

The Role of Strategic Priorities in the Kenya Defence Policy for Enhancing National Security

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the role of strategic priorities in the Kenya Defence Policy in enhancing national security. In particular, it reviewed the strategic priorities of the Kenya Defence Policy, their appropriateness to the current country's security threats, and the mechanisms that facilitate adequate policy implementation for the Kenya Defence Policy. A descriptive cross-sectional survey with a mixed-methods design was used in this study. A sample of 300 respondents comprising respondents from the Kenya Defence Forces, Ministry of Defence, National Intelligence Service and the National Police Service was selected for data collection using structured questionnaires and key informant interviews. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression analysis and the qualitative data were analysed using a theme analysis. The results showed that territorial integrity and sovereignty are the leading concerns in Kenya's Defence policy, which is followed by military modernisation, operationalising against terror agitators, intelligence operations and cooperation in Defence across the region. The results of the correlation analysis showed that all the strategic priorities are associated with national security enhancement at a significant positive level, and the multiple regression analysis indicated that the strategic priorities explained 62.7% of the variation in national security enhancement ($R^2 = 0.627$, $p < 0.001$); the strategic priority with the highest contribution was military modernisation. Respondents were confident that Kenya's Defence Policy has responded to changes in Kenya's security situation but emphasised that there are manpower and institutional weaknesses that require addressing, as well as technological innovations. The study concludes that there is a need to continually invest in military modernisation, among other measures, to enhance the country's national security, while also recommending improved coordination among security agencies, sharing intelligence, strengthening regional defence cooperation and regular review of national Defence policy to address emerging security threats.

Keywords: Kenya Defence Policy, Strategic Priorities, National Security, Military Modernisation, Inter-Agency Coordination, Regional Defence Cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

As military security and political stability have become a preoccupation in the changing security landscape, States have found it necessary to review their Defence policies and designs to protect their national security. The traditional military threats are still at play, but a growing security problem for governments is having to address issues of terrorism, cyber-attacks, transnational organized crime, violent extremism, and insecurity caused by climate change, which can cross borders. These challenges necessitate setting priorities that shape the effective distribution of military and institutional resources and tie national security responses to the most critical challenges in the military. Baylis et al (2022) state that strategic priorities and National Resilience are the building blocks of Defence Planning and military preparedness. Kenya is aware of this fact and tackles it in the Ministry of Defence (MoD) (2022) where it has proposed strategic planning as one of the pillars to support Kenya's sovereignty and protect the country's national security interests.

Modern Defence policy is not based on the concept of arm race, but on proactive and integrated Defence measures that focus on early intervention, anticipating, preventing, and reacting to complex security scenarios. The security institutions need to be ready to apply intelligence, diplomacy, technology and military force in coordination and comprehensive response to threats not only impacting territorial integrity but also economic stability and social

cohesion. Resilient institutions are crucial for the sustained capacity of governments to uphold national security as they mitigate and adapt to multi-dimensional risks, according to the United Nations Development Programme (2022). In addition, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2023) states that organized transnational crimes are best addressed through comprehensive national strategies, predictive policing and intelligence-based strategies, and institutional coordination to stop the crime.

Geopolitical competition, technological advances, and conflict trends have resulted in a major shift in strategic priorities over the last ten years. The rapid development of new weapons systems (such as Cyber Warfare, Ai warfare, space systems and hybrid warfare) and globalization has very much changed Defence planning in the world, both for advanced and emerging military powers. In defense of the United States, the United States Department of Defense (2022) states "The National Defense Strategy calls for integrated deterrence, military modernization, and alliance building. In a similar vein, SIPRI (2025) has noted an increase in global Defence spending in 2024, driven by governments' ongoing efforts to modernize their militaries, establish intelligence networks, and invest in cutting-edge technologies to enhance operational readiness in response to evolving security challenges.

Africa's security context is highly strategic, with a clear emphasis on shifting the security discourse in the region from military Defence to conflict prevention, counterterrorism, peace support operations and cooperation in regional security matters. The ongoing insecurity in many parts of the Sahel, the Horn of Africa region and Central Africa confirmed that nothing can be done on an ad hoc basis on the issue of transnational threats, which is why it requires a collective response from all countries in the region. African Union Commission 2024 thus reaffirms, coordinated regional security responses, institutional resilience, and collaborative efforts as key to a pathway to sustainable peace and security across Africa. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) (2023) highlights intelligence sharing, joint border management and collective action on violent extremism as key strategic priorities for enhancing security in Eastern Africa.

The geographical location of Kenya, in the horn of Africa, presents a critical security situation defined by terrorism, cross-border crime, cyber-attacks, drug trafficking and sufficient threats and instability emanating from neighbouring countries. These security threats have impacted the Defence Policy in Kenya, which now highlights defence diplomacy, Defence technology, institutional coordination and military modernisation. The main goals of Kenya's Defence policy as stated by the Ministry of Defence (2022) is to ensure the preservation of national sovereignty, territorial integrity and the constitutional order. Consequently, improving the resilience of institutions and capacities in terms of adaptable Defence is crucial to effectively meet the security threats that the region is facing.

The Kenya Defence Policy offers guidance to the Kenya Defence Forces on how to exercise its constitutional mandate, which is to protect the territory, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country and plays a role in the broader national security goals of the state. The policy acknowledges that addressable security threats are not of the modern world and cannot be tackled solely by the military and must be addressed through a coordinated approach amongst Defence, intelligence, law enforcement and diplomatic institutions. According to the Ministry of Defence (2022), four areas, including institutional integration, Defence diplomacy, Defence modernisation, and Defence strategic preparation, can be found for improving it through strengthening national security. Effective inter-agency coordination and adaptation of Defence strategies in response to new threats is becoming essential to Kenya's response to terrorism and regional instability, says the International Crisis Group (2024).

Strategic priorities also inform decision-making by governments on how to deploy scarce Defence resources to deal with the greatest security threat. Priorities drive border policing, armed equipment purchases, research and development, appropriations for staff and intelligence services. Clear priorities are a lever to effective allocation of resources, prevention of duplication of effort and support collaboration between security institutions within and across the government. Effective Defence planning requires countries to have a long-term strategic approach to Defence planning, which is not necessarily political in nature, SIPRI (2025) states. Ditto the Ministry of Defence (2022), who highlight continued funding for capability enhancement, modernization and institutional resilience to ensure operational readiness and better use of resources.

Several obstacles remain to affect the effectiveness of Kenya's security priorities, though significant changes have also taken place in Kenya's security sector. National security institutions are facing pressure due to terrorism,

cyber-enabled crimes, illegal arms proliferation, transnational organised crimes, and the instability of neighbouring states. The challenges, therefore, make clear that national security is accepted, generally; but the foundations of a sound policy will without doubt not be adequate unless there is an accompanying ability to see to their execution and for that purpose sound institutions. According to the National Counter Terrorism Centre (2024), the use of technological platforms alongside a decentralised organisational framework and structure is growing more common among extremist groups necessitating adaptive and flexible security responses. The Office of the Auditor-General (2022), identifies risk in the effectiveness of public resource management, as well as lack of institutional accountability, that could compromise effective efforts in the implementation of national security programmes.

An analysis of the role of strategic priorities in Kenya's Defence Policy is therefore needed to know if the current Defence Policy directions are addressing the changing security landscape in the country. This research helps build an understanding of the impact of Defence priorities on preparedness, institutional coordination, intelligence integration and national resilience to new and emerging threats. The study also sought to offer evidence that will contribute to future policy change and enhance strategic decision-making in the Defence sector. The African Union Commission (2024) states that adaptive security governance increases institutional effectiveness by enabling coordinated regional responses to emerging challenges and threats. In a comparative sense, the World Bank (2024) mentions the importance of good public institutions and proper governance for sustainable peace, national security and long-term development.

Kenya's security landscape is constantly changing and calls for a forward-thinking and proactive approach to Defence policy. Investment in institutional capacity and technological innovation, Defence diplomacy and inter-agency cooperation is demanded for emerging threats. Ongoing monitoring of policy in this way is thus required to maintain the policy's ongoing relevance to evolving security situations. Defence strategies preserve their efficacy only if they comply with rising security challenges (Baylis et al. 2022). In this regard, the Ministry of Defence (2022) stresses continuous military modernization, institutional reform and strategic partnership as indispensable as a way to enable the strengthening of the national security. Against this background, this study examines the role of strategic priorities in Kenya's Defence Policy in enhancing national security.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Structural (Neo) Realism Theory, and Institutional Theory are used as a basis for this study. The two theories could be used to study Defence Policy in Kenya with respect to its role in complementing national security in a complementary manner. The international security environment pushes states towards the “structural realism” – that is, towards enhancing military power and survival. Organizational Theory helps consider the institutional context of successful implementation of strategic priorities by assessing the institutional structures, institutional coordination and governance mechanisms. The theories, presents an in-depth understanding of both the formulation and implementation of the Defence policy in Kenya national security architecture.

