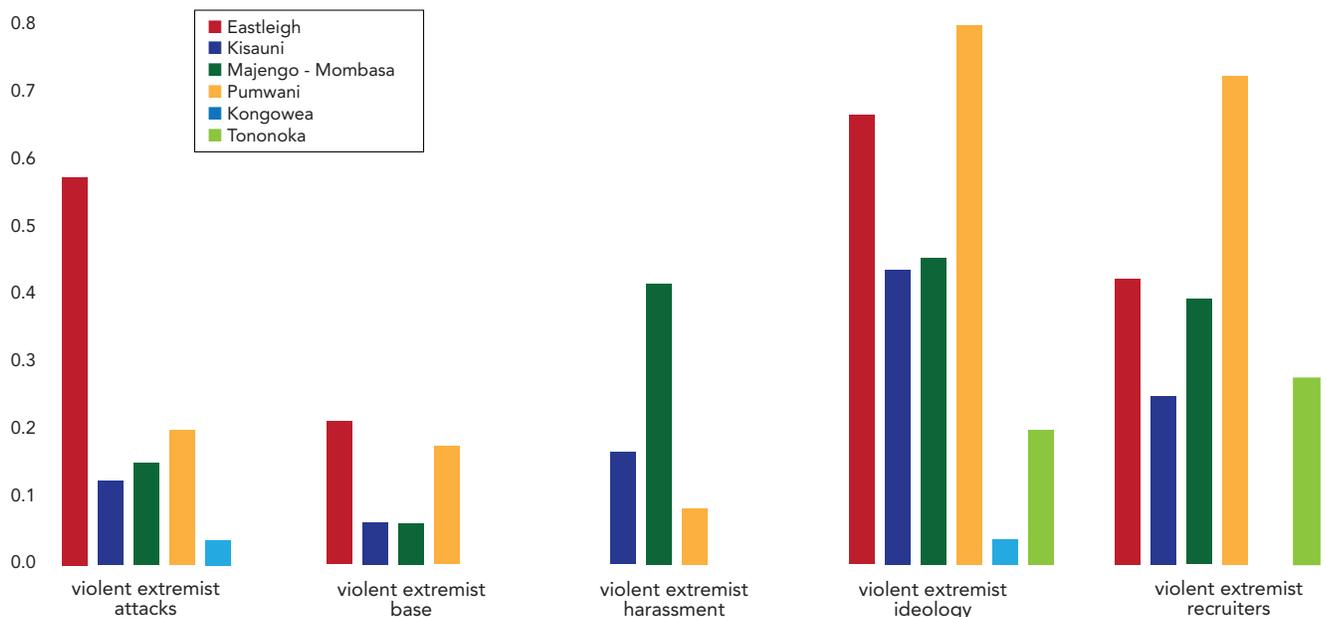
Figure 1 shows that Tononoka and Kongowea have extremely low aggregated levels of violent extremist activity and only two significant violent extremism factors each: violent extremist ideologies (both neighborhoods), extremist recruiters (Tononoka), and attacks (Kongowea). Meanwhile, in Kisauni, Pumwani, Eastleigh, and Majengo, aggregate levels of multivariate threats are high. In table 4, the structured qualitative analysis suggests that resilience factors work interactively, creating positive feedback loops that are mutually reinforcing. Similarly, vulnerabilities can also interact, causing negative feedback loops.

Muslim-Muslim and Christian-Muslim associations: Kongowea and Tononoka, communities with less aggregate violent extremist activity, have both forms of association at high levels (see table 4). Like all other communities, Tononoka has had an influx of newcomers, primarily from up-country. Yet, because of its unique, communal living, Tononoka enjoys high levels of social cohesion and Muslim bonding. As Carpenter notes, segregated housing reduced resilience because it made recruitment and staging easier. One source of resilience in Tononoka is its traditional Swahili housing; when newcomers rent, they live communally across religious and ethnic lines.

Christian-Muslim and Muslim-Muslim associations in Kongowea occur primarily through business, political, and community interactions. Community members note a high level of religious and ethnic relations through community associations. Kongowea has numerous political clubs—places where community members affiliate along political party lines, and across religious and ethnic lines, to discuss political issues. Political leaders also employ large numbers of Kongowea youth across religions and ethnic groups. Christian respondents in both

Resilience factors work interactively, creating positive feedback loops that are mutually reinforcing. Similarly, vulnerabilities can also interact, causing negative feedback loops.

Figure 1. Levels and Types of Violent Extremist Activity



Source: Author's compilation

communities showed high levels of empathy for Muslim groups experiencing discrimination and heavy-handed police actions and of trust that Muslim leaders were doing their best to counter extremist groups. Communities with a high degree of Muslim-Muslim association were more immune to violent extremists in their community; in Kenya, violent extremist groups generally enter communities through sectarian fissures, manipulating religious factions over doctrinal issues. Their ability to work together to prevent the threat established important community feedback loops of trust and peaceful coexistence with Christian neighbors.

Meanwhile, communities with more aggregate violent extremist activity (Pumwani, Eastleigh, Majengo, and Kisauni), as seen in table 4, had one associational factor and not the other (Muslim-Muslim or Christian-Muslim) or lower levels of each. High levels of Muslim sectarianism in Pumwani provided entry points for violent extremist groups, who continued to manipulate Muslim religious divides, even as interethnic and interreligious marriages created strong familial associational bonds across religions. In Eastleigh, retributive attacks by Christians following extremist attacks led to a negative violent feedback loop in the community. In Kisauni, radical ideology and extremist recruitment grew as a result of Muslim communities dividing into smaller and smaller religious sects—although focus group participants felt that a reputed Islamic university in Kisauni helped counter radical interpretations of the Quran. Although Christian church leaders in Kisauni generally tried to preach trust and nonretribution following violent extremist attacks against churches in other communities, survey responses showed that Christian trust in Muslim neighbors was deteriorating.

Communities with less violent extremist activity also had community-focused security groups that worked together, again creating mutually reinforcing feedback loops.

Communities with less violent extremist activity also had community-focused security groups that worked together, again creating mutually reinforcing feedback loops (see shaded columns of table 4). Tononoka has a gated perimeter around its community, along which watch guards man the gates and monitor incoming guests and newcomers. Religious leaders also report to the chiefs and elders on itinerant preachers in their mosques and other newcomers, and the mosques ring bells to gather the community to alert them of violent threats. Surveys showed the significance of multiple, interlocking community-focused security groups. First, they triangulated information to validate informer statements and investigate events. This way, they could not be manipulated by community members. Second, they provided a buffer between the community and the police, protecting community members who reported suspicious activities or actors from arbitrary police arrest or detention and preventing police from taking bribes to release the accused, who would then retaliate against the community members who had cooperated.

In Kongowea, politicians and criminal gangs collude to maintain politicians' control of rents and profits from the community's wholesale market (the largest in the region). Politicians are also closely tied to criminal groups in the community to instill fear and maintain the loyalty of community groups. This negative, interlocking security structure establishes an effective monopoly on violence in Kongowea, preventing other violent groups, like violent extremists, from disrupting business activity in the market. Both of these cooperative security structures also have interactions with the government (in Kongowea, through corrupt, nepotistic networks), which have prevented heavy-handed police activity and allowed for open discussions of violent extremism (see both Tononoka and Kongowea's high scores) and, in turn, have enhanced monitoring of the security situation and the effectiveness of community security groups. With a monopoly over power and violence in the community, politicians prevent other violent groups from operating in order to protect the market's activity. This form of negative resilience accounts for Kongowea's negligible violent extremist activity, but it can certainly drive other forms of violence in the community (criminal, political, electoral).

