

The Intersection of Migration Management and National Security: A Comprehensive Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates how migration management and national security operate together specifically regarding Kenyan inbound and outbound migration patterns. The research evaluates how migration processes between different borders and forced movements affect both security stability within territories alongside standard regional stability levels. The research employs mixed data collection methods to evaluate governmental and community-based security expert data which specifically focuses on areas along borders and densely populated regions with high migrant activity. Risks stemming from both Somali and South Sudanese refugees entering/hosting countries as well as labor-intensive migration to Gulf Cooperation Council member states have emerged as major national security problems according to research results. According to the research border communities experience the most severe security consequences among bordering regions. Research supports the integration of security measures with humanitarian aspects for migration governance through the establishment of regional cooperation programs and policies that protect migrant rights. Recommendations to improve border security and enhance protection of migrants and develop migration-affected areas promote social stability and national security.

INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century has established migration as its central element which influences both population compositions nationwide and national security policies and approaches to threats. Most national governments worldwide need to manage their dual responsibilities of fulfilling humanitarian agreements alongside defending national security. Experts agree that migration surpasses economic and social standings to become a vital part of security discussions in regions where irregular migration rates are high while border control remains weak and many vulnerable groups move between different nations (de Haas et al., 2019). This research examines the central relationship between state security concerns and human mobility using extensive analysis of policy coherence and enforcement mechanisms alongside institutional readiness.

Academic along with policy experts increasingly focus their attention on migration securitization since its recent emergence. The Copenhagen School defines securitization as how state actors make issues into existential threats that need urgent and exceptional actions (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde, 1998). Migration has been met with tighter border management through enhanced security interventions that employ security forces to handle matters which previously fell under civil and humanitarian domains. States defend these rules by mentioning their worries about terrorism protection alongside concerns about human trafficking and their belief that social cohesion is failing. Security measures aimed at migration tend to merge migrants with threats in operational settings thus they reduce human rights safeguards while wearing down state capabilities according to Huysmans, (2006).

National security issues resulting from migration affect most intensely the regions suffering from conflict and political instability together with economic problems. The Horn of Africa together with East Africa includes four bordering nations whose migrant populations actively migrate across borders but also allow significant entry of foreign migrants. The government of Kenya has long functioned as a welcoming country that provides refuge and transit services to asylum seekers and refugees from Somalia and South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (UNHCR, 2024). More than 1 million foreign residents in Kenya many of whom entered undocumented have overburdened the nation's border control capabilities while raising security concerns about

border terrorism along with smuggling operations and resource depletion (Statista, 2023; IOM, 2023). Through Al-Shabaab-linked terrorist acts against northeastern Kenya the public believes uncontrolled migration causes immediate threats to national security (Whitaker, 2020).

Biometric registration and the implementation strategies through the East African Community and the Kenya Citizenship and Immigration Act (2011) have produced important implementation gaps due to weak institutional capacity. The national security outcomes are hindered by weak institutional capabilities and irregular enforcement of migration laws in addition to minimal security agency partnership. Migration governance and national security relationships continue to lack proper theory application and integrated implementation in Kenya's national policy environment (Mutinda 2021 and Tran et al. 2024). The important research gap is resolved through investigation into the implementation mechanisms and stakeholder interactions and safety implications that govern current migration administration systems.

Although scholars have extensively studied migration-security issues in global north nations there is still an insufficient number of empirical studies which examine African institutional adaptations to manage migration governance together with security threats. This research focuses on Kenya due to its exemplary situation of migration management within conflict areas and economic zones which generates new insights into geographical patterns of migration-security relations (Chimni, 2004; Mochama, 2023). Nationals pressure to plan strategically about migration management splits it from being just technical work or bureaucratic operations into essential security planning. The end result of this research delivers an extensive analysis of how policies and national security collaboration with actors and institutional elements shape migration management relationships. The research utilizes political science together with international relations and security studies to investigate how governments perform migration governance and security procedures while managing border conflicts in real-life settings. The study aims to provide both academic and policy communities with understanding how to address one of the major governance dilemmas affecting our contemporary world.

