

The flurry of Crimes in Kibiti and Rufiji and the Quest for Effective Early Warning and Response Mechanism

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Abstract

The flurry of violent crimes in Kibiti and Rufiji districts between the years 2015 and 2017 was unprecedented in the country. As a result of such incidences that seemed to have targeted government and ruling party officers, the people of the two districts generated a sense of insecurity and the rest of the country was left in disbelief on what was happening in the area. In such circumstances, it is worthy interrogating: What was the driving force for the serial violent crimes in the two districts? And why did it take long for the government and communities to respond to such tendencies? This article argues that the emergency of unorthodox fanatical doctrines inspired the wave of violent criminal activities in the two districts. It also suggests that the perpetrators maintained their mission by generating resources through other forms of illicit activities. The article contends that limitations in existing early warning and response mechanisms affected the ability of the government and communities to detect and counter the occurrence of violent tendencies before they matured. The article suggests the re-establishment of Nyumba Kumi as a formal early warning and response mechanism against activities, which compromise peace and security in the communities and the country.

Keywords: Tanzania, Crimes, Violence, Security, Nyumba Kumi

Introduction

From the year 2015 to 2017 Tanzania witnessed unprecedented incidences of violent crimes in Kibiti and Rufiji Districts in the Coast region. Intermittent security challenges, including killings targeting police officers, local government and ruling party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) officials traumatized communities in the two districts and raised safety concerns in the whole region. At the same time, there was a wave of poaching, robbery of banks and mobile money shops in the districts and neighboring places. This article posits that a series of violent actions, which took place in Kibiti and Rufiji, was inspired by fanatic ideas associated with unorthodox Islamic theological doctrines. The article is based on the findings of the study, which was conducted between August and October 2017 in the two districts. The article is divided into four sections. The first section highlights the methodology that was used to get data for the study. The second section introduces the conceptual guide for this article. The third part of the

paper examines the nature of crimes, which took place in Kibiti and Rufiji at the stipulated time. The section also highlights the role of different social groups-women, men and youth in carrying out violent criminal activities. The fourth section of the article underscores the utility of early warnings and response mechanisms on the basis of the premise that the existence of accurate ground information and responses is a necessary condition for effective prevention and combating of criminalities. And, finally the article wraps up the discussion by offering concluding remarks.

Methodology

This article uses data, which was collected in a study conducted in the two districts to examine the paradoxes related to the wave of violent activities in Kibiti and Rufiji districts in the Coast Region. In-depth interviews were held with key informants including government leaders, religious leaders, law enforcers, victims and perpetrators of violent activities in the two districts. The research was conducted by a team of six researchers, who managed to have interviews with 82 key informants (42 in Kibiti and 40 in Rufiji); 18 of the key informants were women and the rest were men. The researchers also identified and analyzed online materials to uncover the extremist messages explaining the wave of criminalities, which took place in the two districts between 2015 and 2017. Furthermore, the researchers collected and analyzed media reports on criminal activities in the two districts. Respondents were purposefully selected on the basis of the information they had. The snowballing sampling technique was used to compliment purposeful sampling in identifying 'people who knew' about the problem and its dynamics.

Conceptual Grounding

This article uses the rational choice theory of crime. Becker (1968), the champion of this theory, instructively noted that the choice to commit crime, like other human choices, takes place on rational considerations on cost-benefit analysis. The word crime here refers to any social behavior, which deviates from established social norms with effect of disrupting harmony and causing harm to members of the society. It includes all illegal and immoral activities such as robbery, rape, murder, assault, arson, human trafficking, poaching, just to mention a few. As Becker (1968) notes, human beings are rational actors, hence, one will be motivated to engage in criminal activities if by his reasoning and imaginations, there will be more benefits than disadvantages. However, as Van Gelder (2012: 746) observed the application of rationality in criminal activities does not apply strict *homo-economicus* sense but "rudimentary cognitive processing of pros and cons" of a particular choice of course of actions. Thus, while some people may engage in criminal activities due to instrumental drive to realize some material benefits, others may commit crimes to achieve perceived ideological ends and benefits.