Structural (Neo) Realism Theory

Structural (Neo) Realism was established by Kenneth Waltz (1979) in his Theory of International Politics. The theory became a development of Classical Realism, which drew emphasis from humanity on the shape of the international system in determining state behaviour. Waltz argues that the international system is anarchic because there is no authority superior to any state that can ensure the security of any state. Thus, the relationship between states is conducted in a self-help framework in which these states must develop their military means, build strategic partnerships and establish a credible deterrence for survival and national interests. Structural Realism remains a useful set of tools for studying the global dynamics of today's Defence policy, wars of military modernization, and state competition (Baylis et al., 2022). In an Integrated Strategy for National Defence, the United States Department of Defense (2022), emphasizes on integrated deterrence, military preparedness, and strategic competition as integral elements of national Defence.

One of the greatest strengths of structural realism is its success in offering an explanation for the fact that when faced with some competing economic and social policies, states remain serious about their Defence spending. The theory offers consistent feedback on military modernisation, Defence spending and alliance formation in

uncertain environments where external threats are an issue. This approach is echoed by SIPRI (2025), which details how military spending across the world was at a record level in 2024, prompted by shifts in geopolitical dynamics and new security threats. However, a challenge to Structural Realism is that it focuses more attention on external threats and puts less attention on other institutional factors within the national system, such as governance, accountability, political leadership, and inter-agency coordination, which can have a significant influence on national security outcomes. Baylis et al. (2022) note that alongside military powers, today's security relies also on “good” institutions.

Structural Realism is about the general security climate in the region, which Kenya, under study, falls under the wave of challenges such as terrorism, cross-border crime, insecurity in the seas, cyber threats and instability in the Horn of Africa, and hence is an appropriate analytical framework. Security dilemmas call for endless investment in military modernisation, military diplomacy, military intelligence development, and facilitating military security cooperation to protect national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Based on the Ministry of Defence (2022), Kenya's Defence policy principle is guiding principle one, which is territorial integrity, national sovereignty and strategic preparedness. In Kenya, the preparation for Defence continues, so this is the reason why the country continually reviews and strengthens its Defence capacity in line with the emerging external challenges, in line with Structural Realism. The theory also serves as a solid framework for analysing the implications of different priorities in the Kenya Defence Policy on national security levelled up by better military preparedness, capability and national resilience.

Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory emerged out of the foundational work of John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan (1977), and was later built upon by other researchers, like W. Richard Scott (2014). The theory is that organisational structures, institutional rules, administrative procedures and governance influence organizational behavior and policy implementation, thus affecting organizational effectiveness. Unlike the approaches that tend to focus on the efficiency of organizations, Institutional Theory sees organisations as functioning in a larger social and institutional context that has deep-rooted norms, regulations, and routines that influence decision-making processes. The theory remains rather prevalent in the field of public administration to demonstrate institutional performance, policy implementation and organisational resilience in government institutions (Scott, 2014). In this case, the World Bank (2024) notes that good governance continues to be one of the key principles of high-quality public sector performance and sustainable national development.

One of the strengths of Institutional Theory is that it is able to articulate why sometimes, similar policies in different organisations lead to different results due to differing institutional capacities, leaders, accountability systems, and coordination mechanisms. The most important point covered in the theory is the need for good organisational structures, proper use of resources and interaction between institutions in charge of the implementation of the policy. In the security field, the concepts of Institutional Theory offer a valuable perspective on the integration of intelligence, planning and operation within the national security field by individual and collective bodies, institutions, and government actors. The external security environment and conditions of geopolitical competition are still underemphasized in the theory as factors that shape national Defence policy. Institutional Theory is not sufficient to explain the formulation of Defence policy as Baylis et al. (2022) argue, it is affected by changes in the international security environment also.

Institutional Theory is relevant to this study as the overall successful implementation of Kenya's Defence Policy can be hinged on strategic priorities and the institutions involved to implement the strategic priorities. Effective coordination of the Kenya Defence Forces, National Intelligence Service (NIS), National Police Service (NPS) and other security agencies is essential when reacting to the threat of terrorism, cybercrimes, transnational organized crimes and regional insecurity for national Defence. Institutional coordination, accountability and capacity are cited as primary drivers of a successful Defence policy implementation by the Ministry of Defence (2022). In a similar fashion, the African Union Commission (2024) notes that resilient institutions are crucial to tackle contemporary security challenges on the African continent. As a result, the institutional effectiveness theory is an adequate theory to be used in understanding how institutions determine the implementation of the strategic priorities and ultimately contribute to the strengthening of Kenya's national security.

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

The chapter summarises empirical research on Defence strategic priorities and how this facilitates national security. The study objectives are the basis of the organisation of the review: the strategic priorities, development of military modernisation, internal coordination and regional cooperation in the field of Defence are the main components. The chapter examines previous research and provides a critical comparison of the aims, methods, conclusions, and gaps of these studies to establish points of accord, disaccord, and gaps in the existing literature. The core of the review is based on literature and publications from 2022 to 2025 to represent a range of current developments in the field of Defence and security. The chapter ends by finding out a gap in the research, which calls for the present study on the role of the Kenya Defence Policy in strategic priorities on enhancing National security.

Strategic Priorities in the Kenya Defence Policy and National Security

Strategic priorities represent a cornerstone of a country's Defence policy as they define how a government designates its resources, builds the armed forces, and addresses current threats to the security of that country. Ali et al. (2025) used a qualitative methodology to study the role of technological modernisation in Defence preparedness in the USA using an analysis of Defence policy documents and interviews with Defence professionals. The research revealed that ongoing investment in the field of AI, cyber Defence, and space would greatly improve operational readiness and strategic deterrence. One of the strengths of the study was methodological triangulation for strengthening the findings through the documented analysis and expert interviews. The findings of this study are, however, applicable in the context of a well-embedded Defence sector with well-developed Defence institutions and financial resources, which is widely different from many developing countries, including Kenya, where institutions and finance are likely to be a constraint.

In the same vein, Jimoh (2025) examined Defence cooperation arrangements in Canada to evaluate the role of Defence diplomacy in promoting national security through a qualitative case study approach build on constructivist theory. The results showed that the institutionalized Defence cooperation resulted in better collective security through improving the intelligence exchange, joint operations and trust in partner states. The study's message is in the shift away from military capability to institutional learning and strategic partnerships. However, it declared that politics and other disagreements over military imperatives could hinder cooperative efforts from effective..

A combination of budget analysis and policy review and in-depth interviews with security practitioners was used in a mixed methods approach to study strategic security priorities and counterinsurgency operations in Nigeria by Pokorny (2026). The study found that therefore a higher Defence budget was not automatically a measure sufficient to ensure national security owing to the failure the Defence policies were effectively implemented due to institutional fragmentation, poor inter-agency coordination, and corruption. The findings stress on the need for robust governance frameworks and enabling action mechanisms for the successful implementation of strategic priorities into security results. The study was concerned largely with counterinsurgency operations and this experience has had relevance to the Nigerian campaign against terrorism, but not to the impact of other Defence policy priorities on national security. Thus, it has not adequately tackled the broader link between strategic Defence policy emphasis and strengthening national security, which makes the current study relevant to the Kenyan context.

Strategic Priorities and Military Modernization

Military modernization is well understood as a strategic priority due to its contribution to Defence preparedness, boost to Defence deterrent, and support for defending against new security challenges. In this qualitative study, Kumar and Ganguly, (2024) explored how technological modernization plays a role in enhancing the effectiveness of Defence in the United States based on an analysis of Defence policy documents and interviews conducted with Defence policy experts. Investment in AI, cyber Defence, state of the art surveillance and technologies for space saw a significant enhancement in operational readiness and strategic deterrence. One of the strengths of the study is the methodological triangulation which used two data collection methods; documentary analysis and expert interviews to support the credibility of the results. The study took place,

however, in a developed Defence context, with financial resources and institutional skills. The conclusions reached in its work, therefore, are not as easily transferable to other developing countries like Kenya, where other development factors and resource limitations remain an issue for Defence modernization.

Institutional capacity is also a major factor in the success or failure of military modernization programmes in developing countries. Oyosoro (2023) undertook a qualitative policy analysis of Defence reforms in Malawi, within the framework of Post-Colonial Security Theory framework, to examine the institutional drivers of Defence reforms in stated facets. The researchers concluded that colonial legacies, poor Defence spending and reliance on external military partners, both militiamen and military equipment, slowed the nation's efforts to modernise the armed forces and needs to guard against non-traditional security threats. One of the good features of the work is the specific consideration of the processes of continuing influence of historical institutional factors on Defence reforms today. The paper focuses, however, more on structural constraints and to a lesser extent on institutional reforms to meet the challenges. While the findings offer much useful regional understanding, the evidence is not robust as far as the changing military modernization strategies that have been embraced in the context of Kenya's Defence policy.

In addition to higher Defence spending, effective institutional coordination is crucial to turn a commitment to military modernization into better outcomes for national security. Researchers such as Hartley (2023) adopted the quantitative method for looking at the relationship between Defence spending and national security in Kenya through Defence expenditure data and national security indicators. The study revealed that higher investments in the Defence industry improved military strength, thereby playing a positive role in a nation's Defence. But lack of synchronization between the Kenya Defence Forces, the National Intelligence Service and National Police Service hampered military modernization plans. One of the study's greatest assets is that it adopts measurable national security indicators on which to draw conclusions, thereby offering empirical evidence from the Kenyan context. The study however, targeted foremost on the Defence expenditure and overlooked the broader aspects of the Defence strategic priorities on national security and modernization of the military. This constraint would underscore its need for the present study.