Table 4. Numerical Comparative Analysis of Resilience Factors

	Pumwani	Eastleigh	Majengo	Kisauni	Tononoka	Kongowea
Muslim-Muslim association	1	2	2	2	3	3
Christian-Muslim association	3	1	1	2	3	3
Criminal/VE group ties	2	1	1	1	2	1
Fluid religious identities	2	2	1	2	2	2
Fluid ethnic identities	3	3	3	3	3	3
Interlocking security networks	2	2	1	1	3	1*
Open discussion of VE	1	1	2	2	3	3
Youth-elder relations	1	1	1	2	1	1
Total Score	15	13	12	15	20	17

* Kongowea ranked low for community-led security groups; however, the blind review confirmed the presence of interlocking political-crime networks that regulate violence in Kongowea, where politicians do not want sales at the Kongowea market (from which they receive rents) to be affected by violence.

In Eastleigh, community-focused security groups exist but are not recognized by the government. Both Pumwani's and Majengo's community security groups suffer from high levels of public apathy and distrust of community elders (leaders of security efforts) who are not elected by the local population but are instead appointed by the chiefs and rely on informant networks for intelligence and information. Informant networks, unlike mutually reinforcing community security groups, create negative feedback loops in a community—community members can manipulate the informant system because informants are paid based on a constant supply of information. In all three communities, Nyumba Kumi, the government-led initiative to establish community monitoring groups for violent extremism, is viewed with suspicion. It was seen as a government plot to spy on the community. In Kisauni, two neighborhoods have community-oriented security groups that work with each other and the government, but others rely on vigilante groups to murder known criminals in their community and see periodic cycles of revenge killings. These communities often experience heavy-handed police activity as a result of their inability to provide their own security or engage with the police productively. They therefore score lower on open community discussions of the violent extremist threat (police often arbitrarily arrest informants or take bribes to release the accused, who will then perpetrate violence against their accusers). This negative feedback loop further diminishes their ability to mount a community protective response.

Informant networks, unlike mutually reinforcing community security groups, create negative feedback loops in a community.

In sum, the aggregate analysis suggests that resilience factors work together and that these mutually enforcing capacities have feedback loops that affect levels of violent extremist activity in general. These feedback loops can be positive—for example, when community security groups buffer police engagement and create safe spaces to exchange information on extremist actors, which, in turn, increases the effectiveness of community security groups. They can also be negative—such as when Christian groups retaliate against Muslim communities for violent attacks, further breaking down trust and establishing retributive cycles of violence. Establishing a research control for risk factors and conducting a multivariate analysis to validate correlations between these factors would be a significant next step. If these resilience patterns held across different countries or across different types of conflict (electoral or gender-based violence), the findings would provide a foundation for an evidence-based resilience practice.

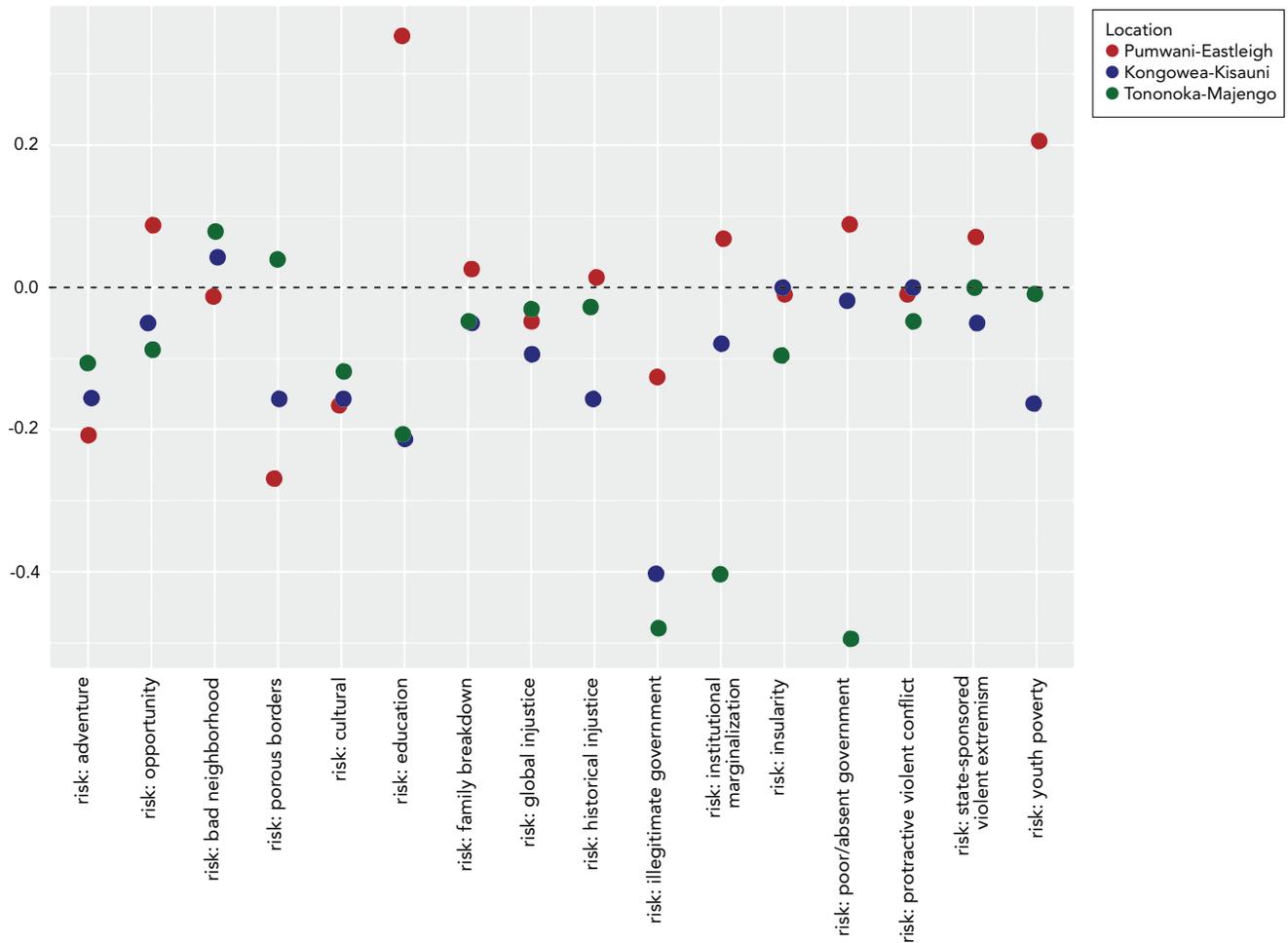
Comparative Analysis

Communities at equal risk of violent extremism but different levels of extremist activity in the form of radicalization, recruitment, or attacks were paired for analysis. The quantitative results, drawn from community survey data, validated the desk review on perceived levels of violent extremist activity. Eastleigh, Majengo, and Kisauni reported higher levels of recruitment, attacks, and radicalization, even as respondents identified relatively equal levels of youth unemployment, institutionalized marginalization and repression, and poor or absent governance (risk factors that are considered at the core of the violence driven by extremism in Nairobi and Mombasa).³⁵ When aggregating the risk factors, the risk levels and types of violent extremist risk remained similar for group 1 and group 3. However, the aggregated risk in Majengo and Tononoka (group 2) differed, Majengo experiencing multiple risks and Tononoka only one (idle youth). Thus, groups 1 and 3 permitted a research control that could answer the question of whether, given similar levels of risk but different levels of violent extremist activity, resilience made the difference.