Criminality in all its forms and nature entails transgression of laws of the country. As Viskovatoff (2001) observed, the decision to abide or deviate from laws of the country is shaped by one's values and thought structure referred to, by Kant as 'thinking rules'. In essence, the Kantian 'thinking rules' refer to ideology, which shapes the mindset and rational calculus of a person in the face of choices on a suitable course of action. Ideology is used here to mean a mental frame, which structures the menu on courses of action available to a person. In criminality, crime leaders tend to manipulate the mindset structures of their disciples in a way that it makes commission of a particular crime a rational choice. This particularly happens when the preached religious beliefs promote intolerant view against non-believers and advocate the use of violence to achieve their desired goals. In these doctrines, the use of violence as an instrument to propagate their ideological stances and the desire to replace established social and political structures in order to provide space for the envisaged new order inevitably leads to conflict between converts of new ideologies and other members of the society.

The Kibiti and Rufiji serial crimes had hallmarks of fanatic religious and ideological ideas. However, this was not the first time Tanzania witnessed crime incidents of that nature. In fact, incidents of violent criminal activities associated with religious and ethnic ideologies started taking place with introduction of liberalization policies in the 1990s. Heilman and Kaiser (2012) observed that in this period of time violence criminal incidents occurred due to manipulation of religious and ethnic identities to reinforce existing divisions with the effect of causing clashes between people of different ideological and identity orientations. In this situation, Lawi (2015) reveals that the introduction of Wahhabi doctrine of purifying Islam in Tanzania by Islamic scholars from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Yemen from 1980s became the source of violent confrontations between such scholars and believers of conventional Islam. At the same time, religious revivalism emerged amongst Christians in form of numerous Pentecostal churches; some of them preached intolerance views against established churches and non-believers. In some situations, converts of new ideologies committed some crimes as a means to realize their religious missions. Some of the crimes which may be associated with religious activities include the murder of Rev. Mathayo Kachila, the Assemblies of God pastor and wounding of scores of other people due to the fight over the right to slaughter animals in Buseresere, Geita in 2013; bombing of Olasiti Catholic parish in Arusha on May 5, 2013, in the presence of the then Vatican envoy in Tanzania, Archbishop Francisco Montecillo-Padilla and other clergy; bombing of Arusha Night Park Pub in Minazini area in April 2014; killing of Fr. Evarist Mushi and gun attack on Fr. Ambrose Mkenda in 2012 in Zanzibar; acid attacks on Sheikh Fadhil Suleiman Soraga, the secretary to the Mufti of Zanzibar in 2012; explosive attacks on Sheikh Abdulkareem Njonjo in Arusha in 2012 and attack on Sheikh Sudi Ally Sudi of Ansar Sunni's Mosque in Kilombero, Arusha in 2014 (Lupa, 2015: 56-58). Other incidents

include explosive attacks on a mosque in stone town in Zanzibar in 2014 which killed one person and caused injuries to scores of people, attacks of two Christian churches and restaurants in Zanzibar in June 2014(LeSage, 2014:6).

The Nature of Kibiti and Rufiji Crimes

Kibiti and Rufiji districts, like other places in the country, have no history of organized and serial violent crimes. However, in the period between 2015 and 2017, the two districts witnessed a number of violent incidences in an unprecedented scale and magnitude. The rise of the spate of criminality in the two districts in the period was associated with a group of the then new preachers who were referred as *walokole wa kiislamu*, meaning Islamic revivalists. This was an activist group, committed to a movement to reform the practice and place of Islam in the society. According to the report, the revivalists, who were dedicated to invigorate religious purity in accordance with their beliefs, started their activities in the two districts a decade earlier before 2015. Additionally, various respondents claimed that the revivalists were inspired by ideas of foreign radical clerics, notably, the late *Sheikh* Abu Rogo, from Mombasa, Kenya. The teachings of *Sheikh* Rogo were obtained through compact discs (CDs) and videos, which were sold in the streets by *machingas* (hawkers). It seems therefore the revivalists' activities and teachings incited the use of violence as an instrument to bring their desired changes in the existing social and political structures.