Theoretical Framework

Migration Systems Theory is a structural and systemic way of looking at migration and focuses on the interrelation of historical, economic, political and social ties between countries of origin and destination. This means that migration, as opined by Mabogunje, (1970) and subsequent scientists, such as Faist, (2000) and de Haas, (2021), is not just a result of a series of individual decisions based on push-pull factors, such as economics; it is a result of underlying and more ingrained relationships between countries. Such systems are sustained by processes, including remittances, diaspora networks, and regional treaties, which generate sustainable migration flows, as observed in the situation of the intricate migration patterns of Kenya and its neighboring states, such as Somalia, South Sudan, and Ethiopia (Masakona, 2022). These systemic forces are so strong that they explain why the irregular migration process has persisted in Kenya despite various efforts to curb it, such as the militarization of the border or deportation operations. The unstable politics and transnational criminal systems operate outside the state interventions, thereby compromising the national security operations (Mutinda, 2021). Nevertheless, Migration Systems Theory has been criticized as failing to effectively explain the way in which sudden interruptions, such as environmental catastrophes or political conflicts, may change migration flows, and it fails to fully describe how poorly managed migration systems may contribute to the security risks, such as terrorism and organized crime (Brotherhood, 2020).

Conversely, the Human Security Theory that was the result of the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report, Human Security Theory shifts the emphasis on the traditional concepts of state-based security matters to the prosperity of individuals. It promotes the protection of individuals in the event of various threats such as military aggression, poverty, disease, displacement, violence as well as social exclusion (Gasper, 2005). When applied in the migration context, this theory emphasizes that states have a moral duty to ensure that the rights and dignity of migrants are safeguarded despite the security concerns that they exhibit. This has been the case in Kenya, whereby the presence of massive refugee populations in camps such as Dadaab and Kakuma has been threatened with containment strategies that compromise their security and welfare because they are perceived more as security liabilities than individuals who need protection (Whitaker, 2020). The Human Security Theory requires migration governance to change its primary goal to the well-being of people by providing access to justice,

healthcare, and employment opportunities to migrants instead of paying emphasis on border control and security maintenance only (Sikkink, 2019).

Migration Systems Theory and Human Security Theory when combined offer a powerful prism through which we can view how systemic migration flows which are determined by geopolitical and socio-economic factors need to be managed in a manner that simultaneously maintains national security as well as the rights of the migrants. The Migration Systems Theory helps us uncover the structural drivers of migration and why commonly used state interventions, like tightening of borders, are incapable of fixing the underlying causes of migration. Human Security Theory, in its turn, emphasizes the ethical duty of states to protect migrants in these systems, and makes sure that their dignity and rights are preserved in the face of systemic pressures that they have to endure. When states act on migration flows without incorporating the morality provisions of Human Security, as is the case of Kenya concerning its treatment of refugees, there are chances of abusing fundamental human rights, increasing vulnerability, and destabilizing prospects of lasting stability. Migration governance therefore needs to be able to see the systemic reality of migration but also to be cognisant of the ethical imperative of protecting individuals in a way that provides a balanced response to both the structural nature of migration and the dignity of the human person.

METHODOLOGY

The research will utilize a convergent parallel mixed-methods research design because it involves triangulating qualitative and quantitative data to understand the multifaceted association between migration management and national security in Kenya. Its qualitative aspect will encompass semi-structured interviews of 20 government officials (of the Directorate of Immigration in Kenya, and the Ministry of Interior and security agencies) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with community leaders and refugee representatives in areas including Dadaab and Kakuma. These interviews and discussions will give detailed accounts on experiences and perceptions of stakeholders on migration patterns, security threats, and the effectiveness of current policies. The quantitative aspect examines reports by the official sources (UNHCR, IOM, Kenya Police and NCTC) on trends of migration, border security incidents, and socio-economic consequences between the years 2020 and 2023, including the data on irregular crossings, refugee inflow, terrorism-related cases, and human trafficking indicators.

