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THE ROLE OF SECURITY FORCES' DEPLOYMENT IN PROMOTING PEACEFUL ELECTIONS IN ARUSHA CITY COUNCIL: EVIDENCE FROM 2025 GENERAL ELECTION

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ABSTRACT

This research examined the role of security forces' deployment in promoting peaceful elections in Arusha City Council during the 2025 General Election. Peaceful elections are vital for democratic stability, yet electoral periods in Tanzania have occasionally been marked by tensions and violence. Security Governance Theory and Conflict Prevention Theory underpinned this study. We employed a mixed-methods approach under a convergent parallel design to assess how deployment adequacy, visibility, and responsiveness influenced electoral peace. We gathered data from 96 respondents using questionnaires and 12 key informants through interviews and focus group discussion. Quantitative analysis using SPSS and qualitative thematic analysis through NVivo revealed that deployment was largely reactive, uneven, and delayed, particularly in peri-urban areas. Although security forces eventually restored order, their interventions were sometimes excessive, undermining public trust. The findings indicate that weak coordination, limited resources, and delayed response reduced the preventive impact of deployment efforts. In conclusion, while deployment was essential in stabilizing post-election unrest, its shortcomings limited its preventive effectiveness. It recommends proactive, intelligence-led planning, improved inter-agency coordination, community engagement, and training on human rights–based security operations to ensure credible and peaceful elections.

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INTRODUCTION

Peaceful elections are fundamental to democratic governance and social stability. Yet, elections globally remain vulnerable to tensions that may escalate into violence, threatening these outcomes. Election-related insecurity manifests in various forms, including political unrest, misinformation, cyber-attacks, and external interference. For instance, the 2016 United States presidential election raised widespread concerns over foreign cyber interference and misinformation campaigns, which undermined public trust in electoral integrity (Nwokike et al., 2023). Similarly, during France's 2017 presidential election, sophisticated cyber-attacks targeted political candidates, prompting the government to tighten its cybersecurity protocols (Mukhammadsidiqov& Turaev, 2020). The United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD) has since supported more than 100 countries in implementing security frameworks aimed at addressing such evolving threats, highlighting the indispensable role of security forces in safeguarding electoral integrity (Abiodun et al., 2020). This underscores the increasing complexity of modern electoral security and the need for adaptive, coordinated, and proactive security deployments to uphold democratic order. Across Africa, electoral violence persists as a significant challenge to democratic consolidation and socio-economic progress. According to the African Union (AU, 2021), nearly 45% of elections in sub-Saharan Africa between 1990 and 2020 were marked by incidents of intimidation or violence. The 2007–2008 Kenyan general election remains one of the most severe examples, with over 1,100 deaths and more than 600,000 people displaced following disputes over results (KNCHR, 2008). Similarly, the 2010–2011 crisis in Côte d'Ivoire caused over 3,000 deaths and widespread displacement (Human Rights Watch, 2011). Such crises exposed weaknesses in security coordination and preparedness, reinforcing the critical importance of effective security deployments in maintaining peace. Post-crisis reforms in Kenya and other African countries have improved inter-agency collaboration and community engagement, showing that strategic deployment of security forces can mitigate risks, deter violence, and facilitate credible elections. In Tanzania, while political stability has been relatively sustained, elections have occasionally been accompanied by heightened tensions, particularly in urban and politically active regions such as Arusha. The 2020 general election witnessed confrontations between police and opposition supporters in several areas, with reports indicating the detention of over 300 individuals linked to protests (Wepundi&Sharamo, 2021). In response, the Tanzania Police Force (TPF), in coordination with the National Electoral Commission (NEC), developed specialized election security strategies, including