The findings of the study observed that the introduction of new religious beliefs led to conflicts in the mosques.¹ Such conflicts made the revivalists stop praying with fellow Muslims at mosques. The group also made attempts to take-over existing mosques in Ikwiriri and other places causing chaos, which ultimately led to their decision to build their separate mosques with timber residuals. Some of the new mosques which were built as a result of such conflicts include *msikiti wa mabanzi* [Mabanzi Mosque], *Msikiti wa Mbao wa Kibwibwi* [kibwibwi timber mosque] and *Msikiti wa Jaribu Mpakani* [Jaribu border Mosque]. It was intimated by the respondents that these mosques were centers for the youth indoctrination with new ideas and equipping the converts with militant skills. Such skills include the use of weapons and propaganda to destroy and forcefully eliminate all forms of considered impure religious practices and deeds. Inevitably, such beliefs and practices led to disorder and friction in the society.

Worse enough, the revivalists started engaging in a series of bizarre killings of people. Scores of government and ruling party officials, militia and innocent citizens (both Muslims and non-Muslims) were killed. It was reported that about 35 people in total lost their lives in such incidences. The killings started by invading the police station in Ikwiriri, killing of two police officers and robbing two guns which were used in the killings that followed thereafter. Several other people were abducted and others were mutilated or maimed by unknown assailants. At the same time, it was reported that a

number of youth were disappearing from the community. This includes some school children that were absconding from schools in a pretense of going for religious studies. One witness stated thus:

Before the killings we witnessed the wave of pupils absconding schools on the pretense that they were attending religious education; there was also a wave of change of behavior where the youngsters stopped greeting elders and started calling them *kaffirs*. Moreover, some *madrassa* teachers started forbidding their pupils from attending schools. They considered those schools illegitimate and *haram*] (Center for Strategic and Peace Studies, 2017: 1).

The police reported that some of the young people were sent abroad in the guise of religious scholarships, which, perhaps, aimed at radicalizing and training them on the use of weapons (Habari Leo 14.12. 2017). Walwa and Jingu (2017:17) report that in this racket, young girls from the age of twelve were married to members of the criminal enterprise, sometimes without their parents being informed. Furthermore, it was revealed by some eyewitnesses that as a result of embracing new ideologies, some youth started denouncing their parents and labeling them as infidels.²

The series of weird killings of government officials seem to have links with illegal poaching and charcoal business in the area. Forests and the Selous Game Reserve surround the two districts. Charcoal and other natural resources were some of the major sources of livelihoods of local communities in the two districts. By 2015, there were a good number of people who were charcoal vendors and engaged in illegal logging and poaching. It seems some instances of crime activities were fueled by the drive to revenge against real or perceived injustices in illegal logging and timbering. Unfortunately, some members of the community considered these natural resources, as their God-ordained property and hence they considered that the government had no right to interfere with harvesting of such resources.

Correspondingly, in some incidences, some local people seemed to have been sympathetic to the accused killers of the police, *mgambo* and natural resource wardens. For example, there is an incident, which occurred on February 21, 2017 where the Criminal Investigation Officer (CIO) of Kibiti and two other officials of government from the Ministry of Natural Resources were killed in an ambush attack at the tax collection revenue that is located in Majawa ward. After the murder of the two officials, the suspects mobilized local communities around the area to collect and share the sacks of charcoal and other natural resources that had been confiscated by the government and kept at the tax collection center (Mwananchi, 23.2.2017). It was claimed that the killers left a message that reads:

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We are announcing that we have killed these people because they are abusing people through their work and anyone that will work here we will follow him even if it is at his home. We have sacrificed ourselves to die. When you see anywhere a driver gives us information; be it at home or work. There is no way to get rid of this abuse; it is through gun only (Walwa and Jingu, 2017:13).

Based on the above quotation, two observations are worthwhile highlighting. First, the virtual mobilization of local people to share the impounded forestry and natural resources was done so as to attract support from the local population to the mission of the criminals. Certainly, it seems the purpose was to antagonize the local communities against the government. Secondly, concerns about perceived unfair confiscation of local communities' forest and natural resources were widespread in Kibiti and Rufiji. Local communities accused the police and government officials at the tax revenue collection for confiscating the forestry produce of people who fail or refuse to bribe them. Thus, concerns and grievances of the people created and reinforced a breeding ground for recruitment of disciples to the mission of the crime perpetrators.

