British-Kenyan Cooperation in the Areas of Defense and Security – A Postcolonial Perspective

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze and evaluate the cooperation between the United Kingdom and Kenya in the areas of defense and security in the second decade of the 21st century. The analysis is conducted in the light of the theory of postcolonialism. The research uses the method of analyzing text sources. This paper begins with an introduction synthetically describing the transition of British-Kenyan relations from colonial to postcolonial and the main methodological assumptions of the paper. Then the theoretical assumptions of postcolonialism are presented. The next three sections include: the circumstances of cooperation in the fields of defense and security; Military cooperation to restore peace in Somalia; and The United Kingdom programs to enhance peace and security in Kenya and East Africa. The paper ends with a conclusion.

The main research questions are: Was the defense and security cooperation during the recent decade a continuation of the status quo or was there something different about it? If there was something different, what caused the change? Are there prospects for strengthening the cooperation in the future?

Over the past decade, the United Kingdom has strengthened cooperation with Kenya in the areas of defense and security. The actions of the British were aimed at strengthening Kenya's military potential and its ability to influence the international environment. The United Kingdom's increased involvement in Kenya was driven by internal, bilateral and international factors. Kenya also expressed its readiness to strengthen this cooperation, guided by its own interests.

Keywords:

1. Introduction

After the Second World War, the decolonization of the British Empire began, starting with the Indian subcontinent. As a result, the UK's influence on the international security environment diminished. Outside Europe, it retained significant importance in the Middle East and parts of Africa, including Kenya (Bell, 2013). Due to the abuses of the British against the Kenyans, in 1952 the Mau Mau organization led by Jomo Kenyatta launched a rebellion against the colonial authorities, which deepened hostility between countries and societies (Callaghan, 2007). In 1955, the British managed to suppress the rebellion at the cost of about 3,000 members of the Kikuyu tribe and several hundred British citizens. The British used brutal methods, including the placement of persons suspected of insurgent activity in concentration camps and the use of torture, slave labor and murder in them (Elkins, 2013). At that time, the United Kingdom forged its counter-insurgency policy in Kenya. Even then, the British knew that gathering intelligence from captured insurgents was the key to success. Forcing information to protect British soldiers and civilians led to the ill-treatment of detainees (Rowe, 2016). Despite the British brutal attempt to maintain the colonial empire, the rebellion led to Kenya's autonomy in 1958 and independence in 1963 (Nasong'o, 2007).

Independent Kenya was of less importance in the United Kingdom's foreign and security policy (Cullen, 2017). In the following decades, the involvement of the Soviet Union in the former British colonies in Africa increased, which was a cause of concern for Great Britain (White, 2002). However, the risk of Kenya entering the zone of Soviet influence was limited. One of the reasons was Kenya's dependence on trade with the United Kingdom, including imports of British weapons, which lasted until the end of the Cold War (Kaplan, 1982).

After the Cold War, Kenya and the UK cooperated mainly in the area of international security. They undertook joint efforts to resolve conflicts in Central and Eastern Africa, including the civil war in Rwanda (Kameron, 2013). Counteracting international terrorism was systematically becoming an increasingly important area of cooperation between the states. In 1998, Al-Qaida bombed US embassies in the Kenyan capital Nairobi and the city of Dar es Salaam in neighboring Tanzania. They were just one of a series of attacks carried out by this terrorist organization in the 1990s (Brown, 2013). As we know, the group carried out the most spectacular attack on September 11, 2001, in the United States. At the beginning of the 21st century, both the UK and Kenya have engaged in the global war on terror led by the US. Even so, British influence in Kenya has been diminishing, partly being superseded by rising Chinese influence (Branch, 2011). This has been a consequence of the adoption of the "Look East Policy" by the Kenyan Government.