Resilience Capacity + Community Competence \cong Risk = Reduced/Increased Level of
Extremist Activity.

Group 1. The Eastleigh and Pumwani neighborhoods have comparable levels of risk. In terms of violent extremist activity, both report extremist recruitment, radical ideologies, and cells that use the community as a base. However, Eastleigh has a higher level of one violent extremism factor (violence). What explains the difference? The most intriguing difference between the communities is Pumwani's high level of Christian-Muslim association (see table 4), which is tied to high levels and tolerance for interethnic and interreligious marriages. (Community residents identified this as a main factor in preventing electoral violence in Pumwani in the 2007–08 elections; residents avoided ethnic-based manipulation by politicians because the ethnic “other” was a brother, cousin, or aunt.) As ethnic groups in Kenya can be mixed (Christian and Muslim), families associate across religious lines as well. This has prevented Christian retaliation of violent extremist attacks, which do occur in Eastleigh, causing escalating levels of violence. This finding echoes earlier research on conflict escalation that shows that bridging social capital prevents the hardening or rigidity of attitudes and identities that drive conflict. The relationship of high levels of social capital to strong community competence also fits with previous studies. High levels of interdenominational interaction have built working trust in Pumwani, a latent (embedded) capacity that enabled religious leaders to successfully prevent retaliatory measures after the 2012 attacks on the Gikomba market by Muslim extremists.

Figure 2. Community Risk Correlations



Source: Author's compilation

Group 2. The quantitative data on Majengo and Tononoka revealed much lower levels of risk for violent extremist activity in Tononoka than in Majengo. Table 4 reveals the presence of a cooperative, organized community security initiative in Tononoka. Between 2002 and 2003, in response to a series of brutal rapes, the women of Tononoka organized community watch groups and built a secure, guarded perimeter. The community’s administrative leaders frequently arrested community-identified suspects and turned them over to police, establishing a latent security system that was used during the last elections to successfully prevent instigators of violence from entering the community. This security capacity was also used to prevent violent extremist groups from embedding—suspicious individuals are monitored by citizens and religious leaders and reported to chiefs and elders, the town’s guarded perimeter identifies all newcomers, and town elders sit on the boards of mosques. When controlled for risk across community pairs, the resilience factor analysis (see table 4) suggests that cooperative, community-focused security groups do not explain levels of violent extremist activity. However, the Tononoka case suggests that existing cooperative, community-focused security groups reduce risk to violent extremism.

Survey and focus group respondents in Tononoka noted that the low levels of violent extremist activity and criminal violence in the community are due to the fact that Tononoka repels and expels criminals and radical individuals to neighboring, vulnerable Majengo, further overwhelming that community's already weak resilience capacities. (Kongowea allows criminal groups from Majengo to hide from police or other gangs, but not embed.) As shown in figure 1, Tononoka residents identify recruitment and exposure to radical ideologies as violent extremist threats for their community. Risk data on Tononoka reveal a single, primary risk factor for violent extremism (idle youth). The surveys describe how Tononoka youth are radicalized and recruited in Majengo. Thus, resilient communities may push their threats to more vulnerable, neighboring communities, but find that, because of proximity, they still experience risk and exposure to violent groups. This analysis suggests that strengthening and supporting community-level resilience may result in displacement effects for more vulnerable, neighboring communities.

Group 3. Despite having similar levels and types of risk, Kongowea is a community, identified by its members, as entirely free of violent extremist activity. Kisauni, meanwhile, has experienced all types of violent extremism: recruitment, operating bases, harassment, exposure to radical ideologies, and attacks. What is the source of Kongowea's resilience to violent extremism? It has strong social cohesion—both Muslim-Muslim and Christian-Muslim associations occur in multiple ways. First, survey respondents report that neighborhoods are highly integrated, with different ethnic groups living together and “Kamba, Luos, Kikuyus, and the entire Mijikenda community not forgetting the Waswahili and Arabs living together in the same village and sharing the same social amenities such as church, mosque, schools, and health facilities.” Political party association also drives high levels of social cohesion, according to the surveys. Kongowea fully supports the Coalition for Reform and Dialogue, and this unified political party affiliation, according to respondents, drives social cohesion. Many community members from different religious and ethnic groups congregate every morning at local newspaper stands to discuss politics in a local form of association called the Bunge la Mwananchi, or public parliament. Kisauni, however, is highly segregated along ethnic lines, with community members reporting considerable bickering between ethnic groups at community meetings, employers hiring only from ethnic groups, and significant tensions between up-country newcomers and local, indigenous groups (Arabs, Indians, Mijikenda), especially over land tenure. Up-country newcomers are given title to public lands by national political leaders (seen as antagonistic to the coast), whereas local groups are denied titles and remain squatters on government-controlled land. These ethnic tensions exacerbate interreligious tensions; up-country newcomers are predominantly Christian and indigenous groups are Muslim.

In establishing a research control for community pairings based on similar levels of risk but different levels of violence, quantitative data show that three resilience relationships do not affect levels of violent extremist activity.

Fluid Identities

Interethnic, interreligious marriages and religious conversions in Kenya are quite common and, in general, communities are highly tolerant and accepting of them, providing an antidote to the marginalization and discrimination that can drive violent extremism. These familial and social bonds also build associational ties and working trust across religious and ethnic groups. Because the trend was prominent across all communities, it has no explanatory power with regard to resilience and community levels of violent extremism. Interreligious marriages

are common, though not as prevalent, and only one way—Christians marry Muslims and convert; Muslims rarely change religion. Religious conversions were also quite prevalent in all communities. Again, the conversions were primarily from Christianity to Islam, for various reasons: attraction to the moral values of Islam; economic advantages, such as being hired by a certain business or boss; burial traditions—Muslims bury the dead faster and the community contributes to the costs, which can be quite expensive. Up-country migrants to the city would convert to Islam to associate with their ethnic counterparts, who were Muslim, but convert back to Christianity when they retire up-country. Several surveys mentioned the vulnerability of these converts to radicalization, because their Christian families often break ties with them, and their marginalization and lack of grounding in Islam make them easy targets for recruiters.

Criminal-VE Ties

Communities consistently reported no nexus between violent extremist and criminal groups. Most survey respondents rejected the idea of ties between violent extremist and criminal groups in their communities. Recruitment between the two groups might happen on an individual basis, though—criminals graduate to extremism and extremists returning from Somalia with no prospects for reintegration often join criminal groups. However, no nexus of cooperation or convergence exists between the two, which are seen to have fundamentally different goals and cultures—the “purist” pursuits of the extremist groups versus the drug and alcohol pursuits of the criminal gangs.

Many respondents, however, did note a linkage between resilience and criminal and violent extremist activity in a community. Specifically, communities that could not manage criminal groups felt they had no prospects for countering violent extremists, who were perceived as more sophisticated and more hidden.

Communities that could not manage criminal groups felt they had no prospects for countering violent extremists, who were perceived as more sophisticated and more hidden.