The second complaint raised by local communities was to do with real or perceived illegal transfer of their land to local and foreign investors. In the last ten years preceding the occurrences of violence activities, the two districts witnessed a significant increase in number of investors wanting to acquire land for commercial farming. The investors especially targeted the land along Rufiji River Basin, which is considered good for irrigation farming. It is because of the investment potentials in these two districts that the then government program, Big Results Now (BRN), earmarked about two thirds of the land in Rufiji district for investment. Launched in 2013 through financial support of foreign donors including the United Kingdom, Department for International Development (DFID), the BRN initiative sought to implement the Malaysian model of development in Tanzania. The transfer of land from local communities to investors has been marred by malpractices that place local people at disadvantaged position. Many local people in villages, such as Nyamwage where large-scale investment has taken place, complained about illegal transfer of their land with little or no compensation. Government leaders at the village and district levels were accused of conspiring with investors to take away the local communities' land with little or no compensation (Mwami and Kamata, 2011). In effect, tensions and complaints over the transfer of land to investors reinforced the gap and broken relationship between the local population and government officials. This made it possible for the violence perpetrators to penetrate and gain support from the aggrieved local population. It is probably because of such hostilities against authorities that the police, government officials and *mgambo* ended up being the most targets.

However, land use conflicts in Rufiji are a historical phenomenon. During German colonial rule, there was an interest to make the Rufiji Delta a breadbasket of Tanganyika (Mwami and Kamata, 2011). The same interest continued after independence in which the government in 1975 enacted the Rufiji River Basin Development Authority (RUBADA) to manage all land in the Rufiji River Basin. This basin is considered potential for investments on large-scale farming. The establishment of RUBADA was, however, revoked in 2017 by the United Republic of Tanzania President, Dr. John Magufuli, following complaints over the duplication of activities performed by RUBADA and other government agencies, especially the district councils. Functions performed by RUBADA have now been transferred to the land department in the respective district councils.

Moreover, the perpetrators of violence in the area survived and thrived through several illegal activities—notably illegal logging and charcoal business, banditry and poaching in the Selous Game Reserve.³ Thus, the government initiative to control illegal logging, charcoal business and poaching compelled the perpetrators to be creative and devise new ways of mobilizing resources. The perpetrators innovative ways of surviving and sustaining their mission included engaging in new forms of criminal activities such as robbing mobile money shops, banks and travellers emerged to replace poaching and illegal logging. Some of the criminal activities that took place in that way included an attempt to rob CRDB Bank in Mbande, Temeke district in Dar es Salaam where four police officers were killed and several weapons were stolen. There was also an incident of robbery to the National Microfinance Bank (NMB) Bank in Mkuranga district in Pwani in which one police officer was also killed (Tanzania Today, 20.3.2016). The ‘criminal innovation’ by the group was also seen on February 26, 2017 with the robbery of Access Bank in Mbagala, Dar es Salaam, where one Police Officer and two people were killed and an undisclosed amount of money was stolen (Mwananchi, 20.3. 2016).

Additionally, on September 14, 2017, the Dar es Salaam Zone Police Commander, Lazaro Mambosasa, released a statement indicating that the police killed one bandit whose real name was Anae Rashid *alias* Abu Mariam. The bandit was killed in Kivule, Dar es Salaam, while trying to escape the police. In their statement, the police indicated that the bandit whom the police have been hunting for sometimes confessed before dying that he was behind the violent attacks that killed the police and local government leaders in Kibiti and Rufiji. He also admitted that he was involved in the robbery of CRDB and Access banks in Mbagala and NMB Bank in Mkuranga and the subsequent killing of the police during the robbery operations (MbukuziHuru, 20.3. 2017). The police report stated that:

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He was the chief architect in all these criminal incidents. This bandit after being arrested he mentioned several other bandits he has been cooperating with. After getting all these, the police rushed him to Muhimbili Hospital, but before reaching the hospital he died because of losing high amount of blood. After a close examination of this bandit, he was found with three bullet injuries, which without doubt, he was shot during different clashes he was involved with. But he was found with a fresh wound that he was being treated *kwa bibi* (to grandmother) in Kivule (Mambosasa, 2017).