community policing initiatives, crowd-control training, and the deployment of rapid response units (Maguire & Franklin, 2021). These efforts support the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, which emphasizes peace, justice, and strong institutions (Mtui, 2022). Within Arusha City Council a politically dynamic and historically sensitive area the deployment of security forces has played a crucial role in maintaining order during previous elections. The 2015 and 2020 elections demonstrated measurable improvements in stability, yet persistent logistical and resource-related challenges call for a deeper analysis of deployment effectiveness. Accordingly, this study, titled "The Role of Security Forces' Deployment in Promoting Peaceful Elections in Arusha City Council: Evidence from the 2025 General Election," examines how security deployment strategies influence the promotion of peaceful and credible elections, offering insights into best practices that can strengthen Tanzania's electoral security framework.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Literature Review: This study was guided by Security Governance Theory and Conflict Prevention Theory to explain the role of security forces in promoting peaceful elections. Security Governance Theory treats security as a shared responsibility across police, military, local authorities, and civil society. It emphasizes coordination, accountability, and inclusivity in maintaining stability, especially during elections (Maguire & Franklin, 2021; Chilundu, 2023). In Tanzania, collaboration between police units and community actors has strengthened trust and reduced electoral tensions (Masabo, 2020). However, critics note that political interference, inter-agency rivalry, and resource shortages often weaken cooperation (Jenkins, 2020; Wepundi&Sharamo, 2021). Within this study, the theory provided a framework for analyzing how security coordination and governance mechanisms supported peaceful elections in Arusha City Council during the 2025 general election.

Conflict Prevention Theory, rooted in the works of John Paul Lederach and later advanced by Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall, stresses early identification and mitigation of potential violence through proactive measures such as risk assessment, early warning systems, and intelligence gathering. Empirical studies in Africa show that these strategies can reduce election-related tensions (Bitafir Ijon, 2020; Mission A.U.E.O., 2020). Despite this, scholars argue that weak institutions and political interests often limit preventive efforts (Nwokike et al., 2023; Sule et al., 2020). In Tanzania, the theory complements Security Governance Theory by focusing on anticipatory measures like intelligence-led policing and inter-agency coordination (Masabo, 2020; Mhoja, 2023). Together, they offer a comprehensive framework linking coordination and prevention in maintaining peace during elections in Arusha City Council.

Empirical Review: The deployment of security forces during elections is widely recognized as a fundamental mechanism for safeguarding the integrity of electoral processes and ensuring a peaceful voting environment. Garnett and Bordeleau (2022) provide a comprehensive analysis of security forces' involvement in elections across various democratic nations. Their findings emphasize that the strategic and well-coordinated deployment of security personnel serves as a crucial deterrent against electoral violence, intimidation, and malpractice. The visible presence of trained and impartial security officers reassures voters and political actors, fostering confidence in the fairness of the election. However, Garnett and Bordeleau caution that deployment should not focus merely on numerical strength; rather, it must be carefully planned with consideration for the political, cultural, and social nuances of the election environment. Failure to do so risks creating perceptions of bias, harassment, or repression, which may exacerbate tensions and undermine the very peace such deployments seek to uphold. Across Africa, Bitafir Ijon (2020) explores security dynamics during the Ghanaian by-elections in the Ayawaso West Wougon and Talensi constituencies, which have historically been prone to election-related violence. The study highlights how targeted deployment of security forces to identified hotspots was instrumental in reducing violent incidents and intimidation tactics. The research highlights the necessity of localized and context-specific deployment strategies that respond to the unique political landscapes and security challenges within different constituencies. Bitafir further argues that the mere presence of security personnel can empower citizens by creating a safer environment in which they feel free to participate in the democratic process without fear. Such deployments not only mitigate violence but also contribute to enhancing voter turnout and legitimacy of election results, as communities are reassured that their safety is a priority. Building on this, Ali and Ali (2022) provide an insightful examination of Nigeria's election security landscape, where the deployment of security forces carries significant political implications. Their study indicates the effectiveness of security deployments heavily depends on the perceived neutrality and professionalism of the forces involved. In situations where security personnel are viewed as aligned with specific political interests or parties, their presence can provoke distrust, increase tensions, and even lead to escalated violence. Ali and Ali emphasize that to avoid such outcomes, security agencies must undergo rigorous training to ensure adherence to impartiality and human rights standards. Additionally, proactive community engagement and transparent communication before and during elections are vital in building trust between security forces and the electorate. This highlights the complex interplay between operational deployment and political legitimacy in election security management.