The qualitative interviews and FGDs data were subjected to thematic analysis, whereby important themes migration management, human security, and national security appeared in the transcripts. This methodology enabled the study to establish trends and opinions regarding the implications of migration on national security and the efficiency of the prevailing systems of governance. At the same time, quantitative data was used to perform descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies, trends) to evaluate migration patterns and security incidents and conduct correlation analysis to identify the relation between migration flows and national security risks. The combination of the two data sets allows a better comprehension of the issues surrounding the challenges in managing migration and security in Kenya.

Through the mixed-methods approach, this study will enable the subtle analysis of the migration-security nexus in the case of qualitative data-rich and context-specific analysis and the generalizable patterns identified through quantitative analysis. The complementarity of the methods used in this convergence means that the findings not only have the solid foundation of real-world experience but also the statistical evidence is strongly in place. The ethical matters were taken into account and concerns were thoroughly considered, informed consent of the participants was provided, and confidentiality was preserved, particularly with regards to sensitive security information and migration data. The mixed-methods nature of the study, as well as the attention to not only one theoretical framework (Migration Systems Theory and Human Security Theory), allows one to understand the issue of the interconnection between migration and national security in Kenya in a comprehensive manner.

FINDINGS

Migration Dynamics and National Security

National security impacts in Kenya were evaluated based on migration patterns as the second specific goal of this study. Security analysis examined three migration patterns including border crossings and domestic

relocations as well as refugee arrivals and their impact on safety measures and government management together with social bonding. Participatory planning serves as the primary component for minimizing security risks stemming from migration since it unites state agencies with local communities and international entities. The need for unified security measures emerges from the intersection between migration movements and risks including terrorism activities and trafficking networks and source-based conflicts.

Inward Migration and Security Implications

Table 1: Inward Migration and Security Implications in Kenya (2020–2023)

Metric	Value/Details	Security Implication
Irregular Border Crossings	~15,000 apprehensions annually	Porous borders exploited for smuggling and terrorism (e.g., al-Shabaab).
Terrorism-Linked Arrests	120+ suspects (Somali border regions, 2023)	Migrant routes used for extremist recruitment and operations.
Human Trafficking Victims Rescued	900+ victims rescued (2023)	Weak enforcement enables trafficking, targeting women and children.
Border Security Funding	KES 14.2 billion (2023/24 budget)	Investments in surveillance (drones, biometrics); gaps in implementation persist.
Crimes Linked to Migrants	450+ arrests (theft, fraud, violence, 2022)	Fuels xenophobia; increases societal tensions.
Migrant Detention Centers	12 facilities, 3,500+ detainees (2023)	Overcrowding raises human rights and radicalization concerns.
Refugee Camp Incidents	300+ violent clashes (Dadaab/Kakuma, 2022)	Resource conflict between refugees and host communities.
Urban Undocumented Migration	40,000+ migrants in informal areas (2023)	Informal settlements become hubs for illicit activities, strain urban governance.

Internal migration mainly involving people from nearby conflict areas generates intricate security problems. Between 2020 to 2023 Kenya's border patrol teams arrested around 15,000 migrants annually and terrorist's groups like al-Shabaab have begun using migrant routes to recruit members and organize operations (DIS, 2022; NCTC, 2022). Human trafficking operations continue to thrive across the country because authorities rescued more than 900 victims in 2023 while showing ongoing implementation weaknesses (Counter-Trafficking Secretariat, 2023). The KES 14.2 billion allocation for border surveillance enhancement has not yet solved the ongoing problems with securing border points (National Treasury, 2023). Public trust diminished because of migrant-related crimes in addition to refugee camp conflicts as well as increasing numbers of undocumented immigrants throughout Eastleigh urban areas (UNHCR 2022, Kenya Police 2022, IOM 2023). The current trends strengthen the necessity for coordinated migration management to achieve proper border security protection alongside humanitarian aid delivery according to Kenya's security objectives.