The criminal activities which took place in Kibiti and Rufiji seem to have extended beyond the hotspot areas. Revealingly, on November 6, 2017 the police in Kahama district, Shinyanga, reported killing five suspected bandits. The police received intelligence information about presence of the suspects who were preparing to rob miners. The police investigation revealed that those killed are among the suspected criminals that have been accused of killing local government leaders, the police and ruling party functionaries in Kibiti and Rufiji (Habari Leo, 6.11. 2017).

The perpetrators of violent activities in Kibiti and Rufiji employed women, men and youth differently. The recruitment of youth, children and women to the criminal activities was facilitated by family members, peers and friends. This set-up had penetrated institutions such as formal schools and *madrasah* where youth and children were being recruited to engage in criminal activities. The recruiters also penetrated informal institutions such as family rituals and local marital processes and systems to get functionaries in their mission.⁴ It seems their recruitment strategy was successful. For example, there were reports in Kibiti, of about 1,300 children that had gone missing from schools. The then Regional Commander of Police (RPC) of Pwani, Jonathan Shana, reported on December 13, 2017 that some of the children that went missing were found. He noted also, however, that some of the children were taken outside the country under the cover of receiving religious education, but in reality that was only as a cover for sending them to obtain martial and ideological trainings required in their operations (Habari Leo 14.12. 2017).

Moreover, the recruitment into the criminal gangs was done through trusted family members or friends. A 15 years young man who was apprehended by the police had the following to say:

..to join these groups, ..I was convinced by my brother who cheated me that I was going for religious education but only to find that I was recruited into criminal enterprise...Had I known, I wouldn't have joined here. I blame my brother for terminating my studies and bringing in the false religion.⁵

It appears that roles of different social groups were assigned differently for youth, women and children. The boys were recruited to serve as fighters in the cells and girls were recruited to serve as wives of men in the cells. Also, women married to the suspects acted as informers to their husbands against state security organs. Similarly, some women who were followers of the gang were used for information gathering regarding the location of the police and gauging the public opinions about the suspects and their operations. All of social groups-women, youth and children, were used to gather intelligence, providing services to the enterprise and recruitment of new members. The youth, particularly the *bodaboda* drivers (motorcycle drivers), masons, petty traders, and carpenters who joined the group were useful in maintaining surveillance in the road junctions and stops, banks, police stations and any target places for attack by the group. Eventually, some youth started taking part in killing of village and ruling party leaders. The youth were promised good life after removal of what they were told as illegitimate leaders.⁶

Illuminatingly, according to the police, in one of the incidents where the police were in the mission to ambush one of the camps of a criminal enterprise, they met a group of about five women who claimed to have been looking for firewood. On reaching at the camp, they found it empty without the suspects; it was later realized that the women who met the police along the way were informers of the criminal enterprise.⁷ Moreover, women have been hiding their husbands who are criminals and hiding their secrets when the security organs come to arrest them. For example, in one of the cases, after the arrival of the police officers in one of the homes, they found a wife and asked the-whereabouts of her husband. In response, she informed the officers that her husband had not been at home for about three months while in reality the husband was hiding in the house. The husband was later involved in the murder of another person in another area.

Significantly, women played a role of recruiting girls who were later married to men in the criminal gang. A notable incident is that which involved a *Kungwi* in Rufiji. In particular, girls that are ready for marriage are required to be groomed by elder women referred to as *Kungwi* to make them ready for marital and family roles. The *kungwis* were to socialize young girls to the fanatical ideas, recruited them and facilitated their marriage to the perpetrators. Connected to the above, is also a case, which involves targeting and promising marriage to girls in primary and secondary schools so as to influence and recruit them. Accordingly, in one of the villages, a parent complained about the disappearance of his daughter who later got married to a person that was alleged to be one of the perpetrators. According to this parent, his daughter started dodging classes at the secondary school she was studying; she would instead, attend *madrasah* classes that were supposedly run by a member of the revival movement. The parent reported the matter to the local government leaders and