Strategic Priorities, Inter-Agency Coordination and National Security

The ability to coordinate effectively between institutions has become more and more a national Defence strategy, due to the fact that threats in the modern world are not national defence issues for a single security institution. Ateku and Owusu-Mensah (2023) investigated the impact of inter-agency coordination on Kenya's counterterrorism efforts, employing a descriptive study that consisted of interviews with agents from the Kenya Defence Forces, National Intelligence Service and National Police Service. The study concluded that intelligence sharing, integrated command and coordination and operational planning between the two national entities was of great benefit in combating terrorism and the cross-border nature of insecurity. The competition between the institutions, however, competing agendas, and bureaucratic complications still hampered the effectiveness of the operations. The study is relevant in terms of providing understanding of coordination mechanisms, but it overlooks more broadly the role of strategic priorities to impact institutional cooperation within the Kenyan Defence policy structure.

Mohamud, (2023), in applying a comparative case study methodology, studied the coordination in the security sector for the Horn of Africa, drawing on the responses to terrorism, organized crime and instability in the region. The study concluded that developed information-sharing arrangements and clearly defined operational responsibilities were effective in helping countries to cope effectively with complex security challenges, while poor information-sharing arrangements and lack of responsibility were not. The research also found that there was a need for long-term political will to ensure cooperation between the Defence, intelligence and law enforcement services. However, the research focused primarily on the governance landscape of regional security and excluded a detailed analysis of how countries define strategic priorities in their national Defence policies in order to enhance national inter-agency co-ordination in particular Kenya.

From a governance perspective, Owuondo, (2024) evaluated collaborative security management in the national security architecture in Kenya using a qualitative approach that included conducting interviews, analysing policies and documents. The results showed that a focus on strategic priorities such as building intelligence,

conducting joint training sessions, and implementing mutual operational plans strengthened institutional responsiveness to new threats, such as cybercrime and violent extremism. However, the study found that a number of factors prevent effective and comprehensive coordination, including policy gaps, lack of communication infrastructure and resource competition among security agencies. The research offers considerable insights into collaborative governance of security, but it does not 'prove' linkages between defence policy strategic priorities and outcomes for the broader national security landscape. This limitation provides an important basis for the current study.

Strategic Priorities and Regional Defence Cooperation

In today's context, regional Defence cooperation is increasingly becoming a significant strategic priority, as the threats facing the region often go beyond national borders and call for joint regional response. Kibochi and Maina (2024) used a comparative policy analysis of security cooperation between the IGAD member countries to assess security cooperation in the eastern African region. The study revealed that intelligence sharing, joint military training operations and border security operations were significant drivers of the capacity of member states to counter terrorism and transnational organized crime and irregular migration. The study also revealed that the cooperation in South-East Asia Defence would mitigate duplication of efforts while securing a more efficient use of South-East Defence resources. One of the key strengths of the study is that the security policies of different countries are compared and analyzed regionally. But the emphasis was on the regional institutional cooperation and little emphasis placed on how national and regional defence policy integration contributes to unity and coherence of national security objectives within the context of a Kenyan nation.

Similarly, Gnanguênon and Hofmann (2024) explored how the African Union contributes to African security and peace via the qualitative analysis of security patterns and mechanisms in the African continent, as well as of African peace support operations. The study concluded that collaborative Defence arrangements, when implemented at strategic, operational and technical levels, provided benefits in terms of the interoperability of operations, sharing of information and the coordinated response to armed violence and extremism. Given differences in military capabilities, political commitment, and financial resources, however, there were limitations on the implementation of regional security initiatives to any great extent. The study does not specifically speak about how Kenya brings the regional Defence cooperation into its National strategic Priorities in order to improve national security. The study does not touch upon Kenyan's integration of regional Defence cooperation with its national strategic priorities to enhance national security.

This study by Kurniawan et al. (2025) examined the role of regional Defence cooperation in ensuring the security of Kenya, utilising questionnaires and interviews with security experts. The results indicated that sharing information and experiences through joint military exercises and information sharing, as well as through multinational security exercises, to a certain extent, improved operational readiness and helped to improve border security management. The study also concluded that Defence diplomacy fostered a nation's ability to build its strategic partnerships and quick response mechanisms to challenges arising across the border. However, on several occasions, collaborative security operations were less than effective due to policy discordance and institutional coordination problems. The study presents important evidence for regional Defence cooperation and the benefits it brings, but its emphasis is mainly on operational-level collaboration, with less attention paid to how the strategic aspects of the Defence Policy in Kenya affect regional Defence cooperation. This restriction emphasises the requirements for the present study.

Research Gap

The literature on empirical evidence shows that the strategic priorities affect the implementation of Defence policy through military modernisation, institutional coordination and regional Defence cooperation. Most previous studies, however, have focused on separate dimensions of these dimensions without considering them part of a wider framework of Defence policy. In addition, the range of literature available internationally has been limited to the experience of advanced countries in developing their Defence institutions and is directed at specific aspects like counterterrorism, peace support operations, or regional security. Attention has consequently focused less on understanding how the joint implementation of strategic priorities supports the enhancement of national security in developing countries. The existing research is mostly descriptive or qualitative, leaving a limited

quantity of empirical evidence regarding the relationship between strategic goals, institutional workings, and national security results.

In the context of Kenya, the available literature focused on individual elements of national security such as military modernisation, counterterrorism, coordination of information and regional Defence cooperation. Nevertheless, little empirical studies exist that analyse these strategic priorities as a whole within the Kenya Defence Policy and their cumulative impact on improving national security. Further, there is limited quantitative evidence that sets out to define the correlation between national security priorities and tangible outcomes. This study seeks to tackle these conceptual, contextual, methodological and empirical deficits by analyzing and examining strategic priorities as a unified Defence policy and exploring their impact on Kenya military modernization, inter-agency coordination, regional Defence cooperation and eventually on the enhancement of the country's security.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design was descriptive cross sectional survey, employing mixed methods as the methodological approach in the research to examine the role of strategic priorities in enhancing national security in the Kenya Defence Policy. This descriptive design allowed the researcher to gather the data on the perception of the respondents towards the implementation of defence policy with no manipulation of the study variables. A cross sectional approach was deemed appropriate as responses were obtained in one point in time from a sample of respondents from different security institutions. Structured questionnaires used for collecting quantitative data and key informant interviews used for collecting the qualitative data. Thereby, when using the two methods, findings has been done on a triangulation basis which enhanced their credibility and provided a full picture of the research problem.

Sampling Procedures

The study focused on staff members of the Kenya Defence Force (KDF), the National Intelligence and Security Service (NIS), the National Police Service (NPS) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) which are directly involved in the development and execution of the Kenya Defence Policy. The sampling was done by applying the formula for adequate representation and reliable findings in Yamane (1967) which was based on the number of respondents to be 300. To ensure proportional representation from each institution, stratified random sampling was used in this study and purposive sampling in this study was used to identify key informants because of their knowledge and hands on experience with the implementation of national security and Defence policy in Nigeria.

Sampling Distribution among Institutions

The respondents were selected from the major institutions in charge of Defence and national security in Kenya to ensure critical stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of Defence in Kenya were represented. The distribution of respondents is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Sampling Distribution among Institutions

Institution	Sample Size	Percentage (%)
Kenya Defence Forces (KDF)	120	40.0
Ministry of Defence (MoD)	60	20.0
National Intelligence Service (NIS)	60	20.0
National Police Service (NPS)	60	20.0
Total	300	100.0

The sampling distribution provided for representation from the major Defence and security institutions directly involved in implementing the Kenya's Defence Policy. The Kenya Defence Forces were the largest, since they were directly involved in national Defence and conduct of military operations, Ministry of Defence and National Intelligence Service were represented to capture the policy and intelligence views, and the National Police Service to capture internal security views.

Validity and Reliability

The validity and reliability of the research instruments were determined to ensure that the data obtained would meet the research needs. A questionnaire and an interview guide was created from the research objectives, conceptual framework and literature to ensure that this tool has content validity, after which the questionnaire and interview guide was reviewed by the research supervisors and experts for defence and security studies. They recommended that items were added and adjusted to give it clarity and relevance. About ten percent of the sample were included in a pilot with instruments outside the study area in order to detect the problems of the instruments. Before the main data collection phase, the reliability of all the study constructs was established through the use of Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of which the required minimum limit was 0.70 as suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994).

Data Analysis

The study has utilized both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques for accomplishing the study objectives. The quantitative data gathered using structured questionnaires were coded, cleaned and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 30. The demographic characteristics and the study variables were summarized using descriptive analytical statistics such as the frequency, percentage, mean and the standard deviations. In addition to descriptive statistics, inferential statistics were also utilized, and then Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to analyze the relationship between each of the variables of the study, while the Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was used to explain the influence of each priority of the study (military modernisation, counterterrorism measures, intelligence-led operations, and regional Defence cooperation) on national security enhancement. Statistically significant differences were classified using 0.05 as the level of significance ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$).