Youth-Elder Relations

Communities consistently reported intergenerational hostility and competition. Most communities identified tensions between youth and elders as a risk factor: an educated youth bulge exists at a time when more traditional governance and religious leadership structures are tenaciously maintained. However, in Majengo and Pumwani, the relationships were described as particularly hostile, with elders perceived as giving away youth’s inheritance (by selling family land) and youth described as lazy and criminal. Youth discussed how elders in those communities often “manipulate the rules of the game” in various ways: changing the age of majority for mosque leadership and insisting that leaders have multiple children, parsing out community development funds to favorite youth, maintaining their leadership tenures for life without instilling accountability to citizens, or marginalizing youth by not seeking their active participation in community governance structures, such as *barazas* (community meetings). Elders discussed having to compete with youth, with significant government and development funds being funneled to the younger generation and up to 30 percent of government contracting provisions being set aside for youth. The root of the problem, according to youth and elders, is that this generation of elders led Kenya out of colonialism and feels a sense of entitlement to their leadership positions. Meanwhile, this generation of youth are more educated than the leadership class and are often forced to take employment in jobs well below their capabilities even as they watch leaders with considerably less (“third-grade”) education govern.

Although youth-elder relations in Pumwani, Kisauni, and Majengo were significantly more hostile, all communities in Kenya suffered from these tensions, and none had systematically tried to mitigate these relationships. Only two communities in the study had mechanisms to regulate intergenerational ties. In Tononoka, chiefs or elders are elected to three-year terms based on professional experience and personal qualities (for example, chiefs can be former university professors or government workers) and then move on with their careers after administrative service. Recently, Tononoka residents elected a youth to the chief's position. The young chief had creative ways of engaging the younger population. For example, no community meeting could be held unless all youth were invited and some were present; he insisted that community elders had to go where youth were (*khat*, chewing places) to invite them to the meetings. He himself also went to chew *khat* with youth to hear their problems. Although not a systematic effort, youth described how this process—an example of adaptive and networked leadership—relieved their antagonism. In Kongowea, most youth are on the payrolls of politicians, who use them to conduct violence against other politicians and political groups. As discussed in the following community stories, nepotism can solve the idle youth and violent extremism problem. At the same time, it can also result in high levels of youth-perpetrated political violence, especially around elections in Kenya.

A quantitative control of community pairings validates Christian-Muslim association as a resilience factor that controls levels of violence in communities similarly at risk. The quantitative control also confirms that fluid ethnic identities, intergenerational competition or tension, and criminal-extremist ties have no explanatory power for different levels of violent extremist activity.

Resilient communities can push violent actors to more vulnerable, neighboring communities; that communities can be resilient to violent extremism in negative ways, such as when alliances of politicians and criminal gangs prevent extremist activity; and that resilience does not mean invulnerability.

Community Resilience Stories

A qualitative analysis of community resilience stories shows that resilient communities can push violent actors to more vulnerable, neighboring communities; that communities can be resilient to violent extremism in negative ways, such as when alliances of politicians and criminal gangs prevent extremist activity; and that resilience does not mean invulnerability—highly resilient communities can succumb to violent extremism if the level of threat is great.

Eastleigh: A Multifaceted Violent Extremist Threat

Community members identified a multifaceted violent extremist threat in Eastleigh that includes six elements:

- Youth recruitment, associated with high unemployment and financial incentives, as well as heavy-handed police actions, primarily associated with Usalama Watch (a Kenyan government initiative to eliminate terrorist networks focused mostly on Eastleigh and Mombasa).
- Radical messaging by itinerant preachers, who have easy access to Eastleigh as a highly transient community, and the community's tradition of *mubadharas*, which the community perceives as destabilizing.
- Presence of sleeper cells in neighborhoods where Nyumba Kumi initiatives have failed to take hold.
- Tensions between Christian and Muslim communities after the interreligious violence in the 2013 elections and attacks on churches in nearby communities (St. Polycarp) and after Christians from Maltare retaliated against Muslim groups (primarily Somali) after an attack on a commuter bus in 2012.

- Self-imposed isolation of the substantial Somali refugee community that residents feel is a security threat because refugees and diaspora move in and out of the country with limited oversight and little is known about specific individuals. The Somali community has served as a conduit for a more culturally and religiously conservative vein. It has funded religious educational institutions and conservative mosques, which are perceived as avenues for radicalization among Somali youth.
- Major religious schisms between indigenous Muslims and newcomers, primarily Somalis, which prevent a cohesive community approach to prevention.

Since a series of grenade and gun attacks in Eastleigh, and in some cases retributive attacks of Christians on Muslim neighborhoods, community members and leaders have engaged actively in efforts to counter and prevent violent extremist groups from operating within community boundaries. This is a story of a community building and creating resilience capacity. Community leaders—there is a strong functioning administrative leadership of chiefs and elders—are proactive on issues of peace and security. They sponsor interreligious dialogues to combat the *muhadharas*; their efforts to engage communities in education and sensitization to violent extremism are well-attended, and citizens engage in open discussions of risks and threats.

Business leaders, especially in Eastleigh North, are predominately Somali, and are highly proactive on security—though they generally keep themselves separate from the rest of the community. In April 2014, the Kenyan government initiated Usalama Watch in Eastleigh and Mombasa, a mass round-up of possible terrorist suspects that was largely perceived as targeting Somali communities and resulting in large levels of indiscriminate arrests and torture. These operations have had a significant impact on the Somali community in Eastleigh, devastating families and undercutting the vibrant Somali-dominated business community, which has seen economic activity plummet. The overlapping ties that nourish the Somali business community in Eastleigh North (such as diaspora remittances, informal financial networks that sustain the refugee community) are also seen as a security threat, providing conduits for extremists and their financial assets. Thus, Usalama Watch has not only driven away valued business customers, it has undercut businesses' financial underpinnings. According to surveys and focus group discussions, the Somali community has begun to cut deals with the police, routinely offering them bribes to release family members. The community has also begun to organize its own security groups and reconsider its isolationist position with its Kenyan neighbors. From a resilience perspective, the emerging actions of the Somali community both enhance and diminish resilience; contributing to police corruption and remaining self-marginalized affect key security and social cohesion resilience factors. On the other hand, establishing community-based security efforts and beginning to build routine engagements and trust with other ethnic groups in Kenya contribute to resilience.

Eastleigh exhibits strong intra-Muslim factionalism. Major schisms exist between indigenous Muslims (who practice a more moderate Islam) and newcomers, mostly Somali but also other non-Kenyan and Kenyan groups (who are adherents to more conservative and extremist strains of Islam, often sponsored by Wahabbist networks in the Middle East). These various sects have clashed in local mosques as they seek leadership control. The struggle between them for followers, especially through the *muhadharas* that are quite popular in Eastleigh, has also been quite visible. Interreligious relations are also difficult in Eastleigh, where religious-based violence has occurred and *muhadharas* are seen to stir interreligious (as well as intrareligious) conflict.

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Eastleigh, in many ways, can be seen as a community that is working actively to counter violent extremism—through creating and nurturing resilience—but it is also facing multivariate risks and threats that require corresponding resilience capacities.

