

Influence of Strategic Culture on National Security: The Kenya Experience from 1963 to 2023

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the relationship between Kenya's strategic culture and its national security decision-making processes, particularly in relation to territorial disputes. Whereas the study did not test any theory, it drew from the path dependence and constructivist theories, which provided perspectives into how historical events and institutions constrain future choices and the social construction of strategic culture. Mixed methods were applied to gather qualitative and quantitative data from policy experts and practitioners within the Kenyan security sector. The results showed that Kenya's strategic culture of leniency and compromise has remained consistent and predictable, significantly influencing its responses to these disputes. However, the lack of decisive diplomatic, legal, or military action to settle border disputes with Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda has undermined Kenya's regional standing and credibility. Preferences for military or diplomatic responses are influenced by past experiences and the political system/regime type. While cooperative security and an antimilitaristic posture are strategically and economically prudent given the devastating outcomes of armed conflict, Kenya's approach also manifests weaknesses, including the failure to discern the threat dynamics of the territorial disputes which hampers decisive action to settle them by the most appropriate means. Recommendations include prioritising effective control of the disputed territories, improving coordination across government agencies, establishing a think tank for long-term security and development planning, and regularly assessing the efficacy of national security strategies for necessary recalibration.

Keywords: Strategic Culture, National Security, National Interests, Territorial Integrity, Territorial Disputes, Military Action, Diplomacy

INTRODUCTION

According to Lippmann (1943), "A nation has security when it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interests to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by war." National security is a critical element for any nation's survival and development, encompassing a wide range of internal and external challenges. Strategic culture offers a valuable perspective to understand the enduring patterns in international crises and the driving forces behind a state's behaviour. It is rooted in a state's historical inclination to protect its perceived spheres of influence, shaping its strategic thinking over long periods of time. In essence, strategic culture seeks to incorporate cultural factors, collective historical memory and their impacts into the analysis of a state's security policies and interactions with the international

community. A state's responses to matters of national security are significantly influenced by its strategic-cultural predispositions. Across the globe, the strategic culture of different states is evident through their national security and foreign policies.

This thesis therefore focused on the influence of strategic culture on national security, focusing on the unique context of Kenya. The study explores Kenya's strategic culture and its influence on some of the country's key security interventions as well as its effectiveness in dealing with key security issues that threaten its territorial integrity. As a country located in East Africa, Kenya is not only strategically positioned, playing host to various international organisations and multinational corporations, such as the United Nations, but also faces multidimensional security threats, including terrorism, organised crime, border disputes and cyber warfare.

OVERVIEW ON THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC CULTURE

Three generations of scholars address strategic culture. Jack Snyder represented the first generation and is credited for coining the term strategic culture five decades ago (Hudaya & Putri, 2018). In *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Nuclear Options*, Snyder states that the behaviour of states emanates from their unique culture, from which strategic culture is derived. Using the Soviet Union as an example, Jack Snyder expresses that the Soviet Union's cultural aspects informed its behaviour. He adds that the uniqueness of situation, historical heritage and military culture, as well as the role of the military in the policy-making process are also cultural aspects that must be considered in analysing a state's behaviour through a strategic cultural perspective. He further postulates that the strategic culture of a country can be examined by looking at the written military doctrine, as well as the speeches of the president(s) and military commander(s). Based on Snyder's (1977) explanation, strategic culture can be understood as a perspective by which to analyse how a state behaves in the face of a threat. In this case, the internal factors of a country such as the culture of thinking, past experiences, the uniqueness of the situations it faces and military posture, are the determinants of a state's actions.

In the article *A theory of Strategic Culture*, Klein (1991), a second-generation scholar of strategic thinking, posits that a nation's policies are not enough to understand a country's strategy and that its strategic culture must also be scrutinised. He defines strategic culture as "the set of attitudes and beliefs held within a military establishment concerning the political objective of war and the most effective strategy and operational method of achieving it" (Klein, 1991). This shows that the second-generation conception of the term strategic culture is focused on the use of the military as a means of achieving political goals. He largely concurs with Snyder that the military plays a critical role in the development of the strategic culture of a nation. Klein (1991) also agrees with Snyder that each country has a unique strategic culture which develops out of its internal uniqueness.