Key informant interviews were used to collect qualitative data, which were transcribed, coded and analyzed using thematic analysis to generate themes related to the study goals. The results coming out of the qualitative and quantitative data were then triangulated to support and validate the qualitative findings and to bring interpretation to the results, and to give a holistic understanding of the role of strategic priorities in enhancing national security in the Kenya Defence Policy.

Ethical Considerations

The National Defence University–Kenya Research Ethics Committee gave a nod of permission for this study to be conducted before data collection. Also, authorization for research has been granted from the competent authorities and research institutions. The study was voluntary and respondents freely agreed to participate in the study after being told the purpose of the study. Ensuring confidentiality is guaranteed by the collection and disclosure of no personal identifying information throughout the study and ensuring anonymity. Withdrawal from the study at any time was made without penalty upon the participants being informed of this right. All data collected was kept confidential, stored securely, and protected from unauthorized use and disclosure, and only used for academic research purposes following accepted research ethics guidelines.

FINDINGS

The objective of this study was to analyse the strategic priorities of the Defence Policy in addressing National security issues in Kenya. To address this objective, structured questions were asked and results presented in the following subsections;

Response Rate

A total of 320 questionnaires was sent to samples taken at selected defence and security institutions. A total of 300 questionnaires were returned successfully and the response rate was 93.8%. This was deemed adequate for data analysis and generalisation of the study's findings. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) consider the rate of response over 70% for survey research as a very good response rate thus many of respondents gave the data for the survey and analysis which support reliable conclusions.

Modernization Priority Areas

This section aimed at assessing respondent's perception on the main areas of military modernization have been most emphasized in the institution over the past 5 years. Results were as presented below;

Table 2: Strategic Defence Policy Priority (n = 300)

Strategic Aim	Frequency	Percent
Civil assistance for internal stability and civil authorities (public order, crisis management and disaster response)	30	10.0%
Combating violent extremism and terrorism (dealing with threats from groups such as Al-Shabaab)	33	11.0%
Cybersecurity and emerging threats (Defence against cyberattacks, espionage and cyber warfare)	30	10.0%
Modernization of military equipment, technology and training	42	14.0%
International and regional cooperation (security and peace through UN, AU and EAC missions)	24	8.0%
Protection of territorial integrity and sovereignty (border security and Defence against external aggression)	141	47.0%
Total	300	100.0%

(Source: Researcher, 2026)

Table 1 identifies that protection of territorial integrity and sovereignty (47.0%) had the highest proportion of the total respondents identify it as the most important strategic priority of Kenya's Defence policy. This implies that the overwhelming half of the respondent's view border security and protection from external aggression as the primary responsibility of the Defence sector. Other priorities had more low-level responses, such as modernization of military equipment (14.0%), fighting violent extremism and terrorism (11.0%), civil assistance as a means to internal stability (10.0%), cybersecurity and emerging threats (10.0%) and international and regional cooperation (8.0%). As one respondent noted;

“The Defence policy has to ensure that Kenya's territorial integrity and sovereignty is first because insecurity at the borders and threats from abroad remains the most immediate threat to national stability.” (KI3, Senior Security Analyst, Interview, 2026)

Another stakeholder underlined the link between territorial security and other Defence priorities such as counterterrorism and military preparedness:

“Most of the security challenges facing Kenya have a cross-border origin; thus, border protection and Defence capability strengthening form the basis of the national security policy.” (KI7, Defence Policy Advisor, Interview, 2026)

These findings are consistent with what was found in previous empirical studies in the area of Defence policy priorities. For example, Mwangi, (2021) suggests that Kenya's Defence strategy has been focused on territorial protection and border security in the past based on the country's vulnerability to instability in the region and transnational security threats. Similarly, Sarjito, (2024) notes that states with constant external threats have always tended to focus on sovereignty protection and military preparedness as the fundamental targets of Defence policy. Therefore, the dominance of territorial Defence in the set of preferred priority as respondents highlight the strategic security context in Kenya as well as the revival of the theoretical view that national Defence policies tend to be geared towards ensuring state sovereignty and territorial integrity.

KDF Operational Effectiveness

Respondents were asked “How effective is the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) in fulfilling its constitutional role during peacetime, crisis or war?” **and results were as presented in the Figure 1;**

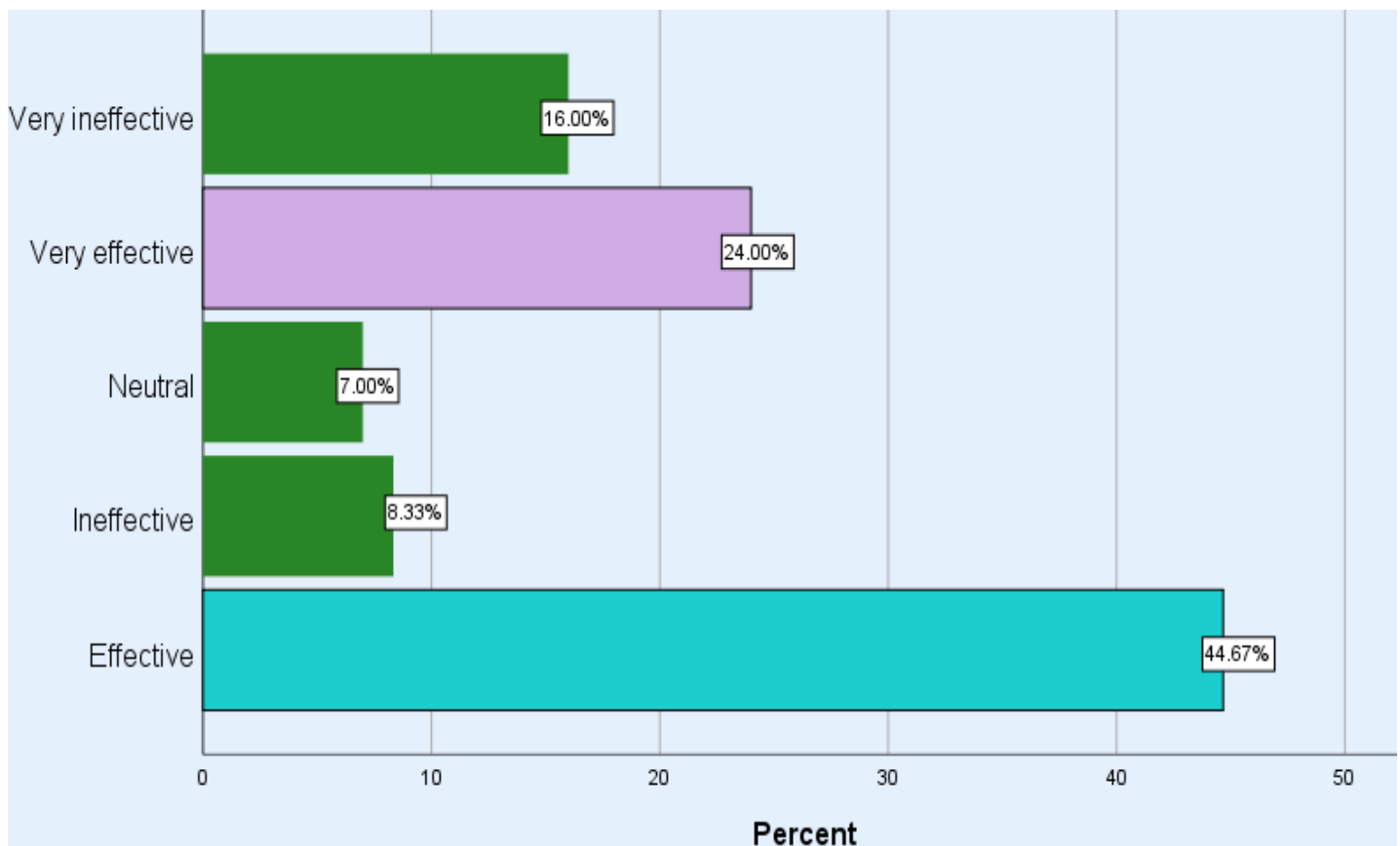


Figure 1: KDF Operational Effectiveness

(Source: Researcher, 2026)

Figure 1 illustrates the respondent's perception of how well the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) are delivering when it comes to fulfilling its constitutional role either in peacetime, crisis or war. The findings show that a majority of respondents consider that the KDF is operationally effective. Specifically, 44.67% rated the KDF as effective and 24.00% rated it as very effective, implying that 68.67% of the respondents provided a positive assessment of KDF performance. In contrast, 16.00% rated KDF as very ineffective, 8.33% rated as ineffective, and 7.00% rated as being in the middle. These results imply that despite the KDF being generally seen to be capable of fulfilling its constitutional mandate, a significant minority of respondents, still see some operation challenges. One key informant explained the importance of the military in maintaining national security and in responding to threats:

“The Kenya Defence Forces have generally done a good job of carrying out their constitutional role, especially in protecting the country's national security and in responding to security threats in and around Kenya's borders.” (KI4, Defence Policy Expert, Interview, 2026)

These results are consistent with prior empirical studies. Mwangi, (2021) argues that the KDF has enhanced its effectiveness in operations through modernization efforts and regional security operations participation. Similarly, Kenya, (2022) highlights the fact that the effectiveness of KDF is closely tied to factors including military preparedness and coordination between agencies, as well as the ability to adapt to emerging security threats. Therefore, the findings imply that despite the view held by the overwhelming majority of stakeholders that the KDF has proven to be effective in terms of providing its services to meet its constitutional mandate, further strengthening of institutional capacity, and modernization remains important for sustaining operational effectiveness.