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afterwards to the police. But after a while this girl went missing and the parents did not know where she went. In October 2017, it was reported that one of the suspects was spotted in Nkasi district in Rukwa Region. This suspect escaped to Rukwa following the police operations in Kibiti and Rufiji. He escaped together with the girl who was, by that moment, married to him. Upon arresting the suspect, the police handed over the girl to her parents, but the parents were uncertain whether their daughter will ever go back to school, being a convert to unorthodox religious beliefs, which despises modern education.⁸

The respondents further revealed that members of the criminal gangs had the tendency to use children for intelligence gathering in pursuing their agenda. This was indeed a case related to the April 13, 2017 incident in which eight police officers were killed in an ambush attack organized and implemented by the suspected radical groups at Mkengeni village in Kibiti (Zamampya, 2017). It was alleged during interviews with local people and the police that the suspects used children playing near the location of an incident to gather information about timing of the police car carrying the police exchanging patrol shifts. The location of an incident is about three kilometers from the police camp in Vungu village. It was intimated during interviews that the children informed the killers who easily planned and successfully implemented the ambush. In a similar vein, in one of the villages, it was unveiled during interviews that a boy of about 12 who was recruited for martial training by the criminal enterprise demonstrated to the police some elevated ability to use machine guns. In their operation to arrest parents of the boy in question who had escaped, the police inquired from the boy about whether his parents had weapons. The boy directed to the police the weapons that his parents had left inside the house. He exhibited about how to assemble and disassemble the gun.⁹

In short, violent activities in Kibiti and Rufiji survived and thrived partly because the perpetrators were able to recruit members and assign them roles according to the existing social roles. Notably, the perpetrators benefitted from intelligence gathered by women, youth and children in executing their mission. Traditionally and culturally, these social groups tend to be unsuspected when it comes to engaging in criminal activities. It seems that their perceived innocence was seen to be an asset by the perpetrators of violent activities and therefore, they were useful for gathering intelligence upon various heinous crimes were committed. To deal with this situation, it is imperative to create a space which will allow community members to detect and respond to unusual behavior amongst various social groups. Such a space should also be a vehicle for close cooperation between communities and government authorities in unveiling and stamping out criminal elements in their midst.

Early Warning and Response Mechanism

Community early warning and response mechanisms are locally based peace and security infrastructures, which provide space for members of the community to prevent and transform criminal behaviors (Leach, 2016). The establishment of community early warning and response mechanisms is based on two premises. First, community members are better placed to detect signs of criminality and deal with them before they turn violent and harm the society. Secondly, community members have interest to effectively participate and partner with the government in crime prevention and maintaining community safety. Thus, community members as rational actors have interest in maintaining spaces which enable them to engage various members of the community to interact with the government in prevention and combating crime. In his study on Nyumba Kumi in Kenya, Leting (2017) observed that community peace and security infrastructure are instrumental in providing a space in which community members work together with state law enforcement agencies to reduce crime in their localities and keep communities safe. Leach (2016) noted that early warning mechanism efficacy lies on its ability to enable the government and communities arrest crime incidents before they become violent. The fact that the Kibiti and Rufiji flurry of violent crimes emerged as a 'surprise epidemic' suggests the need to rethink on the efficacy of existing community early warning and response mechanisms.

The building-up of Kibiti and Rufiji criminal activities started taking place for about a decade before it reached a tipping point in 2015. It was claimed that some of the perpetrators were saying publicly about their intention to kill the police, government leaders and members of the ruling party functionaries for several years. The Mabanzi mosque (*msikiti wa mabanzi*) in Ikwiriri, which was, it was alleged, offering radical preaching and martial training for recruits was located less than 200 meters from the Ikwiriri police station, but that did not prevent them from making a centre for ideological and 'battle' training in preparations for eventual criminalities. The Ikwiriri police station is one of those stations that were attacked and weapons stolen; the preparation for the attack was allegedly done in *Msikiti wa mabanzi*. This situation suggests deficits in early warning and response mechanism, which allows the communities and law enforcement agencies to jointly handle threats to peace and security at early stages. It seems, it took a fairly long time to detect and counter what was going on because of the difficulties related to gathering information at the local level, unlike other places such as Mwanza and Arusha where the security organs were able to detect and respond to insecurities in a relatively shorter period of time. The established community security and peace infrastructures in Mwanza allowed the police to gather useful information at the local level and integrate community members in addressing security challenges (Walwa and Jingu, 2017). The community

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security structures allows security organs to have access to 'on the ground' information in supplement of existing government security structures.