The aim of this paper is to analyze and evaluate cooperation between the United Kingdom and Kenya in the area of defense and security in the last decade. The analysis is conducted in the perspective of the theory of postcolonialism. The research uses the method of analyzing text sources. The main research questions are: Was the defense and security cooperation during the recent decade a continuation of the status quo or was there something different about it? If there was something different, what caused the change? Are there prospects for strengthening the cooperation in the future?

Over the past decade, the United Kingdom has strengthened cooperation with Kenya in the areas of defense and security. The increased involvement in Kenya was driven by internal, bilateral and international factors. This mainly concerned Great Britain's search for a new international role due to Brexit, its benefit from cooperation with rapidly developing

Kenya, attempts to rebuild its position in East Africa, the need to stabilize the region, preventing the spread of China's influence, using its advantage over other powers resulting from postcolonial ties, and the redemption of complicated colonial history. For Kenya, cooperation with the United Kingdom in the areas of defense and security offers the opportunity to strengthen its security forces, increase the possibility of stabilizing neighboring countries, including Somalia, counter the spread of terrorism and extremism more effectively, increase its position in East Africa, and benefit from development cooperation. Over the last decade, the convergence of goals, the possibility of achieving mutual benefits, historical and cultural ties, and the readiness to overcome the negative consequences of colonialism have favored efforts to strengthen cooperation between the United Kingdom and Kenya in the areas of defense and security. This trend should continue throughout the current decade.

2. Theoretical assumptions

In the 21st century, Kenya's foreign and security policy has undergone a major paradigmatic shift. Kenya's orientation has been defined as moving further away from traditional Western allies, i.e. Great Britain and the United States. Kenya has strengthened its relations with the emerging global powers, mainly with China, and has also focused more on the region of East Africa. However, Kenya's relations with the West may turn out to be deeper than it seemed in recent years, and its future policy direction is not certain. It is because Western states, especially the United Kingdom, are trying to warm up tarnished relations with Kenya (Nzau, 2016). This is especially true in the area of security and defense, where the states have many common interests.

Contemporary relations between the United Kingdom and Kenya in the fields of security and defense can be seen from the perspective of postcolonial theory. Jean-Paul Sartre, Franz Fanon and Edward Said, who defined themselves as representatives of the postcolonial school of thought, should be considered the pioneers of postcolonial studies. The postcolonial current was established as an independent research approach in the mid-1980s. Part of the literature of anti-colonial movement leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi, Leopold Senghor and Kwame Nkrumah, is also included in the postcolonial canon. In the 21st century, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha and Walter D. Mignolo may be recognized as the best-known representatives of the academic community participating in the postcolonial discourse (Polus, 2014).

The theory of postcolonialism primarily criticizes the one-sided view of the period of colonialism and neo-colonialism from a Western perspective. This perspective may lead to the belief that the West was an active player expanding its influence, ideas and values, and that the rest of the world was a passive, irrational witness of its development, acting like a victim or subject to external authority (Gawrycki, 2013). Such an attitude entails binary categorizations (master-slave, colonizer-colonized, civilized-uncivilized, white-black), being a derivative of triumphalist European historiography, justifying the imperial political benefits of the West, its legal system and morality (Grovogui, 2007). Proponents of the postcolonial current tend to redefine the period of colonialism, supplementing the discourse with the perspective of colonized entities, taking into account the contemporary impact and effects of colonialism on political, social and cultural issues (Gawrycki, 2013).

The concept of postcolonialism is most often understood as the history of former colonies after the process of decolonization. According to some authors, the prefix "post" is

supposed to suggest that colonialism is over. However, it is a falsification of reality (Domańska, 2008). Many postcolonial scholars emphasize the considerable degree of continuity and durability of colonial forms of power in contemporary world politics. The degree of protection of economic and military interests by world powers in the southern countries sometimes seems to be higher than in the period of direct domination, i.e. colonialism. Most often, this phenomenon is called neo-colonialism. The starting point of postcolonialism are issues of global inequalities, forms of power that enable them, and persistent forms of the dominance of rich over poor (Smith & Owens, 2008). Postcolonialism should rather be considered as an international system after the formal political process of decolonization, but with the consequences of the colonial period and some of its remains. In this sense, postcolonialism is a form of colonialism that can last forever. The possibility of overcoming it depends on both postcolonial governments and societies and former colonial empires (Mazurczak, 2016).