Outward Migration and Its Security Challenges

Kenya faces substantial security and policy consequences due to its citizens migrating abroad to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. The economic benefits of remittances to the country do not protect migrants from human trafficking or exploitation or dangerous working environments. Between 2020 and 2023 over 100,000 Kenyans yearly migration resulted in more than 1,500 incidents of human trafficking and at least 200 fatalities based on reports from Ministry of Labour (2023) and UNODC (2023). The number of deportees from Kenya reached 4,800 during 2023 because the reintegrating process created more criminal risks for victims

(DIS, 2023). The nation experienced diminished healthcare services because 3,000 medical staff left the country (Kenya Medical Practitioners Board, 2023). The nation faced 300+ cybercrime cases together with 20 labor protests that caused diplomatic tension (Communications Authority, 2023). Recent migrant trends require increased government regulations together with provisions for worker protection and bi-national employment contracts.

Table 2: Outward Migration and Security Challenges in Kenya (2020–2023)

Metric	Value/Details	Security Implication
Annual Labor Emigration	~100,000+ migrants	Dependency on GCC countries; risks of abuse and labor exploitation.
Human Trafficking Cases	1,500+ victims (2020–2023)	Poor regulation of recruitment agencies fuels forced labor and sex trafficking.
Migrant Deaths Abroad	200+ deaths (2022–2023)	Lack of worker protection and weak consular response.
Deportations	4,800+ returnees from GCC (2023)	Reintegration challenges increase vulnerability to crime and unrest.
Brain Drain (Healthcare Sector)	3,000+ professionals emigrated	Undermines domestic health security and crisis response capacity.
Fraudulent Recruitment Agencies	120+ agencies banned	Illegal practices exploit vulnerable jobseekers.
Diaspora-Related Cybercrime	300+ cases (2023)	Scams and phishing targeting migrant families undermine trust and economic security.
Labor Unrest Abroad	20+ strikes/protests (2023)	Reveals systemic worker abuse and causes diplomatic tensions.

Sources: DIS (2023); UNODC (2023); IOM (2023); Ministry of Labour (2023); Kenya Medical Practitioners Board (2023); Communications Authority (2023); Gulf Human Rights Organizations (2023)

Migration Dynamics on National Security in the Region

The following segment describes migration patterns and their security effects in different Kenyan regions. Research participants assessed how movements across national borders and refugee movements together with domestic population displacement affect both security stability and border regulation as well as regional resource allocation and social group cohesiveness. Local stakeholders enable the discovery of complete understanding regarding how migration patterns influence national security throughout different regions of Kenya.

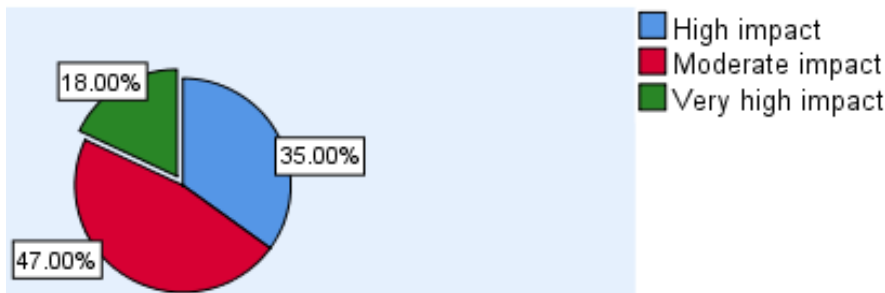


Figure 1 : Impact of Migration Dynamics on National Security in the Region

(Source: Researcher, 2025)

Figure 1 displays Kenya-wide stakeholder opinions regarding migration impact on national security. Refugee flows alongside border movements caused strong effects on national security as reported by 47% of respondents while 35% noticed severe impacts and 18% experienced severe consequences mainly in border zones. The study findings demonstrate that security analysts generally recognize migration effects but the impact strength depends on geographical locations. Numerous respondents stressed that neighboring conflict-affected countries' migration increases security system constraints for Kenya. As one participant noted,

“Migration patterns from conflict zones are putting immense pressure on Kenya’s border security.”