Regional Defence Cooperation

Respondents were asked if they believe if Kenya should make greater investments in regional Defence cooperation, such as missions from the African Union and the East African Community. Results were as presented below;

Table 3: Regional Defence Cooperation

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	127	42.3%
Disagree	35	11.7%
Neutral	17	5.7%
Strongly agree	85	28.3%
Strongly disagree	36	12.0%
Total	300	100.0%

(Source: Researcher, 2026)

Table 2 shows the views of respondents on whether Kenya should increase investments in regional Defence cooperation, especially through frameworks such as the African Union (AU) and the East African Community (EAC). The results indicate that a majority of surveyed believe that more investment in regional Defence cooperation should be supported. Specifically, the frequencies of responses who agreed and strongly agreed were 42.3% and 28.3% respectively, which means 70.6% of the respondents had favorable views on increasing Kenya's involvement in regional security initiatives. While 11.7% disagreed and 12.0% strongly disagreed, 5.7% had no opinion. These results indicate that a majority of the respondents see regional cooperation as an important mechanism for boosting the national security of Kenya. One key informant shared the importance of collective security when dealing with transnational threats:

“Regional Defence cooperation is essential because many of the security threats faced by Kenya, such as terrorism and cross-border crime, cannot be dealt with by any one country acting alone.”
(KI5, Regional Security Expert, Interview, 2026)

These findings are related to the existing research on regional security cooperation. Manyonge, (2021) argues that collaborative Defence arrangements within regional organizations enhance collective response to security threats that are transnational. Similarly, in Olweny *et al.*, (2023) the regional security frameworks are highlighted to play an important role in intelligence sharing, joint operations, as well as peace keeping missions in East Africa. Therefore, the overwhelming support for regional Defence cooperation among respondents reflects rising awareness that cooperative security mechanisms are necessary to address contemporary security issues that are facing Kenya and the East African region in general.

Defence Security Balance

Respondents were asked “What balance should be struck between external Defence and internal security operations?” and results were as demonstrated below

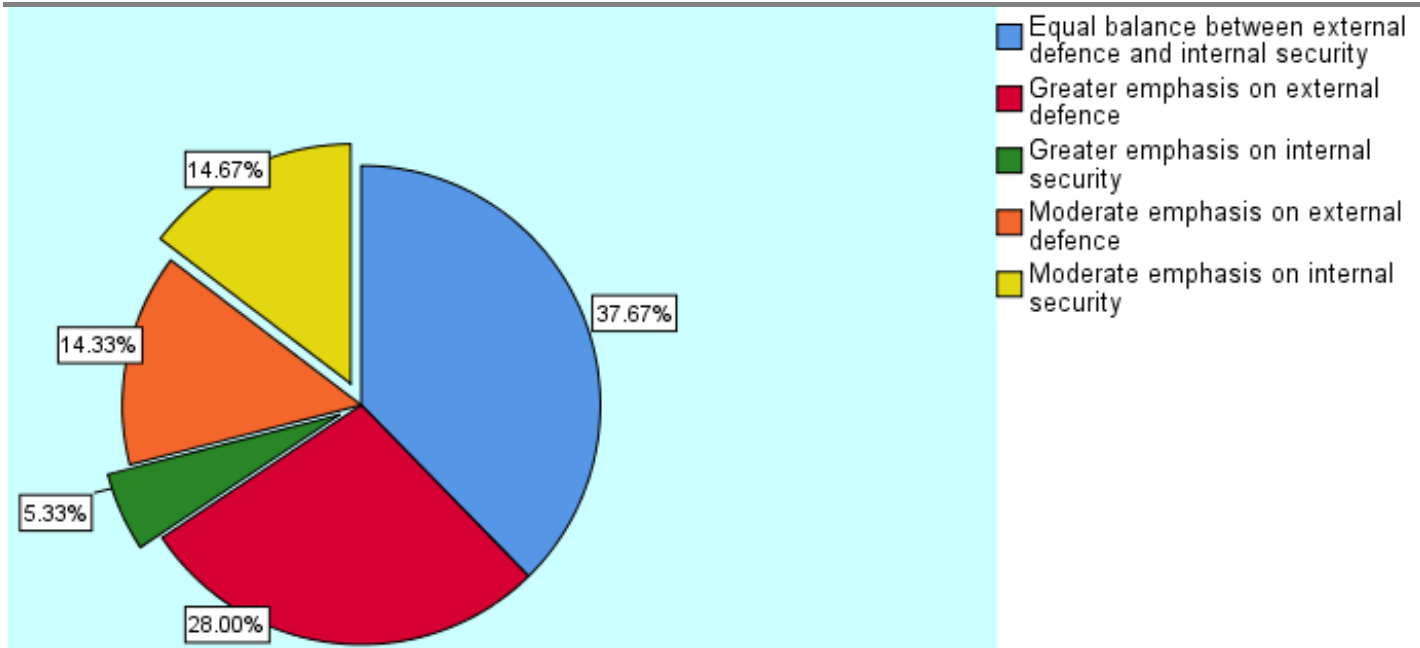


Figure 2: Defence Security Balance

(Source: Researcher, 2026)

Figure 2 shows respondent's opinions on what they considered to be an appropriate balance between the external Defence and internal security operations. The results show that the greatest number of respondents (37.7%) believe that there should be an even balance between external Defence and security from within. Results revealed that 28.0% of respondents preferred higher emphasis on external Defence and 14.3% favored moderate emphasis on external Defence. On the other hand, 14.7% were replace more moderate to the activation of internal security, and only 5.3% believed that internal security should be higher emphasis. These findings indicate that a majority of respondents would agree that most Defence responsibilities should be maintained from the outside while internal security functions should be concurrently addressed in the national security framework in Kenya. One key informant explained:

"Kenya's security environment calls for a balanced approach due to the close interlinkages between external threats like cross-border terrorism and internal threats like radicalization and organized crime." (KI3, Security Policy Analyst, Interview, 2026)

These findings are in line with earlier works in the field of Defence and security policy. Ainea, (2021) states that the development of effective national security strategies requires coordinated responses between the Defence institutions and internal security agencies in Kenya. Similarly, Manyonge, (2021) adds that today's security threats have tended to blur the distinction between external and internal security, with integrated approaches to security becoming the need of the times. Therefore, preference to maintain a balanced approach is in recognition that Kenya is faced with the uphill task of ensuring that both external Defence obligations and internal security challenges are addressed simultaneously.

Military Modernization Areas

The study sought to assess respondent's perception on the areas of military modernization have been most emphasized in the institution over the past 5 years. Results were as presented below

Table 4: Military Modernization Areas

	Frequency	Percent
Acquisition of modern equipment	59	19.7%
Advanced training and skills development	91	30.3%
Infrastructure and facility upgrades	54	18.0%

None of the above	41	13.7%
Technology integration (ICT, cyber tools, drones)	55	18.3%
Total	300	100.0%

(Source: Researcher, 2026)

Table 3 shows the beliefs of the respondents on the most emphasized areas in their institutions in the past five years in terms of military modernization. As the results demonstrate, the most popular training and skills advancement (30.3%), demonstrated by the fact that the majority of institutions are focused on the personnel capacity reinforcement and operation competence. Others that have got significant focus are purchase of new equipment (19.7%), the integration of technology like ICT systems, cyber tools and drones (18.3%), and the upgrade of infrastructure and facilities (18.0%). In the meantime, 13.7% of the respondents reported experiencing none of the above meaning that there are financial institutions which may not have undergone any major modernization effort within the period. These findings suggest that capacity building via training is seen to be the most highlighted modernization work in the Defence institutions. One key informant explained:

“The focus has been on enhancing the proficiency and operational preparedness of the personnel in the recent years due to the modern security threats demanding well trained and flexible forces.” (KI4, Defence Training Officer, Interview, 2026)

The findings are aligned with the past empirical evidence with regard to military modernization. According to Barton, (2022) the dynamics of today Defence systems attach great importance to identifying and establishing human capital as a development factor in addition to the technological development of the system to bolster operational efficiency. In the same light, Bauer *et al.*, (2023) also notes that the Defence modernization has continued to focus on professional training, technological incorporation and upgrading of equipment in Kenya to enhance the ability of security institutions to deal with the changing security challenges. Thus, the aspect of training and skills development waves in this study can more widely represent trends in Defence reforms that seek to bolster institutional readiness and flexibility.