Eastleigh, in many ways, can be seen as a community that is working actively to counter violent extremism—through creating and nurturing resilience—but it is also facing multivariate risks and threats that require corresponding resilience capacities. The community is active on security, but the government has refused to recognize or work with Nyumba Kumi or other community watch programs; thus, a critical link for community security provision is missing. Police continue to conduct raids, beat and torture those arrested, and free criminals and extremists identified by the community, making individuals who reported to the police extremely vulnerable to retribution. Because of this heavy-handed police approach, discussion of violent extremism has gone underground, and the community is left with little ability to identify and counter the threat: “We know sleeper cells exist in our community, but we have no idea where they are.”

Based on the data gathered from Eastleigh, communities with high levels and multiple threats may need commensurate levels and matching resilience capacities. Given the high levels of extremist violence that exist in Eastleigh (as compared to all the other communities), community security arrangements must reach a certain threshold to counter the violence. The gaps in Eastleigh’s security constellation and the government’s refusal to engage prevent the community from reaching that threshold. Its ability to address the threats of radicalization and recruitment are undermined by a lack of social cohesion or working trust between its Christian and Muslim communities and within the Muslim community.

Pumwani: Social Cohesion, Negative Resilience, or Both

As in Majengo, Mombasa, the selling off of family land has had a deep impact both on Pumwani’s youth—who have lost inheritance, status, and income—and on intergenerational relations. Youth-elder hostility is pronounced. Youth perceive elders as corrupt, husbanding community resources for their own self-interest. The chief-elder system is largely defunct, seen by residents as an illegitimate governance structure with bribe-taking elders appointed by the chief with no community input or vote. These tensions played out most prominently in the takeover, in 2007, of the Pumwani Riyadhha mosque by a group of radical Wahabbist youth led by a radical imam (Ahmadi Iman) from a more moderate Sunni-affiliated, long-term mosque leadership. Violence erupted in the Gikomba market when the Wahabbist youth took over market stalls owned by the mosque. A March 2016 raid on the mosque broke up an al-Shabaab financing network that funneled market income to the terrorist group through Eastleigh’s informal financial system, which is used primarily by refugees and newcomers. Earlier, the new mosque leadership was accused of and confirmed to have been recruiting Pumwani youth for al-Shabaab service in Somalia through its educational courses that preached an extremist religious ideology. Imam Ahmadi Iman’s radical policies—rejecting the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet, prohibiting women from dancing, and insisting on male ways of dressing—caused deep conflict within the Pumwani Muslim community. The original Wahabbist-Sunni division has spawned further divisions: Sunnah-Madhab, Wahabi-Madhab, Ahlu Tariku-Madhab, Shia-Madhab, and Salafis-Madhab. These subdivisions led to the formation of other smaller mosques, specifically, Masjid Noor, Masjid Khadija, Chelsea Mosque, Internally Displaced Persons Mosque, and the newly refurbished Pumwani Riyadhha mosque. These groups’ “small doctrinal divisions and internal wranglings” have prevented the Muslim community from countering the infiltration of radicalism.

Thus, Pumwani, like Eastleigh, is facing a pernicious, multifaceted threat (that is, recruitment, radicalization, terrorist financial networks, operating bases) and low levels of resilience capacity (such as Muslim bonding and community security activism). However, unlike Eastleigh,

Pumwani does not suffer high levels of violence. For example, after the violent attacks on the Gikomba market, religious leaders effectively appealed to the community not to engage in retributive attacks, noting that the market victims were from all denominations. This is not the case in Eastleigh, where violent extremist attacks have been followed by retributive attacks exacted by Christian communities, and high levels of Christian-Muslim tension still exist following unresolved issues from violent attacks in the last elections. Community and focus group respondents, however, consistently held up the community's high levels of interethnic and inter-religious association, not through community organizations but through family life. High levels of intermarriage have resulted in high levels of association with members of other ethnicities and religions through family life and shared holidays and festivals. This intimate associational life, the community felt, was the reason they had no electoral violence from 2007 to 2008 and why they had been able to mitigate extremist violence.

Unfortunately, many community members feel that Pumwani is a community at a tipping point, where the threshold of threat is rapidly overcoming resilience capacity. Community apathy in Pumwani is tangible; no community problem-solving forums are in place (*barazas*, or public meetings, are no longer held), and the administrative leadership apparatus is seen as illegitimate and ineffective. On the security side, heavy-handed police actions have caused the community discussion of violent extremism to go underground to avoid indiscriminate police detention and harassment or targeted attacks by violent groups against community informants. Many community members recognized that they had a violent extremist threat but did not know the extent or where it existed. Local security organizations—Nyumba Kumi and the chief-elder system—were seen as illegitimate. Unlike in other communities where they are elected, Nyumba Kumi ambassadors are appointed by the chiefs, who are largely seen by the community as corrupt. Although a robust, tolerant network of familial association across religious and ethnic lines is a strong point of resilience, a community with only one factor will obviously reach a tipping point more rapidly.

Pumwani, like Majengo in Mombasa, faces multiple threats but has experienced low numbers of extremist attacks. This may be the result of a strategic choice by extremists not to attract unwarranted government attention in these neighborhoods, or because extremists have no substantial and insular Christian populations to target, as is the case in Kisauni and Eastleigh.

Tononoka: Security, a Mutual Responsibility

Key resilience patterns were the most pronounced in Tononoka, making it the most resilient community and the one with the least demonstrable violent extremist activity. Although Tononoka is an extremely diverse community (no ethnic or religious group holds a majority), its ethnic and religious groups are bound by numerous associational ties, largely because it has retained and conserved traditional Swahili housing compounds. The old inhabitants of Tononoka rent buildings in these compounds to newcomers regardless of religious or ethnic affiliation. The old inhabitants have also raised their children together, creating intergenerational ties, also across religious and ethnic lines. This associational life—sharing holidays, funerals, and marriages regardless of religious and ethnic orientation—has counteracted the effects of extreme diversity and a high influx of up-country settlers to the community.

Residents of Tononoka note that, as a diverse community, they have difficulty coming together to resolve conflict within the community except around security issues. In the early 2000s, a series of violent rapes in the community compelled members to organize watch groups that to this day work with police to monitor and arrest violent criminals perpetrating the attacks. The community's collective efficacy on security came to the fore again in the 2013 elections.

Many community members feel that Pumwani is a community at a tipping point, where the threshold of threat is rapidly overcoming resilience capacity.

In that period, community members across ethnic and religious lines formed a human chain on Tononoka's border to keep out provocateurs. This active, community-based, indigenous security system, run by the chief through community elders, is now the basis for the government's Nyumba Kumi initiative. Tononoka has zero tolerance for crime; the entire community considers security a personal responsibility. When crimes are reported, village leaders go to a suspect's home, apprehend the individual, and turn him or her over to the police. According to a survey respondent, "The beauty of Tononoka is that they have taken security as their own responsibility." Fairly good relations with the local police are a unique aspect of Tononoka's security. The involvement of the religious community in a working information-sharing system among administration officials, county government officials and politicians, and community groups has ensured that radical sermons are not preached in Tononoka mosques. Every mosque committee in Tononoka reserves a seat for a government village elder or chief, and religious leaders routinely report newcomers through this system and screen the remarks of itinerant sheikhs before they engage with congregations. Mosques also serve as the community's early warning system; they ring their bells to alert the community to the presence of criminals and criminal acts.