Postcolonialism has specifically drawn attention to the international relations theory's neglect of the critical intersections of an empire, race/ethnicity, gender and class in the workings of global power that reproduce a hierarchical system. This hierarchy focuses on the concentration of power. The central theme of postcolonialism is that Western perceptions of the non-West are a result of the legacies of European colonization and imperialism. Non-Western states and peoples are presented most often as "others", usually in such a way that it can be understood as "inferior". This approach helped the West to justify its domination over other peoples in the name of bringing the civilization or progress (Nair, 2017).

According to representatives of postcolonialism, identities do not have a permanent and inherent character but arise during social processes and practices. Cultural hybrids arise as a result of the mutual co-existence of the colonizer and colonized identity. Nevertheless, socially constructed racial, gender and class differences are understood as factors enabling the emergence and duration of global subordination and control hierarchies. Racism, in turn, partly contributed to humanitarian norms sanctioning certain obligations as a type of colonial mission (Smith & Owens, 2008).

Postcolonialism interrogates and somehow challenges a world order dominated by major state actors and their domineering interests and ways of looking at the world (Nair, 2017). Representatives of postcolonialism not only criticize reality but also explore possible forms of resistance to colonial ideologies and formulate strategies for assuming real power (Smith & Owens, 2008).

3. The circumstances of cooperation in the areas of defense and security

The historic British involvement in Africa has had a significant impact on Kenya, where modern legal, institutional and cultural patterns have spread. However, some of the actions of the colonial power led to tensions with Africans, including Kenyans, which the British government has to deal with (International Relations and Defence Committee, 2020). The United Kingdom and Kenya have a long tradition of bilateral relations. They have mainly cooperated in areas such as trade, investments, tourism, defense and security, anti-piracy, counter-terrorism, and climate change (Kenya High Commission UK). From a postcolonial perspective, we can say that British-Kenyan relations were projected by a period of colonialism, the consequences of which significantly influence contemporary relations and facilitate cooperation. Prime Minister Theresa May said "Kenya holds a special

place in the hearts of the British people and our countries share a long history that has left us deeply connected to one another" (GOV.UK, 2018d).

As part of the redemption of difficult moments in common history, in the summer of 2013 Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs William Hague acknowledged and apologized for British crimes against the Kikuyu ethnic group during the Mau Mau rebellion. He announced reparation payments for elderly Kikuyu survivors who filed a lawsuit against the British Government for colonial abuses (Carotenuto & Luongo, 2016). On 11 October 2016, the new Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA) entered into force which allowed British troops to continue their military training in Kenya for another five years (GOV.UK, 2015a). There were also many conciliatory gestures during a visit to Nairobi by Theresa May in August 2018, which was the first visit to Kenya by the British Prime Minister in three decades. In the perspective of Brexit, Prime Minister May promoted in Africa the concept of "Global Britain", which assumed closer relations with former colonies. As part of the concept, Kenya was to become the UK's model partner in East Africa, which concerned both economic and other issues. The visit provided an opportunity to sign additional agreements, including in the fields of defense and security. In turn, in January 2020 in London, Prime Minister Boris Johnson and President Uhuru Kenyatta agreed on a new strategic partnership for the years 2020-2025. The second pillar of the partnership assumes joint efforts to tackle global terrorism, violent extremism, organized crime and corruption. Furthermore, it involves closer defense cooperation, promoting security in East Africa, and improving the cyber resilience (GOV.UK, 2020). Although the British authorities do not admit it, the tightening of relations with Kenya is also expected to limit the spread of Chinese influence in East Africa.