Counterterrorism Strategy Type

Respondents were asked to indicate the Counterterrorism Strategy Type that the institution has adopted and results were as presented below;

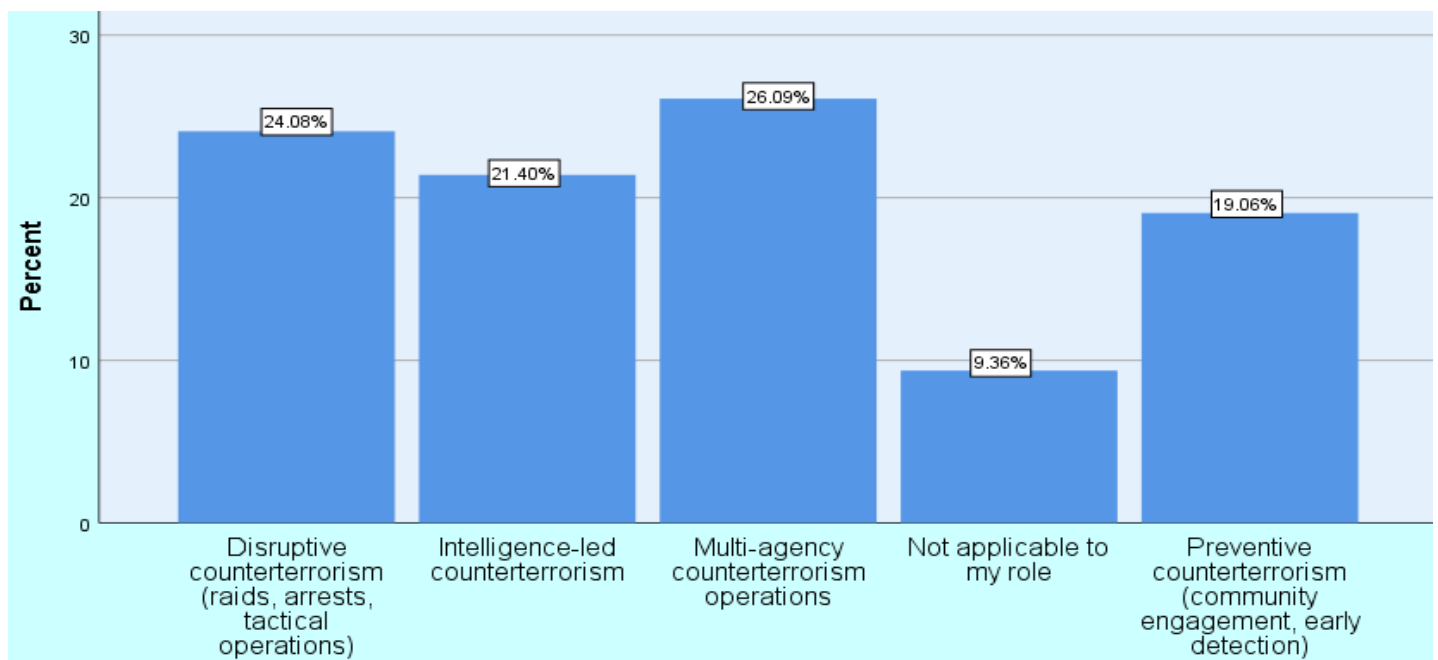


Figure 3: Counterterrorism Strategy Type

(Source: Researcher, 2026)

Figure 3 demonstrates the respondent's perception concerning the nature of counterterrorism strategy they mostly use in their operations. Results reveal that the most utilized strategy was multi-agency counterterrorism operations (26.1%), with the next strategy being disruptive counterterrorism strategies (24.1%), and intelligence-led counterterrorism (21.4%). Also, the elements of preventive counterterrorism such as community involvement and early notification contributed to 19.1% and 9.4% of the respondents reported that the question did not apply to them. These findings indicate that the fight against terrorism has been highly coordinated among various agencies, as well as operational policies, which define the multidimensional and complex terrorism threats in Kenya.

The highlight on collaborative counter-terrorism strategies among security institutions was further elaborated by the qualitative interviews. One key informant noted:

“The role of the military, information agencies and police in counterterrorism efforts is becoming more coordinated in Kenya due to the increasing terrorist threats that have necessitated a concerted effort of the military and information services.” (KI6, Counterterrorism Specialist, Interview, 2026)

The results is in line with the empirical counterterrorism studies that were conducted in Kenya. Chigudu (2021) believes that adequate coordination between the Kenya Defence Forces, the National Intelligence Service and the National Police Service (NPS) is critical for effective counterterrorism response. In a similar study, Chingaipe (2022) concluded that intelligence sharing and collaborative operational models play a key role in maximizing the counterterrorist response against transnational threats. The results also help to validate theoretical framework of the study. Embedding a multi-agency counterterrorism focus in the centerpiece of the policy, from a Structural (Neo) Realism Theory point of view, indicates that states have strengthened their security capacity to respond effectively to new internal and transnational threats.

Additionally, institutional theory elucidates the importance of both coordination of institutions and sharing of information between security agencies, as well as well-defined roles in policy implementation. The importance of multi-agency counterterrorism in this study therefore implies that all efforts towards augmenting military capability is not enough, but moving forward, the institutional cooperation along with coordinated intelligence mechanism is equally crucial in combating terrorism and enhancing Kenya national security.

Regional Security Cooperation Frameworks

The study sought to assess participant's perception on the Regional Security Cooperation Frameworks and results were as presented in the Table.

Table 5: Regional Security Cooperation Frameworks (n = 300)

Regional Security Cooperation Framework	Frequency	Percent
African Union Peace Support Operations	139	46.3%
East African Standby Force (EASF)	58	19.3%
Joint border security operations	35	11.7%
Bilateral Defence agreements	30	10.0%
None	38	12.7%
Total	300	100.0%

(Source: Researcher, 2026)

Table 4 displays the regional security cooperation models where the institutions of respondents are members in them. According to the results, African Union Peace Support Operations (46.3%) is the most prevalent framework of engagement among the respondents. This implies that approximately thirty percent of the institutions deal with peacekeeping and stabilization missions by the AU in the region. Other reported described frameworks were the East African Standby Force (19.3%), joint border security operations (11.7%), and bilateral Defence arrangements (10.0%), and 12.7% of respondents indicated that their institutions are not engaged in any regional

cooperation framework. These findings indicate that multilateral peace support operations are still major aspect of the involvement of Kenya in regional Defence.

In interviews that were conducted using qualitative modes, additional understanding on the importance of such cooperation frameworks was gained in enhancing responses to security in the region. As one of the key informants indicated, joint security mechanisms are important in dealing with common regional threats:

“I have observed that regional cooperation assists us in responding more effectively to security threats since much of the problems we encounter including terrorism and cross-border violence transcends with the boundaries of a single nations.” (KI5, Regional Security Officer, Interview, 2026)

These results are consistent with the previous empirical research on regional Defence cooperation. As it is argued by Turner, (2024), the co-operation agreements on Defence cooperation enhance the inter-operability, sharing of intelligence and capability to operate together among partnering states. In the same way, Adu Gyamfi, (2023) observes that regional security arrangements enhance coordination of the security institutions and the collective response to transnational threats. Thus, the prevalence of African Union peace support missions in the list of respondents can also be taken in consideration as a demonstration of the strategic significance of the multilateral cooperation in strengthening the position of Kenya in maintaining peace and security processes in the region.

Intelligence Operations Type

The study sought to examine the Intelligence Operations Type and results were as presented below;

Table 6: Intelligence-Led Operations Used in Institutions (n = 300)

Intelligence-Led Operation Type	Frequency	Percent
Human intelligence (HUMINT)	98	32.7%
Joint intelligence fusion	91	30.3%
Surveillance and reconnaissance	65	21.7%
Classified / cannot disclose	38	12.7%
Signals intelligence (SIGINT)	8	2.6%
Total	300	100.0%

(Source: Researcher, 2026)

Table 5 demonstrates the most common intelligence-led operations across the respondent’s institutions. The results show that Human Intelligence (HUMINT) (32.7%) is the most utilized intelligence strategy. This is closely succeeded by joint intelligence fusion (30.3%), which entails pulling together and sharing of information among various security agencies. Surveillance and reconnaissance (21.7%), as well as 12.7% of respondents, reported other operations as part of this category, although the specific methods of intelligence applied are classified and are not available. Only a very small percentage (2.6%) of them indicated the use of the signals intelligence (SIGINT). These findings indicate that human sources and inter-agency intelligence cooperation play a key role in intelligence collection in most of the institutions.

The qualitative interviews also had information as to why human intelligence and the co-ordination of intelligence is much used in the security operations. One of the key informants described how intelligence sharing assists in dealing with security-related threats:

“In my case, we strongly depend on human sources and intelligence sharing, as it assists us to perceive security threats on the ground before they can escalate.” (KI4, Intelligence Operations Officer, Interview, 2026)

These results align with the results of earlier empirical research on intelligence-led security operations. Barton *et al.*, (2022) observe that intelligence coordination by security agencies and sharing of information are an effective

measure of detecting and actualizing the operational decisions. On the same note, Tang *et al.*, (2024) highlight that integrating intelligence systems can help security institutions to improve their performance, as they are able to respond coordinately to multifaceted and dynamic threats. Consequently, HUMINT and joint intelligence fusion predominance in this research signifies the need to enhance intelligence interrelations and combinations to reinforce national security activities.

Strategic Security Priority

The study sought to determine respondent's perception on Strategic Security Priority and results were as indicated in the Figure 4.