Tononoka has not fully resolved its youth-elder relations problem; significant tensions still exist. It does have a unique leadership structure, where elders are not given life tenure but are elected for limited terms based on professional experience. One of the new chiefs, in fact, is in his thirties and makes a point of engaging youth "where they are at," including where they idly chew *miraa* (an herbal stimulant from the *khat* plant), and pushes for youth engagement in all community forums. In addition, village elders have arranged youth interest groups (such as art, sports, music) that operate across villages. There are not many idle youth in Tononoka because it houses one of the largest wholesale *khat* markets in the region, which focus group participants estimated employed 60 percent of youth. The community has mixed feelings about the drug market, but overall, thinks that elders manage youth relations "smartly." Despite no structure for managing the competition between youth and elders for resources and access to decision-making authorities, community members feel that even the hope that youth might accede to leadership positions in the community, as modeled by the one young chief, helps manage tensions and expectations.

Majengo: Community Breakdown—Piling on the Most Vulnerable Community

Majengo, Mombasa, had the highest levels and most varied types of extremist activity and had the least resilience capacity of the communities studied. The land-grabbing phenomenon common in Kenya during the 1990s has devastated Majengo in many ways. The older generations have sold their family landholdings to newcomers, which has created a generation of displaced youth. Most residents were raised to be traders, as generations were before them, and have relied on rental properties to supplement their income. Thus, many of Majengo's youth were not provided formal education because they were not expected to engage in formal employment. Up-country newcomers to Mombasa have also taken over much of the city's informal trade from traditional trading families, importing agricultural produce from their rural communities. Majengo youth, in one generation, have lost everything: employment opportunity, status as part of a long-respected group of local traders, and their family heritage (housing that not only guaranteed a family income but a revered place in the community and its leadership structure). Intergenerational tensions are extremely high, with no apparent mechanism or structure to manage them.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, as a result of the land grabs, growing attention around accountability for public property turned toward the management of mosque property. A cohort of young religious scholars who had come back from studies in the Middle East and had Salafist leanings began directing these questions toward the mosque committees in Majengo, whose members were accused to have benefited from the auctioning of mosque property at the expense of the community.

Formal Muslim leadership was also broadly rejected in associations such as the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK) and the Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims, whose members were preaching or sitting at the mosque committees in Majengo. Because CIPK had emerged from the unregistered and disbanded IPK, these leaders were also viewed by the young (epitomized in the charismatic leadership of Aboud Rogo and Abubakar Shariff) as sell-outs and much later as apostates. Generally, these developments—borne out of a series of economic, historical, generational, and religious factors—created the conditions that would lead to an explosion of radical militancy in Majengo and the schisms within its Muslim community.

Christian-Muslim association is also quite weak in Majengo, affected by a clear, strong victimization narrative related to a broader coastal marginalization narrative by the central government and what is perceived to be a mostly Christian- and up-country-based administration (different from the community in Majengo). Majengo's population has recently grown, new residents coming from other parts of the country and Somalia. This migration, in some ways, is read as evidence of the continuing marginalization of the residents of Majengo, given that the incoming groups are changing the social makeup, and have cultures perceived as not amenable to established local traditions. Residents with up-country origins have not been as long in Majengo as they have in Tononoka and have therefore not been able to craft a functional identity with the indigenous population. This might mean that the Majengo community has not been able to develop trust, if they interact and work together at all. This situation makes it easy to accept stereotypes of other groups within the same community, some sections of the up-country community believing older Majengo residents to be lazy and indolent and some among the older Majengo residents believing up-country communities to be aggressive.

Following the Masjid Musa mosque raid, the police adopted a heavy-handed approach in Majengo, making broad, arbitrary arrests and detentions. These tactics have not only increased anger and resentment within the community, making more youths vulnerable to violent extremist recruitment techniques that manipulate local grievances, but they also greatly affect community resilience capacities in multiple ways. Religious leaders have restrained their activities, shying away from open religious expression and acts, which invite police attention. While there is no overt radicalization, there is also no peace messaging; everything has gone silent. The police also rely on a system of paid informants to monitor the community—a system that is frequently abused by community members using it to seek retribution or extra money. Therefore, individuals who want to exercise their citizenship through legitimate reporting on criminals and extremists are often labeled as informants by the community, arbitrarily arrested by the police, or, when police detain and release the identified perpetrators, subject to retribution. Community information sharing on security, therefore, has gone underground, which has eroded any ability of the community to appropriately identify the threat and develop appropriate strategies. In surveys and focus group discussions, community members recognized their inability to mount an effective security response: “Our inability to organize our own security has allowed criminal gangs to dominate our community. A community that cannot control crime is also vulnerable to violent extremism.”

Community information sharing on security, therefore, has gone underground, which has eroded any ability of the community to appropriately identify the threat and develop appropriate strategies.

For every violent extremist threat, there is a related pocket of resilience that can be nurtured, the ink spreading and connecting like a protective coating.

Kisauni: Ink Blots

Kisauni is a highly diverse community, primarily Muslims and Swahilis, along with newcomer ethnic groups from up-country that are mostly Christian. Focus groups and survey respondents characterize Kisauni as a community that “could go either way.” However, this is not a community at a threshold, like Pumwani, which is facing increasing levels of threat and rapidly deteriorating resilience. Kisauni is like an ink blot; for every violent extremist threat, there is a related pocket of resilience that can be nurtured, the ink spreading and connecting like a protective coating. Or, these separate pockets can begin to fade, and their failure to broaden and connect will result in more violence.

Radicalization and extremist recruitment occur in Kisauni, and the Muslim community is fractured, with high levels of sectarianism. Kisauni has historically had a Shia-Sunni divide, but Muslim groups have further split into Wahhabism, Salafism, and Sufism. These divisions are caused by doctrinal disagreements: “Even if people differed in small aspects like how to perform prayers, or their stand on jihadism, they opt to form their own sect rather than resolving the issue in a scholarly way.” Kisauni is home to the Mahad, a Salafist-leaning college, which has trained notable radical Imams: Ahmed Iman, Aboud Rogo, and Ali Bahero. Bahero broke with radicalism, vehemently rejecting extremist ideologues, while preaching at Kisauni’s Masjid Swafaa mosque. However, he was then violently attacked by radicalized youth and deposed as Masjid Swafaa’s imam; the mosque was then raided by police in 2014. Despite this pocket of resilience, the Muslim community has not been able to mount a unified strategy against recruitment. Heavy-handed police raids, resulting in detentions and disappearances, have increased youth radicalization. Religious leaders do host community meetings to discuss recruitment and radicalization but community members note that, because of the police brutality, discussions are general. Kisauni youth see many sheikhs as compromised, as being government mouthpieces, speaking against radicalization but not against government repression and the marginalization of the coast. Some are even considered to be informants, or they say nothing and are seen as weak and having no conviction.

Youth-elder relations are quite tense in Kisauni, elders often manipulating youth for political gain or changing the rules of the game to prevent youth from gaining leadership positions. Kisauni youth are increasingly well-educated and see elders cutting off their economic opportunity at younger and younger ages; for example, schools are overcrowded and access to quality education is declining. At the same time they are offered what they call third-grade jobs (that is, manual labor), they see current leaders as having third-grade (inferior) education. Different government officials sponsor different youth teams, which in many cases are similar to criminal gangs. Certain neighborhoods have associated criminal networks, which are beginning to form overlapping ties with criminal gangs in Majengo. A bright spot in this intergenerational melee is that youth themselves are of a generation that harbors no ethnic or religious discrimination. Youth mix easily across ethnicities and religions, primarily because they have been raised together in ethnically mixed and religiously tolerant households, partially a result of intermarriages between up-country and coastal families. Working trust among youth is extensive, whether it is in support of illegal criminal activity or more constructive neighborhood projects. Interviewees, though, did note what they called negative values that also bring young people together (such as criminality). Youth in Kisauni are also vulnerable to the Majengo problem, being exposed to and recruited by criminal and violent extremist groups that reside there.