In Tanzania specifically, Mnyasenga (2023) investigates the legal and institutional frameworks regulating election campaigns and security enforcement within Tanzania, with a particular focus on Arusha. The study indicates while the legal provisions aim to foster peaceful and orderly electoral processes, the actual realization of these goals heavily depends on the efficient deployment and conduct of security forces. Given Arusha's history of electoral tension and occasional unrest, the deployment of security personnel is a pivotal factor in maintaining peace throughout the campaign and voting periods. Mnyasenga argues for a strategic deployment approach that is proactive, responsive, and adaptable to emerging threats, emphasizing the importance of situational awareness and coordination among security agencies. This approach ensures that security efforts are not only reactive but also preventive, minimizing disruptions and enhancing the credibility of elections at the local level. Ultimately, Schuberth (2020) introduces the concept of hybrid security governance in the management of election-related violence in urban Kenya, a context that shares similarities with Arusha's urban environment. The study documents how formal security forces collaborate with community-based armed groups and informal security actors to manage and prevent electoral violence. This hybrid model reflects an innovative and pragmatic approach to deployment that capitalizes on the local knowledge, social networks, and legitimacy of community actors. Schuberth suggests that this multi-layered security strategy can enhance responsiveness and effectiveness in complex urban settings where traditional policing methods alone may fall short. Applying such a model to Arusha City Council could offer valuable insights for improving the deployment of security forces by integrating formal and informal mechanisms, thus promoting a culturally sensitive and inclusive framework for election security.

METHODOLOGY

Arusha City Council was selected for this research due to its political dynamics and history of electoral tension, making it an ideal setting to examine how security deployment affects electoral peace. The research adopted a pragmatist philosophy and a mixed-methods approach, enabling integration of both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a holistic understanding of deployment, coordination, and preventive strategies. A convergent parallel design was employed, where quantitative data from structured questionnaires and qualitative data from interviews and focus groups were collected concurrently and analyzed separately before integration. The target

population included security personnel, election officials, political representatives, and community leaders. Using Yamane's (1967) formula, a sample of 96 respondents was selected through stratified random sampling for the quantitative phase, while 12 key informants were purposively chosen for in-depth qualitative insights. Data were collected using three instruments: structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group discussion (FGD). Questionnaires captured measurable perceptions regarding the deployment and coordination of security forces, while interviews and the FGD explored participants' experiences, challenges, and contextual realities in maintaining peace during the elections. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS Version 29.0, employing descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, and percentages to summarize trends. Qualitative data were processed through thematic analysis using NVivo software, involving coding and identification of patterns that reflected operational dynamics, coordination effectiveness, and community trust. Combining quantitative and qualitative data strengthened the findings' validity. To ensure data quality, validity and reliability tests were rigorously applied. Content and construct validity were confirmed through expert review and pilot testing to refine the tools (Sürücü &Maslakci, 2020; Coleman, 2022). Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeded 0.70 for all constructs, confirming strong internal consistency and reliability. Ethical standards governed the research: participants gave informed consent, and their identities stayed confidential. Ethical approval was secured from the relevant institutional review board, guaranteeing compliance with established research ethics (Hasan et al., 2021). These measures ensured that the study's findings were credible, dependable, and ethically sound in examining how security forces contributed to peaceful elections in Arusha City Council.

FINDINGS

We examined the role of security forces' deployment in promoting peaceful elections in Arusha City Council during the 2025 General Election. Security deployment aims to maintain peace, deter violence, and build public trust. However, findings revealed a significant gap between policy intentions and actual implementation. The 2025 elections were marred by demonstrations, violent confrontations, and property destruction, resulting in casualties and eroded public trust. Although security forces eventually restored order, their response was widely perceived as delayed, unevenly distributed, and occasionally excessive. Analysis across three key dimension adequacy, visibility, and responsiveness showed that while the forces succeeded in containing unrest, shortcomings in resource allocation and coordination hindered their ability to prevent violence effectively.