Great Britain actively cooperates with Kenya in defense and security. The cooperation basically aims at improving the defense capabilities of Kenya and the safety of citizens, tourists and investors. In turn, Great Britain has the opportunity to train its expeditionary forces in Kenya. Cooperation for conflict resolution in Somalia and South Sudan is also an important issue. It is worth mentioning that Ethiopia, which competes with Kenya for a dominant position in East Africa, also plays a vital role in this respect. So far, none of the two states has come close to achieving hegemonic status in the sub-region (Hartmann, 2016). However, close cooperation with the United Kingdom is vital for Kenya in this competition.

Relations with Great Britain in defense and security were severely strained after the December 2007 elections in Kenya, which resulted in the outbreak of violence. Under these circumstances, Prime Minister Gordon Brown even made inquiries about the possibility of military involvement in Kenya. However, he received information that this option could not be realized due to the British forces' involvement in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other countries. Thus, there were no available military units (Dorman, 2016). Along with the stabilization of the internal situation in Kenya, traditional military relations with Great Britain normalized. Relations could be rebuilt quickly thanks to the long-standing historical connections and Kenya's open door policy (International Relations and Defence Committee, 2020).

Kenya and the United Kingdom are engaged in an enduring defense cooperation that has been going on for four decades. This allows British troops to be present in Kenya mainly for training purposes. According to the official position of the British Government, the United Kingdom has "an excellent, long-standing relationship with the Kenyan armed forces and the local communities surrounding the training areas" (Kamau, 2013). British Army Training Unit Kenya (BATUK), which stations in Kenya, is a permanent training support unit. BATUK is located mainly in Nanyuki, 200 km north of Nairobi. A small element is placed in Kahawa, Nairobi. BATUK fulfils advanced training of units preparing to participate in peacekeeping and stabilization missions or assume high-readiness tasks.

BATUK consists of around 100 permanent staff and reinforcement of about 280 personnel on a short-term basis. Every year, up to six British infantry battalions carry out eight-week training in Kenya. Three Royal Engineer Squadrons carry out exercises, too. Two medical company groups of the Royal Army Medical Corps also station in Kenya. They provide primary health care assistance to the civilian community (The British Army). Overall, the British Army trains up to 10,000 British soldiers in Kenya every year (Kamau, 2013). However, this is usually a slightly smaller number, oscillating around 7.5 thousand (GOV.UK, 2018b). British soldiers participating in military missions in Afghanistan and Iraq and earlier, for example, in Sierra Leone trained in Kenya.

The British Peace Support Team East Africa (BPSTEA) stations in Kenya, too. Its main aim is to coordinate British military assistance to armed forces in Eastern Africa, especially to contribute to Security Sector Reform and to increase peacekeeping capacity (Tossini, 2017). The British Army is involved in various initiatives implemented in Kenya. It trains locals, including local rangers in the fight against poachers killing elephants and rhinos (Vaughan, 2013).

4. Military cooperation to restore peace in Somalia

British soldiers regularly participate in military exercises together with troops of the Kenyan army (Dorman, 2016). The purpose of joint exercises is "to promote stability in East Africa and beyond and to build the continent's capacity to overcome its own challenges and deliver its own security" (GOV.UK, 2018d). Kenya is adjacent to countries where the security is precarious, like Somalia and South Sudan. Both Kenya and the United Kingdom want to stabilize the situation in these countries. They regularly consult each other regarding peace initiatives in Somalia and South Sudan. Moreover, Kenya participates in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional grouping to promote peace, cooperation and development in East Asia.