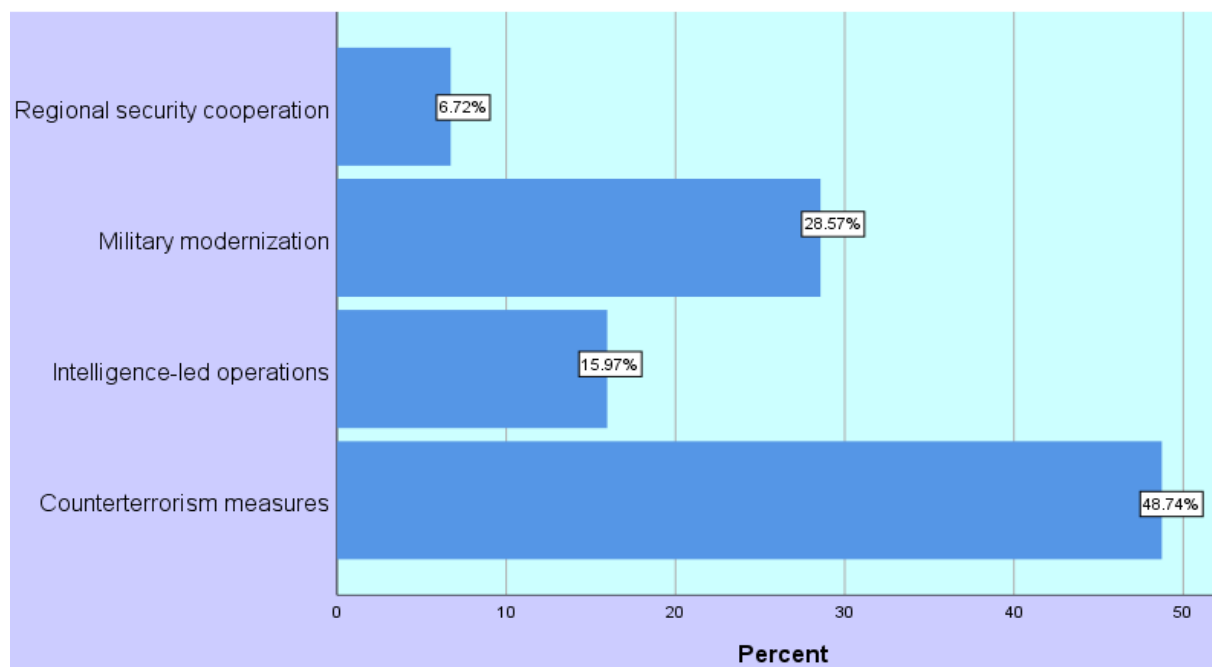


Figure 4: Strategic Security Priority

(Source: Researcher, 2026)

Figure 4 demonstrates the perceptions of the respondents about the strategic priority that makes the biggest contribution towards improving national security in Kenya. According to the results, the most important strategy priority, which was started by the majority of respondents, was counterterrorism measures (48.74%). This is succeeded by military modernization (28.57%), intelligence-led operations (15.97%), and regional security cooperation (6.72%). These results indicate that terrorism is of great apprehension to the respondents as the greatest threat to the national security of Kenya, thus, counterterrorism activities are the ultimate priority in Defence and security system in Kenya. One key informant emphasized the central role of counterterrorism in Kenya's national security strategy:

“Based on my experience in security operations, counterterrorism is the most urgent priority as threats of extremist groups have a direct impact on the stability of countries and the safety of citizens.”
(KI6, Counterterrorism Operations Officer, Interview, 2026)

The results join a number of national security policy documents in Kenya. The Kenya Defence Policy (2017) among other foremost threats to national security includes terrorism and violent extremism, with the need to build the capacity against these threats further through military preparedness, intelligence and regional cooperation. Likewise, the National Counter Terrorism Strategy (Government of Kenya, 2016) identifies coordinated counter terror operations by the Kenya Defence Forces, the National Intelligence Service and National Police Service as critical in fighting emerging threats. Terrorism is additionally one of the most critical security issues faced by the country as stated in the National Security Strategy (Government of Kenya 2020) which calls for increased expenditure on intelligence-based operations and Defence modernisation.

The results also validate the theory presented in the study. From the perspective of Structural (Neo) Realism Theory, the prominence of counterterrorism as the highest strategic priority reflects the need for states to strengthen military capability and preparedness in response to external and transnational threats in an anarchic international environment. Coordinated, intelligence sharing and collaboration through security agencies, which is stressed by the Institutional Theory, is essential for the assessment of Defence policies and for the national security goal. The centrality of counterterrorism in this study, however, is not limited to Kenya's national security policy but also the need for effective coordination of institutions and military capacity to face off today's security threats.

Level of Agreement on Strategic Priorities of the Defence Policy

Respondents were asked to indicate the level of agreement with the following statements related to strategic priorities of the Defence Policy using the Likert Scale whereby 1 represent Strongly Disagree, 2 for Disagree, 3 for Neutral, 4 for Agree and 5 for Strongly Agree. Results were as presented in the Table 6.

Table 7: Respondents' Level of Agreement on Strategic Priorities of the Defence Policy (n = 300)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev
Military modernization improves Kenya's ability to handle current security threats	4 (3.4%)	1 (0.9%)	6 (5.2%)	28 (24.1%)	77 (66.4%)	4.49	0.909
The Defence Policy provides adequate support for effective counterterrorism operations	4 (3.4%)	10 (8.6%)	11 (9.5%)	46 (39.7%)	45 (38.8%)	4.02	1.071
Regional security cooperation significantly enhances Kenya's national security	3 (2.6%)	4 (3.4%)	15 (12.9%)	47 (40.5%)	47 (40.5%)	4.13	0.947
Intelligence-led operations strengthen decision-making and operational readiness in my institution	4 (3.5%)	1 (0.9%)	4 (3.5%)	41 (36.0%)	64 (56.1%)	4.40	0.890
The strategic priorities of the Defence Policy are well aligned with Kenya's evolving security landscape	7 (6.0%)	6 (5.2%)	24 (20.7%)	46 (39.7%)	33 (28.4%)	3.79	1.100
Strategic priorities receive adequate resources (budget, equipment, personnel) for successful implementation	16 (13.8%)	22 (19.0%)	36 (31.0%)	19 (16.4%)	23 (19.8%)	3.09	1.305
Average Mean / Std. Dev						3.99	1.04

(Source: Researcher, 2026)

Table 6 shows the perception of the respondents about the strategic priorities of the Kenya Defence Policy and how they help in maintaining national security. The findings indicate that there is high congruence with a number of important policy priorities. Specifically, the military modernization had the best mean score ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.909$), 66.4% strongly agreeing and 24.1% agreeing that modernisation enhances the capability of Kenya in countering present security challenges. On the same note, the intelligence-led operations also held a great share of agreement ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.890$), and 56.1% strongly agreed that intelligence enhances operational preparedness and choices. The respondents also showed great support to regional security cooperation ($M = 4.13$) and to counterterrorism support under the Defence Policy ($M = 4.02$). Nevertheless, comparatively lower consensus was found, when it comes to the sufficiency of resources devoted to strategic priorities ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.305$), which indicated certain worries about the shortage of resources in fulfilling the Defence policy goals.

The qualitative interviews were used to place these findings in perspective in terms of the significance of modernization and intelligence capacities in addressing the emerging security threats. One of the key informants showed the importance of modernization to the operations of the Defence institutions of Kenya:

“My experience in security operations demonstrates that equipment modernization and training have gained us much power in terms of responding to complex threats, including terrorism and transnational security issues. (KI3, Defence Operations Officer, Interview, 2026)

Another participant emphasized the role of intelligence in supporting effective security decision-making:

“In my opinion, intelligence-led operations have proved to be very crucial as they result in timely information which helps security agencies to start forecasting threats and mobilizing other agencies before things get out of control.” (KI7, Intelligence Analyst, Interview, 2026)

The findings align with other empirical analyses of Defence and national security in Kenya and strategic policy documents. The Kenya Defence Policy (2017) lists as some of the pillars for strengthening national security; Defence modernization, capacity building in intelligence, and cooperation in the region. On the same note, the National Security Strategy of Kenya 2020 focuses on intelligence-driven operations, and coordinated counterterrorism actions, key to combating terrorism, violent extremism, and transnational crime. The National Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2016) also highlights the prerequisite of institutional cooperation and sharing of information between Kenya's National Police Service, National Intelligence Service and the Kenya Defence Forces as a core element of the strategy.

The research also allows for the implementation of the theoretical framework. Structural (Neo) Realism Theory suggests that any level of backing to military modernization, intelligence-led operations and counterterrorism activities is a result of a state's desire to upgrade its capabilities to respond to a complex and unpredictable security environment. The theory asserts that the State's interest is in military preparedness and strategic capability to maintain its sovereignty and survival in an international anarchic environment. Institute theory, meanwhile, highlights the crucial role effective coordination plays between the Defence and security institutions and the policy goals because without the cooperation, one or more institutions may fail to reach their policy objectives. The overall outcome of the respondents' perception is that institution, inter-agency cooperation, and governance structures are very important elements on the successful enactment of Defence Policy in Kenya.

The results are confirmed by empirical research. According to Mwangi (2021), through military modernization and integration of intelligence, operational preparedness is improved, and Ainea (2021) noted that the operational preparedness is strengthened if there is a good coordination and strategic alignment between the Defence institutions. Its overall mean score is 3.99 (SD = 1.04) which shows that the scores overall were adequate, meaning that the respondents generally have the confidence that the strategic priorities mentioned in the Defence Policy of Kenya are effective in strengthening the security of the county. But financial, technological and human resources problems raise doubts on the capacity development needed to implement the aforementioned thematic priorities.