Adequacy of Deployment: Adequacy of deployment was examined to determine whether sufficient numbers of security officers were deployed across urban and peri-urban polling centers and whether their presence was enough to deter acts of violence and voter intimidation. Respondents rated their agreement with three key statements focusing on sufficiency, spatial coverage, and deterrent impact. Table 1, perceptions of deployment adequacy were largely negative. Only 33.7% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that enough officers were deployed to deter violence, while a significant 44.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 21.7% remained neutral. Similarly, only 31.6% of participants believed that deployment covered both urban and peri-urban areas, whereas 43.5% expressed disagreement and 25.0% were undecided. When asked whether the presence of officers reduced voter fear and intimidation, 31.6% agreed while 43.5% disagreed, and 25.0% were neutral. The statistics tell a clear story: most respondents saw deployment as inadequate and poorly planned. Many said officer numbers at polling centers and roads were simply not enough to control escalating unrest, especially in crowded and peri-urban zones. The limited coverage allowed demonstrations to spread rapidly, leading to incidents of property destruction and clashes between civilians and police. Although the eventual mobilization of reinforcements helped contain the situation, the late intervention amplified the scale of the damage. The findings imply that deployment lacked strategic foresight, timely intelligence coordination, and resource balance across electoral zones factors that are essential for maintaining peace during high-tension elections.

Visibility of Security Personnel: Visibility of security personnel during elections plays an essential psychological role in deterring violence and reassuring voters of their safety. It reflects not only physical presence but also the perception of readiness and impartiality. Respondents were asked to rate the visibility of officers at polling stations and public areas, as well as the impact of that visibility on violence prevention and voter confidence. The results show that visibility of security forces was perceived as limited, inconsistent, and insufficiently reassuring. Across the three indicators, fewer than 35% of respondents agreed that officers were visible enough to deter violence or inspire confidence, while more than 40% disagreed. For instance, only 33.7% of participants agreed that security personnel were visibly stationed at polling centers, whereas 40.2% disagreed, and 26.1% were neutral. Similarly, 37.0% of respondents believed visibility discouraged violence, compared to 39.2% who disagreed and 23.9% who remained neutral. These patterns reveal widespread disillusionment with the security presence. Respondents explained that officers were often deployed reactively arriving at trouble spots only after protests had erupted or damage had been done. In several wards, particularly in the outskirts of Arusha, citizens reported seeing minimal patrol activity before or during the voting process. Although the heavy presence of anti-riot units was later observed during demonstrations, many perceived it as excessive and intimidating, especially following reports of injuries and deaths among protesters. This suggests while visibility was eventually achieved through large-scale mobilization, it occurred too late to prevent unrest and too aggressively to promote public confidence.

Responsiveness of Security Forces: Responsiveness assesses how swiftly and impartially security forces react to reported incidents of violence or tension. It reflects operational efficiency and the extent to which law enforcement maintains public order without escalating conflict. Respondents were asked about the timeliness of police response, fairness in handling disputes, and effectiveness in restoring peace. Responsiveness emerged as a major weakness of deployment. Only 28.3% of respondents agreed that officers responded promptly to reported incidents, compared to 47.8% who disagreed and 23.9% who remained neutral. Only 27.2% agreed that that officers acted impartially in resolving election disputes, while 47.9% disagreed. Regarding the effectiveness of interventions in restoring peace, 31.6% of respondents agreed, whereas 44.6% disagreed. The data confirms what citizens felt: slow, reactive response that let tensions spiral before police intervened. During 2025 protests in Arusha, officers arrived too late—damage was already done. Reinforcements stabilized things, but critics said the response was too heavy-handed: tear gas, rubber bullets, live ammunition. Injuries and deaths followed, straining community-police relations further. Order was restored, but at a cost: deepened mistrust and questions about proportionality and human rights.