Cooperation between Great Britain and Kenya in resolving the conflict in Somalia is particularly advanced. In mid-October 2011, Kenya declared war on terrorist organization Al-Shabaab militia operating from Somalia. Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) were ordered to pursue and combat its fighters along the border between Kenya and Somalia. Military operations were also carried out in Somalia. The government in Nairobi justified the operations with the right to self-defense. In response, Al-Shabaab made several terror incursions into Kenya and threatened to carry out major terrorist attacks in Kenyan cities. During the London Conference in Somalia in May 2013, President Kenyatta was a distinguished guest, despite a dislike of his political past, including his involvement in the 2007 electoral violence. The constructive approach to the new president of Kenya resulted from the British authorities' awareness of the state's position in East Africa, its contribution to the fight against international terrorism and its resistance to instability arising from war-threatened Somalia (Nzau, 2016). It was also due to concerns about the China's increasing involvement in Kenya (Kamau, 2013).

Since 2015, the United Kingdom has been supporting Kenya in anti-terrorist activities in Somalia through the deployment of personnel to Somalia to offer logistical support to the Kenya Defence Forces and anti-terrorist training for the police and border guards of Kenya (Tossini, 2017). Kenya is also involved in the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM). Great Britain actively participates in the UN Security Council works to strengthen the AMISOM and to support the engagement of KDF in the mission (Kenya

High Commission UK). The UK provides financial and training support to the African Union (AU) in carrying out the mission in Somalia. The British army gives support to Kenyan soldiers participating in AMISOM, including those training Somali security forces (GOV.UK, 2018d). Most observers recognized military intervention in Somalia and involvement in AMISOM as Kenya's involvement in the global war on terror led by its key Western allies - the United States and Great Britain (Nzau, 2016). In May 2019, Secretary of State Jeremy Hunt described Kenya's mission in the Horn of Africa as vital to global peace (Wakaya, 2019).

The United Kingdom also supports Kenya in dealing with the refugee crisis resulting from the civil war in Somalia. Kenya hosts more than 450,000 refugees from the region. Thanks to the Kenyan Government's consent and the support of international donors, including the UK Government, they can be in a safe environment close to their homeland (GOV.UK, 2018b). On 25 March 2017, the IGAD Extraordinary Summit on Somali Refugees took place in Nairobi. Countries participating in the summit, including Great Britain, declared their continued support for Kenya in helping refugees from Somalia and other countries of the region.

5. The United Kingdom programs to enhance peace and security in Kenya and East Africa

The United Kingdom has been implementing several programs aimed at strengthening security in East Africa, including Kenya. The East Africa Security Program was to be implemented by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) with £0.47 million in funding from Official Development Assistance (ODA) and £ 2 million from Non-ODA between April 2015 and November 2020. The program included two goals - developing a counter Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) training wing of the International Peace and Security Training Centre (IPSTC) and supporting the British Peace Support Team (Africa). The program was directed at increasing local troops' capacity, including Kenyan soldiers participating in peacekeeping missions, mainly in AMISOM, in protecting and counteracting IED (GOV.UK, 2015c).

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the MoD implemented Africa Peace and Security Program (APS) in the period between April 2018 and March 2021. As much as £4 million from ODA and £4.5 million from Non-ODA had been mobilized for the program. These funds were intended for three purposes – the African Union Support Program (AUSP), the British Peace Support Team Africa (BPST) and Other Costs – Delivery, Monitoring and Evaluation. Meanwhile, APS "focused on improving the African Union's capacity to prevent, manage and respond to conflicts in Africa, and to enhance the capability of Troop Contributing Countries participating either in AU or UN missions". In practice, this included technical assistance in the form of advisors for protection of civilians, gender and international humanitarian law, as well as conflict support prevention, diplomacy aid, early warning systems and mediation. Support for regional peacekeeping training centers which train staff to assist AMISOM was one of the specific tasks (GOV.UK, 2018a).

Between April 2015 and March 2020, the FCO was implementing the East Africa Crime and Justice Program for the amount of £1.85 million from ODA. The goal of the program was to support "Kenya and Tanzania to strengthen their law enforcement and criminal justice capability to tackle serious organized crime more effectively, from investigation to prosecution". In practice, support included assisting the development of key institutions

and criminal justice systems and mentoring for police officers and prosecutors (GOV.UK, 2015b).