Regression Analysis

The regression analysis method was used to study the influence of strategic priorities of the Kenya Defence Policy on the enhancement of national security. In particular, this analysis determined what effects military modernization, counterterrorism efforts, intelligence-led operations and regional Defence cooperation had on national security, specifically as predictors. Please refer the results from the model summary, ANOVA and regression coefficient below.

- **Dependent Variable (Y):** National Security Enhancement
- **Independent Variables (X):**
 - Military Modernization
 - Counterterrorism Measures
 - Intelligence-led Operations
 - Regional Defence Cooperation

Table 8: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.792	0.627	0.622	0.486

The national security enhancement model provided in Table 7 summarizes the multiple regression analysis on the effect of the strategic priorities included in the Kenya Defence Policy towards the enhancement of national security. The findings suggest a positive high correlation between the predictor variables and national security enhancement ($R = 0.792$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.627$) indicates that military modernization, counterterrorism, intelligence-driven operations and regional Defence cooperation account for 62.7% of the changes in national security enhancement. The results are confirmed to be robust with an adjusted R^2 of 0.622 and also the level of the standard error is 0.486, which shows the level of accuracy for the prediction model is satisfactory.

Table 9: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	118.742	4	29.686	125.641	0.000
Residual	70.041	295	0.237		
Total	188.783	299			

Table 8 shows the ANOVA results of the multiple regression model testing strategic priorities in the Kenya Defence Policy on national security enhancement. The results establish the overall regression model as statistically significant ($F = 125.641$, $p < 0.001$) which shows that a significant proportion of the variance in the national security enhancement are attributable to the predictor variables grouped together. The regression sum of squares value (118.742) is significantly larger than the residual sum of squares value (70.041), suggesting that the model is very explanatory. The chosen strategic priorities hence play a significant role in improving the security situation of the Kenyan nation.

Table 10: Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	0.842	0.238	—	3.538	.001
Military Modernization	0.318	0.049	0.336	6.490	.000
Counterterrorism Measures	0.287	0.055	0.281	5.218	.000
Intelligence-led Operations	0.241	0.047	0.259	5.128	.000
Regional Defence Cooperation	0.183	0.043	0.196	4.256	.000

The regression coefficients, which represent the unique contribution of each strategic priority to the enhancement of national security, are presented in Table 9. The findings show that all of the predictor variables offer positive and significant effects, namely ($p < 0.001$). Military modernisation had the strongest influence ($\beta = 0.336$, $t = 6.490$), followed by counterterrorism measures ($\beta = 0.281$, $t = 5.218$), intelligence-led operations ($\beta = 0.259$, $t = 5.128$), and regional Defence cooperation ($\beta = 0.196$, $t = 4.256$). The results revealed that military modernization, the implementation of strategic policies, involving civil society, and strengthening regional ties had the highest impact on the enhancement of national security with military modernization being the most significant variable.

Table 11: Collinearity Statistics

Variable	Tolerance	VIF
Military Modernization	0.714	1.401
Counterterrorism Measures	0.693	1.443
Intelligence-led Operations	0.672	1.488
Regional Defence Cooperation	0.781	1.280

The collinearity statistics of the independent variables used to create the regression model are reported in Table 10. Tolerance values range between 0.672 and 0.781 and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values are between 1.280 and 1.488. None of the tolerance values or any of the VIF values exceeds the recommended value of 0.10;

thus no evidence of multicollinearity among the predictor variables exists. The results show that military modernization, counterterrorism, intelligence-led operations and regional Defence cooperation are well-autonomous from one another giving reliable and stable regression results.

Table 12: Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
National Security	1.000				
Military Modernization	.702**	1.000			
Counterterrorism Measures	.681**	.573**	1.000		
Intelligence-led Operations	.655**	.541**	.594**	1.000	
Regional Defence Cooperation	.598**	.493**	.471**	.518**	1.000

Note: $p < .01$

Pearson correlation coefficient between study variables are presented in Table 11. The results provide evidence of the positive and significant relationship of all of the strategic priority dimensions to national security enhancement at 1% ($p < .01$) level of significance. The highest positive link exists with national security ($r = .702$) followed by counterterrorism measures ($r = .681$), intelligence-led operations ($r = .655$), and regional Defence cooperation ($r = .598$). The relationships between the independent variables are also moderate and in the positive direction suggesting related, but distinct, constructs. The results lend support to the decision to include all predictor variables and suggest that higher context of strategic priorities correlates with better national security results.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that there is a relationship between strategic priorities in Kenya Defence Policy and improvement of security in the country. The analysis found significant positive correlations between military modernization and counterterrorism, military modernization and intelligence-led operations, and military modernization and regional Defence cooperation, whereas relationship between military modernization and national security enhancement and between military modernization and counterterrorism were not significant. The regression model indicates that the variation in national security is explained by 62.7% with $R^2 = 0.627$ ($p < 0.001$). The most prominent predictor was military modernization followed by counter-terrorism operations, intelligence-led operations and region Defence cooperation. The results of this study align with Cimbala (2023) who noted that Defence modernisation can create operational readiness and strategic deterrence and Waseem and Malik (2024) who concluded that investment in defense in the country can improve military capability and preparedness and thus strengthen national security in Kenya.

The results also reinforce earlier research highlighting the importance of coordination and inter-agency security responses. The importance of counter terror operations and intelligence in assisting Ahmed (2022) and Lee et al., (2024) to determine that intelligence sharing and coordinated actions between security elements enhance response to transnational crimes and transnational terrorism. On the same note, Defence cooperation within the region in the form of positive cooperation is in congruence with the findings made by Liadi, 2024, which stated that intelligence sharing, joint military exercises, and coordination in border management are all factors that contribute to regional security. The results also validate Structural (Neo) Realism Theory that focuses on increasing the capacity of the state in the face of external threats and Institutional Theory which highlights the importance of effective coordination, government and institutional capacity in achieving the results of implementing Defence policy.

The findings further highlight the paramount need to keep the Kenyan Defence Policy responsive to the new security challenges which are characterizing the current security environment. While participants uniformly agreed that the military needed to be modernized and their military force needed to be equipped to counter the threat of terrorist action, the characterization of modern threats has shifted all the way from conventional warfare to cybercrime, cyber warfare, hybrid warfare, AI use, disinformation campaigns, unmanned aerial systems, and attacks against critical national infrastructure. Increased funding for cyber Defence capabilities, sophisticated

surveillance technology, intelligence exchange and digital resiliency are needed as these threats develop. Therefore, Kenya should continuously reassess its Defence Policy, increase the country's technological innovations and foster a close partnership between the Kenya Defence Forces, the National Intelligence Service, the National Police Service and regional partners to enhance readiness for both conventional and evolving security challenges.

CONCLUSION

This study is based on a concept of strategic priorities in the Kenya Defence policy to strengthen national security and show the role played by Defence strategy by conducting a descriptive diagnostic study which involved two instruments: desk study and a field study involving interview surveys. The results have shown that these are the key pillars of strengthening national security in the country which are essential. The correlation analysis showed that the military modernization, counterterrorism measure, intelligence-based operations and regional Defence cooperation strategic priorities were highly correlated with national security enhancement, with military modernization having the highest correlation value ($r = .702$), counterterrorism measures ($r = .681$), intelligence-based operations ($r = .655$) and regional Defence cooperation ($r = .598$) ($p < .01$). The results support the association of strengthening of strategic priorities with positive contribution to the national security outcomes and Kenya's Defence Policy is relevant in addressing both current and future security challenges.

The regression also showed that strategic priorities are significant influences on enhancement of the national security. The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 125.641$, $p < .001$) and had a high degree of variance accounted for by the selected strategic priorities ($R^2 = 0.627$), thus suggesting that the selected strategic priorities collectively help to influence the national security. Military modernization turned out to be the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.336$) followed by counterterrorism measures ($\beta = 0.281$), intelligence-led operations ($\beta = 0.259$), and regional Defence cooperation ($\beta = 0.196$); all the predictors were significant at the statistical level. The study therefore recommends continuous investment in institutional capacity, technological modernisation, inter-agency co-ordination and resources allocation to enhance Kenya's Defence Policy to be sensitive to the evolving national and regional security threats if they are to be implemented effectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government of Kenya, through the Ministry of Defence, should build on the implementation of the Kenya Defence Policy, investing more in military modernization and strengthening this effort, as it was the strongest predictor of an improvement in national security, the study recommends. There should also be stepped up investments in intelligence-led operations, counterterrorism capabilities and Defence cooperation within the region, including the development of technology, equipment, exercises, training and institutional capacity. It is recommendable that coordination amongst security agencies including the Kenya Defence Forces, the National Intelligence Service, the National Police Service and other security agencies be improved by integrated platforms for sharing intelligence, conducting joint operations and regularly training. Furthermore, periodic Defence policy reviews, sound monitoring and evaluation processes, and more robust accountability regimes should be entrenched to ensure Defence priorities continue to be relevant in the context of changing security threats and are undertaken in the most efficient way.

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