Qualitative Findings: To complement the quantitative results, twelve key informants including security officers, election officials, and community leaders were interviewed across Arusha City Council. The interviews explored perceptions of security force deployment during the 2025 General Election, focusing on adequacy, visibility, and responsiveness. They also examined how deployment affected residents' sense of safety amid protests and unrest. The qualitative insights enriched the quantitative findings by illustrating real-time security operations and citizen experiences, from which four main themes emerged.

Theme 1: Inadequate and Uneven Deployment: Most respondents indicated that the deployment of security personnel in Arusha City during the 2025 elections was insufficient and poorly balanced across different areas. Although polling stations in the city center appeared adequately manned in the early hours of the day, the coverage became inadequate as the situation worsened later in the afternoon when demonstrations broke out in several parts of the city. Respondents noted that while officers were initially positioned at key polling

Table 4.1. Respondents' Views on Adequacy of Deployment (n = 92)

Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
Enough officers were deployed to deter violence.	17 (18.5%)	24 (26.1%)	20 (21.7%)	22 (23.9%)	9 (9.8%)	2.81	1.18
Deployment covered both urban and peri-urban areas.	19 (20.7%)	21 (22.8%)	23 (25.0%)	18 (19.6%)	11 (12.0%)	2.80	1.20
Presence of officers reduced voter fear and intimidation.	15 (16.3%)	25 (27.2%)	23 (25.0%)	19 (20.7%)	10 (10.9%)	2.83	1.16

Source: Field Data (2025)

Table 4.2. Respondents' Views on Visibility of Security Personnel (n = 92)

Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
Security personnel were visibly stationed at polling stations.	16 (17.4%)	21 (22.8%)	24 (26.1%)	20 (21.7%)	11 (12.0%)	2.93	1.14
Visible presence discouraged acts of violence.	17 (18.5%)	19 (20.7%)	22 (23.9%)	23 (25.0%)	11 (12.0%)	2.91	1.12
Visibility built voter confidence in the electoral process.	15 (16.3%)	23 (25.0%)	24 (26.1%)	21 (22.8%)	9 (9.8%)	2.85	1.13

Source: Field Data (2025)

Table 4.3. Respondents' Views on Responsiveness of Security Forces (n = 92)

Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
Officers responded promptly to reported incidents.	20 (21.7%)	24 (26.1%)	22 (23.9%)	17 (18.5%)	9 (9.8%)	2.69	1.18
Officers acted impartially in resolving election disputes.	18 (19.6%)	26 (28.3%)	23 (25.0%)	17 (18.5%)	8 (8.7%)	2.69	1.17
Interventions restored peace effectively.	16 (17.4%)	25 (27.2%)	22 (23.9%)	19 (20.7%)	10 (10.9%)	2.76	1.15

Source: Field Data (2025)

stations, there were limited standby teams ready to intervene when the unrest intensified. This observation matches the quantitative results, which showed that only 33.7% of respondents agreed that the deployment was adequate to deter violence.

An election official described this scenario by stating:

…During the morning hours, things were calm, and you could see police officers maintaining order at most polling stations. But as the afternoon went on and protests started spreading in different parts of the city, it became clear that the number of officers was not enough to handle the growing crowds. The reinforcements came late, and by that time, damage had already started… (Respondent E2, 2025)

This account shows the initial deployment strategy was not flexible enough to accommodate the changing dynamics of the election day. Although the morning period was peaceful, the escalation of protests in the afternoon revealed gaps in manpower distribution and contingency preparedness.

Theme 2: Limited Visibility and Intimidating Presence: Respondents expressed mixed views about the visibility of security personnel during the election. In the morning, their presence at polling stations helped maintain order and reassure voters. However, as violence erupted in the afternoon, the visibility of heavily armed officers increased dramatically, creating fear and anxiety among many residents. While their presence eventually restored control, it also generated a perception of intimidation. This corresponds with the quantitative findings, where fewer than 35% of respondents agreed that visibility helped deter violence or built confidence among voters. A community leader noted:

…Early in the day, people were voting peacefully, and officers were just standing around observing. But later, when the protests broke out, the city changed completely. You could see police vehicles and officers in full riot gear everywhere. For some, that presence meant safety, but for others, it felt like a battlefield… (Respondent C3, 2025) Visibility cut both ways: reassuring some, frightening others. The shift from morning calm to afternoon chaos showed how timing and approach shape public perception of security.