About a decade ago, the community was riddled by crime. In response, community elders organized a vigilante group, the Funga File (Close the File), to identify thieves and criminals

and to exercise justice, usually extrajudicial killings. They employed youth to exercise “justice” at night and to return to their jobs by day. This zero-sum approach to crime quickly rid the community of criminals, and at which point the community declined to continue funding the effort. Vigilantism is still the prominent form of community organization around crime. Community members recount stories of killing noted criminals at night: “We have a policy in our community that if you are ever caught stealing, we burn you alive or beat you up until you are pronounced dead. We do not accommodate such behaviors.” However, in two neighborhoods of Kisauni (Bambura and Bakarani), a highly resilient security system has emerged, involving interlocking groups that have relationships with the government. Each has a different form. In Bambura, every household provides 50 shillings a month that goes to a security committee. The security committee has organized a community watch group of vetted individuals. The watch group coordinates with the local chief, who organizes security meetings for the committee and trains the watch groups on community policing. When the security team in Bambura was initiated, the committee invited the officer in command of the Bambura Police Station to a meeting and sought his permission to operate. The community provided the names of the security watch group so that they are known to the police and can patrol without police harassment. In Bakarani, the Nyumba Kumi initiative, headed by the chief, is used effectively to circulate information around the community through the ambassadors, who also initiate, with village elders, investigations based on community reports. Bakarani had a community watch group, but newcomers refused to pay the monthly contributions. The community itself has therefore become active on security issues, including adopting a series of protective measures (such as come home before dark, have someone escort you from the bus, scream if you are attacked). Recently, citizens of Bakarani made a citizen’s arrest of two phone snatchers and surrendered them to the police. These two pockets of security resilience are possible models for other neighborhoods in Kisauni.

Kongowea: Negative Resilience

A nexus in Kongowea connects politicians, the formal economy, and crime and is the source of the community’s resilience to violent extremism. Entrenched, systemic political violence virtually ensures high levels of electoral violence in the upcoming 2017 elections, however. The Kongowea market drives the local economy. Politicians control the licensing system to the market, and two factions are currently involved in a vicious struggle to administer the market and its revenues: the first member of parliament of the newly created Nyali constituency (an up-country resident with ties to the Luo and Luhya) in which the market is now located has laid claim to it. The member of parliament’s claim challenges the influence of the locally raised county governor. The two politicians have created two parallel management committees. Up-country business people (connected to the member of parliament), who have connections with a much more fertile up-country Kenya, are increasingly dominating supply of the market, bringing vegetable produce and fruit into Mombasa.

Politics dominate Kongowea communal life. Young people are employed by political parties to work in the market and to execute violent hits against political competitors, often outside Kongowea. The predatory political machines that inhabit Kongowea have either destroyed or co-opted the local administration; elders and chiefs are either marginalized by politicians, with local citizens engaging directly with “the machine,” or are on the payroll, working at the market or directly on party payrolls. Politics plays an important cross-cutting, associational role in Kongowea, and constituents, across ethnic and religious lines, are involved in politics or political

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discussion groups loyal to a certain faction. Discussion is persistent in survey responses of corruption, bribery, and supporter- and family-based nepotism with regard to political influence and community development funds, such as the Constituency Development Fund, Ward Development Fund, Bursaries, and so on.

The political class is also allegedly connected to organized crime. Survey respondents recounted stories of targeted attacks and robberies by the criminal group *Wakali Kwanza* at weddings and family events, for example, orchestrated by politicians who provide intelligence on community events: “They intend to project fear to the voters so that they get their way on the leadership seats easily.” Criminal gangs often avoid prosecution after being reported to the police: “At the end of the day, you will find them free from jail; they are out doing the same things. It’s like there is someone who is funding them.” Like a Mafia town where the dons have a monopoly on violence and viciously protect their turf, no other perpetrators of violence, including violent extremists, have a foothold in Kongowea, where citizens openly discuss the threat and risk of violent extremism, noting that violent extremist activity is practically nonexistent.

Christians are the majority in Kongowea, although the community is ethnically and religiously diverse. Older settlements in Kongowea exist, including Muslim communities of Swahili, Bajuni, and Arab descent. But with a recent in-migration of up-country communities and the associated deteriorating status of social services, including security, most of these earlier residents have relocated to other parts of Mombasa and the coast. This has given Kongowea a dominant up-country, Christian, and immigrant character. Unlike their counterparts in other communities, Kongowea’s religious leaders are not engaged in leadership and governance structures. Church congregations tend to include mixed ethnic groups, and, thus far, Christian leaders preach tolerance and defuse tensions. If an attack occurs on a church in another area of Mombasa, or against non-Muslims, church leaders preach actively against revenge. Interestingly enough, it was in Kongowea where evidence was cited of CVE work having been done, including peace messaging, village forums, and interfaith dialogue, especially after an attack had occurred somewhere in the country. This level of awareness in Kongowea of an eminent threat of violent extremist activity is explained by the targeting of Christian communities elsewhere. Ethnic and religious groups coexist in Kongowea; minorities are considered to be well treated, and ethnic groups and families often incorporate members of different religions. This leads to a blending of ethnic and religious customs.

Overall Findings

In regard to resilience and social cohesion, this study validates—in a controlled, mixed quantitative-qualitative analysis—that communities with genuine associations (through clubs, investment groups, dialogue, intermarriage, familial interactions) with religious members from different groups experience less violent extremist activity.

Christian-Muslim association, for example, prevents the escalation of violence. Following violent extremist attacks, Christian leaders with trust in and association with Muslims prevent retribution. Surveys in communities with strong Christian-Muslim association reveal that Christians showed marked empathy with Muslim groups experiencing heavy-handed police actions and trusted that Muslim leaders were doing their best to counter extremist groups. Within family Christian-Muslim associations, the resilience may be more durable in comparison with other forms of association and should be validated. This study proposes an interrelationship

between Christian-Muslim and Muslim-Muslim associations, in which communities with both experience more working trust, which can prevent violent extremist actors from embedding in a community through fractures in the Muslim community (multiple, antagonistic religious sects) as well as retributive cycles of conflict and violence following violent attacks.

This study also suggests that communities with existing security capacities (such as security, collective efficacy, and social cohesion) have less risk of violent extremist activity. However, these arrangements did not have an impact on levels of violent extremist activity in communities similarly at risk. The study proposes an interrelationship between interlocking, community-focused security groups and the ability of a community to correctly identify and adapt to extremist threats by buffering the community from heavy-handed police action, triangulating security information for effective response, and creating a space for open discussions of the nature and level of violent extremist activity.