East Africa Preventing Violent Extremism for the period between April 2019 and March 2022 is another program to be implement by FCO for the amount of £4 million from ODA. The program is targeted to "strengthen the evidence base for preventing violent extremism and reduce the drivers and enablers of violent extremism in East Africa". Specific objectives include supporting the Kenyan Government in implementing national action plans to prevent extremism. In addition, they include actions to identify the primary sources of extremism, sharing best practices of tackling the extremism and supporting the most vulnerable groups to reintegrate into local communities (GOV.UK, 2019).

The FCO, in cooperation with the National Crime Agency (NCA) and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), implemented East Africa Migration Program between April 2018 and March 2020 for the amount of £1.5 million from ODA. This program primarily intended to limit the activity of regional criminal groups involved in the illegal transfer of people to Europe, including Great Britain, but also to East Africa, including Kenya. The activities consisted in the identification, arrest, investigation and prosecution of the traffickers (GOV.UK, 2018c).

Great Britain and Kenya also cooperate to counteract child sex abuse, which made it possible to arrest many pedophiles in the UK. During the visit to Kenya in August 2018, Prime Minister Theresa May announced plans for Britain to set up a cyber-center in Nairobi to help authorities fight online child sex abuse (Webber, 2018). In 2019 Kenya has become the first African country to connect to International Criminal Police Organization's (INTERPOL) International Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) database.

Over the last decade in Kenya, there has been a radicalization of Islamic moods, which is particularly visible in the north of the country and coastal areas (Porteous, 2008). This phenomenon is treated by both Kenyan and British authorities as a serious threat. At the beginning of 2019, Nairobi benefited from a British security funding pledge worth Sh3 billion to fight violent extremism and poaching, and boost trade (Mutambo, 2019). These activities are to contribute to the improvement of social mood in Kenya and thus strengthening stability and security.

5. Conclusion

The colonial period significantly influences contemporary relations between the United Kingdom and Kenya. This is due to historical, cultural and economic dependencies. In order to maintain and deepen postcolonial relations, states had to adapt to new circumstances. This required dealing with the difficult experiences of the colonial period, as well as treating oneself as equal partners. States have made efforts to reduce the inequalities resulting from colonialism and to solve contemporary problems together.

Over the last decade, the United Kingdom has undertaken intensified efforts to improve relations with Kenya, including strengthening cooperation in the areas of defense and security. These actions were conditioned by both internal, bilateral and external factors. In supporting Kenya, the United Kingdom counts primarily on the benefits of cooperation with the country. The ties established during the colonial period make it easier for Great Britain to develop closer relations with Kenya. Building a genuine partnership is helped by London's assumption of responsibility for difficult moments in the history of bilateral relations. In the context of Brexit, the United Kingdom had to reevaluate its role in the world,

returning to the concept of "Global Britain". In order to rebuild its influence in East Africa, it focused on cooperation with the relatively stable and rapidly developing Kenya. Increasing influence in the region is possible with its stabilization, including limiting the threat from Somalia. The British are keen to train and support the Kenyan armed forces in these activities so that they themselves do not have to become significantly involved in regional conflicts. At the same time, strengthening cooperation with Kenya and supporting the peace process in East Africa increases Britain's ability to limit China's influence.

Thanks to the United Kingdom's support, Kenya is strengthening its security forces, which is especially important due to the infiltration of extremism and terrorism from destabilized Somalia. In addition, Kenya has ambitions to gain a dominant position in East Africa, which would give it a greater ability to influence its neighbors. Close cooperation with Great Britain increases Kenya's prestige and creates greater development opportunities. The convergence of goals implies that cooperation between the United Kingdom and Kenya in the areas of defense and security should be further tightened.

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