Theme 3: Delayed and Uneven Responsiveness: Responsiveness emerged as one of the weakest aspects of the deployment strategy. Many respondents reported that the response to violent incidents was delayed, particularly during the height of the unrest in the afternoon. Coordination challenges, traffic congestion, and inadequate transportation reportedly slowed the movement of reinforcement teams across the city. These views align with the quantitative findings, which indicated that less than 30% of respondents agreed that officers responded promptly to reported incidents.

A police officer shared:

…We were deployed early and expected a peaceful day, but in the afternoon, everything changed quickly. Reports of chaos came from multiple wards at the same time, and we struggled to reach all those places fast enough. There were not enough vehicles to cover every location, so our response was slower than expected… (Respondent S1, 2025)

The officer's account reveals the challenge: multiple incidents erupting at once. Delayed response meant more damage and panic before control returned.

Theme 4: Public Perceptions of Safety and Trust: Community perceptions of safety during the election were mixed. While some residents felt reassured by the presence of security officers in the morning, others expressed fear and uncertainty as the situation deteriorated later in the day. Many respondents stated that the heavy deployment of anti-riot police and use of force against protesters made the environment appear volatile and unsafe. This complements the quantitative findings, which showed that 43.5% of respondents disagreed that officers' presence reduced voter fear and intimidation. A local leader explained:

…People were comfortable going to vote in the morning because everything was calm and organized. But when the violence started and police began using tear gas and rubber bullets, the atmosphere changed completely. Some people even said they wished to leave the city for safety… (Respondent C5, 2025)

This perspective underscores how public trust in security institutions fluctuated throughout the day strong in the early hours but eroded as confrontations intensified. While the security presence restored order, its aggressive approach raised concerns about excessive force and impartiality. The qualitative findings revealed that security force deployment during the 2025 Arusha elections was largely reactive and uneven. Early deployment maintained calm, but as unrest spread, coverage became inadequate and response times lagged due to logistical and coordination issues. Public views were mixed many appreciated the effort to restore peace but criticized the excessive use of force. Overall, the deployment restored stability but failed to prevent violence, underscoring the need for more proactive and community-sensitive election security strategies.

DISCUSSION

The results demonstrate that the deployment of security forces played an important but imperfect role in maintaining peace during the 2025 General Election in Arusha City Council. Gaps between policy and practice emerged: deployment aimed to deter violence, but fell short

in practice. The elections were marred by protests, clashes, and property destruction, suggesting that deployment was largely reactive and uneven. These findings contrast with Garnett and Bordeleau (2022), who found that strategic and well-coordinated deployment of officers enhances voter confidence and prevents escalation of violence. In Arusha, while security forces eventually restored order, their late and forceful interventions were criticized by respondents for aggravating public fear. Thus, unlike the effective deployment observed in more stable electoral contexts, the Arusha experience revealed deficiencies in preparedness, planning, and proportionality of response. In assessing adequacy of deployment, the study found that only a minority of respondents viewed the number and distribution of officers as sufficient to deter violence. This matches Bitafir Ijon (2020), whose study in Ghana demonstrated that targeted deployment in urban centers often left peripheral areas underprotected, leading to localized outbreaks of unrest. Similarly, in Arusha, security forces concentrated heavily in the city center while peri-urban polling stations suffered from inadequate coverage. This unevenness allowed demonstrations to spread before additional reinforcements could respond. This indicates that adequate deployment is not only a question of numbers but of equitable distribution and strategic foresight—elements that were insufficiently achieved during the 2025 election.