This underscores the urgent need for enhanced border management and policy coordination to protect regional stability.

The migration patterns from neighboring conflict zones are putting immense pressure on Kenya’s border security. (20: Impact of Regional Conflicts on Border Security – Security Personnel).

Undocumented movements from conflict-zone countries namely South Sudan and Somalia pose security risks to Kenya through its migration pathways. Such irregular movement patterns make it harder for border agencies to identify threats and deplete their operational capacity (Abdulrahim & Adra, 2023). Neighboring states that experience political instability lead to uncertain migration patterns which give rise to dangers from terrorism together with organized crime and disease transmissions. According to a security officer consultation in 2025 it was reported that "Migrants frequently transport aviation threats and public health problems along with criminal enterprises that threaten our national security borders" (Security Personnel, 2025). Border crossings have created an overwhelming burden on public service institutions within frontier areas. The research of Ogunnowo and Olajide (2024) explains that refugee movements from war-torn areas result in dual physical safety threats and medical hazards. The developments in border instability require strong border programs and cooperation between organizations. Romans (2023) establishes that the combination of these trends creates an environment suitable for human trafficking and transnational criminal activities. Complete analysis shows border management should combine humanitarian aid with national security objectives (Kinyanjui, 2022).

Influence of Migration Dynamics on National Security in the Region

Patterns of migration produce substantial effects on national security throughout different Kenyan regions where refugee populations and border travelers are numerous. Local resources such as water, healthcare and food supplies experience increased strain because of growing numbers of displaced people according to study participants. Tensions usually emerge between both the local residents and immigrant populations because of these situations. A respondent noted,

“A concerning trend I’ve observed is the establishment of refugee camps affecting local resources in my region” (Community Leader, 2025).

The findings of Sareen and Haque (2024) and Romans (2023) confirm that border-based refugee camps lead people to battle for resources through their work. Migration-linked terrorism represents a new urgent challenge which adds to resource-based conflicts. The occurrence of crimes by foreign nationals has increased public insecurity which has prompted governments to strengthen border security measures. Security incidents that occur due to migrations tend to damage migrant-society relationships which results in growing xenophobic attitudes and obstructs migrant integration plans. Tchie (2023) demonstrates that terrorist activities linked with migrants cause changes in policies which result in marginalization of large communities. The economic consequences mainly affect border regions that depend on trade. Security protocols that are vital to implement have damaged commercial activities and put pressure on local economic stability. One participant explained,

“Something that alarmed me was a surge in illegal border crossings... local businesses struggled to cope with new security measures” (Community Leader, 2025).

Research from Van Praag (2021) and Udosen and Uwak (2021) establishes that strengthened border measures create unfavorable effects on local economies. Results indicate that national security forms a complex connection

with international migration through its influence on society as well as economics and political structures. Correctly handling these difficulties requires policies that comfortably unite security concerns and human aid efforts as well as positive development initiatives within affected areas.

DISCUSSIONS

The research findings are explored within their academic context which discusses migration effects on Kenyan national security. The analysis relies on primary and second-hand information to elaborate on Kenya's complex migration-security relationship which includes both internal and external mobility patterns as well as institutional management techniques. The phenomenon of migration exists as a tactical issue which combines with governance protocols and economic dynamics and societal perceptions. The study emphasizes understanding how these forces impact national security priorities because migration patterns now receive security-focused evaluations in global challenges (Buzan et al., 1998).