As it was noted above, the relatively late detection and response the situation in Kibiti and Rufiji raised question about the efficacy of existing mechanism in affording the communities ability to detect and respond to criminal incidents in their areas. The existing government security structures at local level include village, *mtaa*[street] and *kitongoji* [hamlet] defense and security committees. These structures seem to be located far from the people in a way that does not allow for early detection and response to criminal or criminal potential behavior. Some respondents were of the view that *kitongoji*, which is the smallest and closer security structure to communities, has 250 households, a large number for effective and close monitoring of social dynamics and hence difficulties in operating as an effective center for early warning and response against criminalities. Furthermore, some vitongoji have large catchment areas. For example, North Umwe in Ikwiriri is said to have 800 households. Additionally, in some places, the distance between households is too far for a closer monitoring of social dynamics in the locality. The village security committee has a bigger catchment area of more than 1000 people and hence more challenging to detect suspicious social dynamics in their formative stages. The people interviewed in the two districts suggested that they rely on these structures to report insecurity incidences. Additionally, the people were also concerned that the personnel in those centers tend to be overwhelmed by reports, given their wide catchment areas. Moreover, as it is for the police, officials of government at the local level are few enough in number to cater for the security needs of the huge population without the involvement of the local communities.

Besides, like many other Coast communities, Islamic religion has traditionally played an important community mechanism as a response mechanism to crimes. However, the power of the religion as a vehicle of early warning and response was eroded with introduction of new theological doctrines, which introduced tensions between its convert and established system of the religion. In the past, the whole Muslim community in the area maintained a united front and paid attention to the teachings and moral guidance of their leaders. The introduction of new religious doctrines caused divisions within the Muslim community and eroded the power of religious leaders to respond to criminal behaviors. In fact, the divisions become particularly toxic to social harmony when some groups of the people in the same religion consider others as *kaffirs*, meaning infidels. In short, the role of religion as a means of early warning and response against criminality was undermined with the introduction of religious teachings in the area.

The absence of a viable community early warning and response mechanism influenced some village leaders and security officers in the two districts to suggest re-introduction of *Nyumba Kumi* structures [ten-household] as non-partisan institutional space for detecting and arresting negative behavior and trends before they mature.¹⁰ *Nyumba Kumi* structures were introduced in Tanzania after independence as community structures that allow people to deal with security challenges in their localities but also as spaces for interface between the state and local communities in dealing with emerging challenges. The efficacy of *Nyumba Kumi* in Tanzania as early warning and response mechanism before its formal abolishment in 1992, made Kenya to re-introduce the initiative as a means of forging partnership between state organs and the communities in dealing and controlling crime, including violent extremist activities. The re-introduction of *Nyumba Kumi* may have the following advantages:

Firstly, *Nyumba Kumi* will provide a space where community members work together with government agencies to proactively deal and mitigate security threats and risks as well as conditions, which are exploited by criminals to win support from the people. Also, cooperation between communities and state actors through *Nyumba Kumi* will build trust, which will allow state actors to gather adequate crime intelligence to prevent, manage and or combat crimes. The premise is that nobody knows the community better than members of the community themselves. Thus, a community based structure like *Nyumba Kumi* is the best suitable vehicle of understanding social dynamics, mapping of security threats and their trends and developing effective responses.