Controlling for similar risk and differing levels of violent extremist activity, intergenerational tensions do not emerge as an explanatory resilience factor—that is, communities that managed intergenerational tensions had less activity. In fact, all communities had significant intergenerational tensions (competition for resources and leadership positions, disrespect for the other generation's culture and world views, and so on). Yet both positive and negative examples of relationship management were apparent. In Tononoka, elections for community administrative positions gave youth hope that they could also access leadership positions. In Kongowea, politicians tightly managed youth-elder tensions by balancing the distribution of community development funds and work contracts at the Kongowea market.

This study confirms that fluid religious and ethnic identities, which might lead to higher tolerance of and openness to members of other religions and tribal groups, do not explain community resilience to violent extremism. All communities showed great tolerance for religious conversion and interethnic marriages and significant levels of each.

This study also confirms that violent extremists and criminal groups in urban Kenyan communities do not currently work together or associate. Individual ties exist, however: a criminal may graduate to violent extremism, and violent extremists who return from Somalia and cannot reintegrate into their communities may join criminal groups. Therefore, a criminal-violent extremist nexus does not explain different levels of extremist activity in the community pairings.

Certain insights from this study about resilience in the context of violent extremism and peacemaking are especially transferable. Specifically, in regard to resilience thresholds, communities facing multivariate and high levels of violent extremist threats need to develop deep, diverse resilience capacities and strategies. Without commensurate capacity and action, threats can overwhelm even highly resilient communities. On a different note, community groups that exercise a monopoly of violence within a community (such as criminal groups or politicians) may ensure the community's resilience to violent extremism but not to other forms of violence (such as crime, political, or electoral). Community resilience capacities may also accumulate; further research should explore whether a direct relationship exists between higher levels of capacity and action and lower levels of violent extremist activity. Feedback loops are significant. Community resilience capacities work with each other. For example, a community that discusses violent extremism openly can increase trust across community groups and improve their security engagement strategies. Displacement effects are another consideration. Resilient communities can export their violence to other surrounding communities. Last is the issue of dual threat. Heavy-handed security approaches not only increase the risk of violent extremist activity, they also undermine community resilience factors and relationships.

Communities facing multivariate and high levels of violent extremist threats need to develop deep, diverse resilience capacities and strategies.

The positive feedback loops created by community security groups and the government working together and by Christian-Muslim with Muslim-Muslim associational relationships should be further explored.

Recommendations

Broadly, programming that focuses on countering violent extremism in Kenya needs to prioritize building working trust between Christian and Muslim groups. More precisely, the positive feedback loops created by community security groups and the government working together and by Christian-Muslim with Muslim-Muslim associational relationships should be further explored and tested. Last, resilience thresholds and displacement effects should be analyzed more deeply. The following tailored programming recommendations are grouped by actor.

Practitioners and Policymakers in Kenya

First, practitioners and policymakers within Kenya should prioritize building working trust between Christians and Muslims, including representatives of both groups in CVE programs, especially those that engage groups in joint activities and support community association. Part of this effort would include educating religious communities on how to use working trust to mitigate violent extremist shocks and long-term stressors that make a community vulnerable to violent extremism.

Relatedly, Kenyan actors also need to validate the importance of strong Christian-Muslim and Muslim-Muslim associations for building working trust between and empathy for religious others in order to reduce retributive violence and violent extremist activity in communities by simultaneously building interreligious and intrareligious relationships in communities. One element of this component would be to focus on building and supporting both interreligious and intrareligious associations, which have mutually reinforcing effects. Intrareligious cooperation prevents and manages the entry of violent extremist actors through sectarian divides in communities and builds trust among Christian communities that Muslim leaders and groups are doing their best. This interreligious trust prevents escalatory or retributive violence. Interreligious association creates more nuanced perspectives on extremist violence and community response, including that all religions are victims of extremist violence and that heavy-handed police actions are discriminatory and may further alienate or marginalize Muslim groups and weaken community social cohesion. It also creates more trust with Christian leaders acknowledging that Muslim leaders were doing their best in challenging conditions. This interreligious trust, in turn, reinforces intrareligious cohesion, while a divisive issue—the extent of Muslim marginalization and discrimination by Christians—which drives decisions on engagement or isolation, is diminished.

Separately, practitioners in Kenya need to validate the importance of cooperative community-led and community-focused security groups that work with the government for reducing the risk of violent extremism by focusing on preventative approaches, such as encouraging at-risk communities to develop or enhance cooperative security programs and engage in constructive outreach to the government. They should also communicate to the police that heavy-handed actions not only risk further radicalization, they also reduce community resilience by weakening social cohesion. Targeted groups feel more marginalized and also victimized when other ethnic or religious groups do not speak up in their defense. The degradation of working trust across ethnic and especially religious lines undermines the critical factor affecting levels of violent extremist activity—high levels of Christian-Muslim association. Encouraging multiple community-led and community-focused security organizations and facilitating their coordination to reduce the risk of violent extremism in communities strengthens such associations. In sum, multiple, coordinated community security organizations allow for broader security coverage in a community; the ability

of community leaders to triangulate security information with other organizations; less reliance on paid informant networks that can be easily manipulated; less corruption, in that having only one community security organization with the monopoly of power is often more prone to bribes and abuse of its power; and the ability of the community to buffer community members, who want to report violent extremist problems, from police abuse.

Finally, practitioners within the country need to work with communities to facilitate and protect safe spaces and conditions for the community to openly discuss violent extremist threats in order to mount effective CVE responses.

Practitioners and Policymakers in General

Programming actors more generally should integrate their CVE efforts into counterterrorism operations; heavy-handed law enforcement inhibits preventative engagement by communities to manage violent extremists threatening their communities.

Next, focusing equally on building community resilience capacity and eroding the resilience capacities of violent extremist groups—such as causing in-group divisions (eroding social cohesion) and affecting their capacity to develop effective strategies and operations—is critical.

Pushing violent groups into neighboring communities when enhancing resilience in a specific community is a significant concern. Adopting a comprehensive, multicomunity approach will help prevent displacement effects.

Identify and nurture capacities in a community developed through participatory processes that can be harnessed for resilience to violent extremism, such as protective security institutions, crisis response, and citizen participation in community-organized initiatives.

Identify patterns in community resilience responses to violent extremism that are mutually reinforcing through feedback loops. Engage in community exchanges on resilience methods to encourage peer-to-peer learning. Explore how international nongovernmental organizations can support community resilience capacities and activities without undermining them by appearing to co-opt them.

Research Community

The research community more generally can contribute by thoroughly analyzing community resilience thresholds to appropriately prioritize interventions for communities at a tipping point for violent extremism. Resilience factors and patterns identified in this research should be tested to develop an assessment framework for determining community resilience. Research that incorporates controls to determine significant resilience factors and patterns to better target CVE programming is needed, as are comparative research studies in different country and violence contexts to yield generalizable results that can inform sound CVE programming.

Heavy-handed law enforcement inhibits preventative engagement by communities to manage violent extremists threatening their communities.

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Notes

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19. \cong means related to.
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Violent extremism often spreads through localized conflict, with extremist groups manipulating local grievances to gain position and traction. Both the international community and national governments have difficulty working in such small-scale and diverse conflict contexts. Understanding how communities undermine and regulate violent extremist groups helps assess local risk and vulnerability for improved, targeted support. This experimental, mixed-method study identifies key community resilience factors to violent extremism in urban neighborhoods in Kenya, including high levels of Christian-Muslim association and high-functioning community-led and -focused security initiatives. These community resilience factors could become part of an evidence-based foundation for successful prevention programming in and beyond Kenya.

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