Globally displaced citizens entering Namibia primarily from Somalia and South Sudan create significant national security problems as validated by research findings. The integration of refugees creates national security challenges through higher terrorism and trafficking rates and organized crime incidents plus social disturbances across refugee settlement areas. According to survey participant's refugee settlements create challenges for local infrastructure which results in conflicts between residents and those seeking refuge. The research conducted by Sareen and Haque (2024) demonstrates that resource conflicts in refugee camps eventually become serious local disturbances. The process of migrating being characterized as a security threat creates an atmosphere where foreigners become seen as threats leading to worsened societal divisions according to Huysmans (2006). The interaction between migrant's matches Faist's (2000) theory of Migration Systems Theory because migratory flows persist inside established historical and regional systems that operate independent of any state government's ability to regulate them.

Study results showed that when individuals leave their country it creates safety and administrative problems. The Kenyan economy depends heavily on remittance funds yet the Gulf-area migrant worker problems involving labor exploitation and trafficking along with the deportation and death of workers create difficult diplomatic relations and internal national issues. The participants explained that deported citizens lack suitable reintegration pathways upon return which exposes them to criminal activities and radicalization. According to Tchie (2023) and Romans (2023) the treatment of migrants lacks sufficient protections because of migration securitization. The exodus of skilled medical personnel known as brain drain creates domestic crisis management challenges for Kenya according to Chimni (2004) and Sikkink (2019) because migration generates structural weaknesses in developing nations.

The migration impact on security stands distinct between regions because border areas of counties remain under the most substantial pressure. Local authorities together with community leaders show varying responses regarding cross-border migration since they recognize a strong connection between these movements and community safety levels. Local participants explained how increased border management leads to economic challenges that most impact zones where border commerce generates significant revenue. The study validates Human Security Theory because it emphasizes protection of individuals alongside communities instead of border security (Gasper, 2005). In the analysis by Buzan et al. (1998) regarding border security challenges shows how security measures can simultaneously create risks towards domestic peace alongside external defence threats. Rising border security measures generate local economic disruptions as explained by Van Praag (2021) therefore intensify poverty conditions where criminal networks can establish themselves.

These results show how security needs of a country clash with its responsibility to provide humanitarian assistance to others. The study respondents stated that migration control measures must stop terrorism and human trafficking but higher than necessary security measures can both breach human rights and promote xenophobia. Reactive policies targeting migration in both incoming and outgoing situations lead to deteriorating integration attempts and negative effects on Kenya's international standing while generating instability throughout the country. Border management systems need to maintain both human compassion and security procedures according to Kinyanjui (2022). Ye (2024) illustrates that migration policies sometimes work against human

security principles because border control policies survive while the state should protect and preserve dignity for all persons including migrants and non-migrants.

CONCLUSION

The research investigated how migration management affects national security in Kenya by examining boundaries from inside and outside the country. The research reveals migration creates considerable security challenges for national safety especially in border areas because displacement throughout the country together with migrants crossing borders produces terrorist threats and human trafficking alongside resource conflicts that cause damage to the governing structures and social connections in the communities. Population movement to Gulf Cooperation Council nations generates three key concerns: workplace mistreatment of these migrant workers and preventable deaths along with a decrease in essential medical professionals available in Kenya. Border regions displayed the most severe effects from migration levels because they suffered from the highest levels of movement. Local authorities together with stakeholders have modified their policies but more integration between security needs and humanitarian protection remains necessary. Migration governance needs a comprehensive method which protects migrants' rights while sustaining national security so local, national and international partnerships become necessary to achieve lasting inclusive migration policies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The outcome of this research indicates Kenya should implement stronger border control measures along with humanitarian assistance yet expand regional safety collaborations and make migration policies that integrate security needs with human rights values. The country needs to invest in its border areas and protect Kenyan immigrants worldwide while decreasing skilled labor migration from important fields specifically healthcare. To fight xenophobia and demonstrate migrant contributions the government should launch public awareness campaigns. The implementation of these approaches will enable Kenya to handle migration patterns successfully while protecting national defense assets alongside setting stable societal stages and promoting economic expansion.

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