Secondly, *Nyumba Kumi* will provide a space where community members can organize themselves to address security challenges of their concern. The criminal gangs in Kibiti and Rufiji flourished at full glare of the people because they were unable to organize and respond against the perpetrators. It seems, initially the crime network consisted of only a few people. For example, it was reported that in Nyambunda village, which had about 1000 people, the renegade group was made of only about ten people. Thus, had there been a community security structure such as *Nyumba Kumi*, it would be possible for the community to arrest the situation before it became calamitous. In this, the Muhuro village in Ikwiriri is illustrative. The community and especially the youth were organized through their community security structures that enabled them to work closely with police and in effect managed to prevent the ensuing criminality to take place in the village. Community security structures enabled the villagers to keep their village safe.

Thirdly, *Nyumba Kumi* may provide a space where men, women and youth (girls and boys) will equip themselves with knowledge and skills required in the local setting to address security challenges in accordance with socio-cultural division of labor and

contextual imperatives. To be sure, the women and youth in Ikwiriri-mwembemuhoro and Utete-Rufiji were of the view that women would have more role in maintaining peace and security in their communities if there was a space for them to learn and share required competences, discuss their challenges with other community members and divide roles amongst themselves in dealing with threats confronting them.¹¹ The executive officer in Mgomba ward corroborated this view that having community structures where women and youth would be engaged in decision-making purposes regarding security matters in their communities will enhance the ability of communities to deal with challenges facing them.¹² One Sahani Likoko, a resident of Lungungu village in Kibiti was explicit that after the police intervention in dealing with the wave of criminality in the district, villagers agreed that all young men and women should participate in the efforts to reveal identities of criminals, apprehend them and hand them to the police. Mr. Likoko stated in extenso thus:

...unlike other villages, the youth are motivated and volunteered to protect their communities, and for now there is no more violent criminality in Lungungu. As for women, we have advised them to stay home and prepare food for their husbands who patrol various parts of the village. Violent criminality will end in the whole Kibiti district as we now know the perpetrators and we thank the police and the government in general. Increased public awareness on the problem is much needed. Other agencies and institutions should also join hands with the government for it cannot be expected for the government to effectively ameliorate the problem alone (Center for Strategic and Peace Studies, 2017: 21).

Thus, *Nyumba Kumi* structures will be facilitative to communities in organizing themselves against security challenges, by taking into account the community social, cultural landscape and requirements.

Conclusion

The article explored the nature of Kibiti and Rufiji criminal activities. It argued that the shocking headlines which appeared in front pages of the media on various violent crimes including killings of police, government officials and ruling party officials in the period between the years 2015-2017 was primarily inspired by the emergence of unconventional religious ideas. Moreover, the article expounded that the criminals survived and thrived on the web of social ties amongst members. It is through such ties that recruitment of new members was done. The article underscores the utility of community security structures as early warning and response mechanism in preventing and combating criminalities. In this, the article recommends re-introduction of *Nyumba Kumi*-the structure that has traditionally served as a formal early warning and response mechanism against threats and risks to peace and security- as a bulwark

against crimes trends. However, if *Nyumba Kumi* has to be re-introduced, it may need to be restructured to take into account the existing socio-economic and political context of the country. Indeed, *Nyumba Kumi* may serve as a space for partnership between the state and communities in preventing and combating criminalities. In this way, *Nyumba Kumi* will *interalia*, enable security agencies to collect accurate intelligence upon which they can operate against criminals. Importantly, *Nyumba Kumi* may become a vehicle through which communities in their various social groups become part of the efforts to maintain community safety and by extension national security.

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Notes

1. Interview with government and religious leaders in various villages, 05.8.2017, Kibiti, Tanzania.
2. Interview with senior police officers, 20.9.2017, Kibiti and Rufiji, Tanzania.
3. Interview with suspected perpetrators of violence in Kibiti, 20.8.2017, Kibiti, Tanzania.
4. Interview with a person arrested for taking part in the violence activities, 10.8.2017, Ikwiriri, Tanzania.
5. Interview with an individual arrested for taking part in violence activities, 15.8.2017, Kibiti, Tanzania.
6. Interview with some police officers, 02.12.2017, Rufiji, Tanzania.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. Interview with a parent whose child was married to a suspect, 10.9.2017, Ikwiriri, Tanzania.
12. Interview, 20.8.2017, *op.cit.*

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