The visibility of security personnel was another critical factor influencing perceptions of peace and voter confidence. Respondents in the present study expressed mixed views—some felt reassured by police presence, while others perceived it as intimidating once heavily armed officers appeared in response to protests. These results partially align with Ali and Ali (2022), who found in Nigeria that visible and neutral security presence builds confidence and encourages voter turnout. However, when visibility becomes excessive or militarized, it can create anxiety and suppress participation. The Arusha case demonstrated this dual effect: early in the day, visibility encouraged calm, but the later deployment of riot police generated fear among residents. This suggests that visibility must balance deterrence and reassurance, a principle supported by Schuberth (2020), who emphasized community-oriented visibility as a way to prevent violence without provoking tension. Regarding responsiveness, the study revealed widespread dissatisfaction among respondents, who described the reaction of security forces as slow, reactive, and at times excessively forceful. Less than one-third of participants agreed that officers responded promptly or impartially to incidents.

This mirrors findings by Sule, Adamu, and Sambo (2020) in Nigeria, who noted that delays in response during elections often stem from weak logistical coordination and inadequate early warning systems. In Arusha, these same factors were evident: security units lacked transport and communication capacity to respond to simultaneous incidents across wards. While interventions eventually restored order, the heavy-handed tactics used—such as tear gas and rubber bullets fueled public mistrust. Compared with contexts where early intelligence and rapid deployment mechanisms exist, the reactive nature of Arusha's response underscores the need for preemptive planning and localized coordination structures to improve operational efficiency. Ultimately, the study found limited collaboration between formal security agencies and community-based structures in managing election security. This finding diverges from Schuberth's (2020) research in Kenya, which highlighted the success of hybrid security models that integrate local actors in preventing violence. In Arusha, the centralized command structure restricted such collaboration, resulting in a disconnect between law enforcement and the public. However, consistent with Masabo (2020), the findings suggest that greater community engagement and participatory security planning could enhance legitimacy and prevent escalation of violence in future elections. Overall, while the deployment of security forces was instrumental in restoring order, the study concludes that its reactive and uneven implementation limited its preventive effectiveness, pointing to the need for more balanced, community-centered, and anticipatory security governance in Tanzania's electoral processes.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the deployment of security forces was crucial in maintaining peace during the 2025 General Election in Arusha City Council, but its implementation was characterized by delays, uneven distribution, and occasional use of excessive force. Officers did restore order, but only after unrest began—not before. Most respondents said deployment fell short on adequacy, visibility, and responsiveness, especially in peri-urban areas. Qualitative insights confirmed these shortcomings, highlighting late reinforcements, weak coordination, and mixed public perceptions some citizens felt reassured, while others were intimidated. Compared with studies by Garnett and Bordeleau (2022) and Bitafir Ijon (2020), which emphasize the positive effects of strategic and timely deployment in deterring violence, the Arusha case shows limited preparedness and delayed response undermine public trust and the credibility of electoral security efforts. The study therefore concludes that while deployment contributed to restoring stability, its shortcomings prevented it from fully ensuring a peaceful and confidence-inspiring electoral process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen the effectiveness of security deployment in future elections, several measures are recommended. First, security planning should adopt a proactive and intelligence-led approach, ensuring timely and adequate deployment across both urban and peri-urban areas. This requires continuous risk assessment and early identification of potential hotspots before election day. Second, coordination among security agencies should be enhanced through joint command centers, real-time communication systems, and shared logistics to ensure rapid and impartial response during crises, as supported by Sule et al. (2020). Third, community engagement mechanisms should be integrated into deployment strategies, encouraging collaboration between formal security institutions and local actors, as suggested by Schuberth (2020). Such partnerships would improve legitimacy, trust, and responsiveness. Fourth, training programs on human rights and proportional use of force should be institutionalized to reduce the risk of intimidation and ensure that visibility remains reassuring rather than threatening. Ultimately, the study recommends that the National Electoral Commission and the Tanzania Police Force develop standardized deployment frameworks that prioritize balanced coverage, resource adequacy, and public accountability, thereby enhancing electoral peace and public confidence in future elections.

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