Elizabeth Kier is regarded as one of the third-generation scholars of strategic thinking. In her article, *Culture and Military Doctrine: France Between the Wars*, Kier (1995) explains that "choices between offensive and defensive military doctrines are best understood from a cultural perspective." She postulates that it is not that military organisations favour offensive doctrines, but rather, it is their culture that bounds such choices. Legro (1994), another third-generation scholar, defines strategic culture as pattern of ideas, beliefs and assumptions that prescribe how a state manages its internal structure and adapts to external factors. These patterns therefore shape the state's actions and preferences during war. The three generations of scholars have therefore provided a comprehensive definition of strategic culture as the focal concept of this study.

Zandee & Kruijver (2019) outline five elements that make up countries' strategic cultures. According to them, these elements are: 1) the aim for use of coercive means; 2) threat perceptions; 3) decision making model of the State, 4) how coercive methods are used, and 5) the state's historical experiences and practices. They opine that these elements have influenced the courses of action that countries have taken throughout their histories when faced with issues that concern territorial integrity. Therefore, the mentioned elements of strategic culture manifest in the country's action towards territorial disputes. Consequently, this study focused on these five key aspects of strategic culture, among others.

According to Lantis (2002), the introduction of the term strategic culture by Snyder (1977) to explain the military strategy applied by the Soviet Union was an attempt to discredit the assumption that states are rational actors, which had gained prominence in security policy studies. Using the strategic culture framework, he interpreted how the United States' and the Soviet Union's nuclear doctrines came about as products of historical, political, technological, and organisational constraints (Lantis, 2002). His prediction was that based on their strategic cultures, the Soviet Union would prefer pre-emptive offensive use of force. He argued this through the lenses provided by strategic culture. This construct thus links strategic culture to national security by providing the basis of understanding a state's security policy and strategy. The link between strategic culture and national security can be explained through the behaviour of various states. For instance, Japan's strategic culture of being largely antimilitaristic, shapes its security policy.

In North America, Canada, endowed with vast oceans and the Arctic as natural geographical defences, enjoys a unique strategic position that significantly influences its national security posture. Bounded by a friendly neighbour and a major power, the United States, Canada's geographic location and geopolitical context contribute to its perception of minimal threats to its territory. The absence of direct territorial challenges, coupled with the strategic advantage of proximity to a powerful ally, allows Canada to maintain a modest military force relative to its economic capacity and landmass (Smith, 2005). In line with this, Canada's defence strategy is shaped by a cooperative approach, emphasising diplomacy, international partnerships and peacekeeping efforts. The reliance on these mechanisms aligns with Canada's strategic culture, emphasising multilateral engagement and conflict resolution through non-coercive means. The absence of perceived territorial threats enables Canada to prioritise other aspects of national development while contributing selectively to global security initiatives.

In contrast, Russia's strategic culture is deeply influenced by its lack of natural defences and historical anxieties. The absence of significant geographical barriers exposes Russia to potential threats from multiple directions, contributing to a longstanding sense of vulnerability. The trauma of losing the Soviet Empire and the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) into what Russia considers its historical fiefdoms intensifies these anxieties (Trenin, 2016). As a result, Russia maintains a robust military posture, emphasising a proactive approach to securing its territorial integrity. This includes assertive actions in regions perceived as strategically crucial, reflecting a strategic culture rooted in historical experiences and the need to protect perceived spheres of influence. The complex interplay of historical contingencies and contemporary geopolitical challenges shapes Russia's military strategy and its reliance on military force as a tool of statecraft.

Turning to Asia, the strategic cultures of Pakistan, India, China and Taiwan underscore the diverse influences that shape national security perspectives. In South Asia, Pakistan's strategic culture, influenced by historical conflicts with India, has led to a predisposition for military responses, particularly regarding territorial disputes over Kashmir. India, on the other hand, maintains a strategic culture that balances

military capabilities with a preference for diplomatic resolutions to territorial issues (Cohen, 2018). In East Asia, China's strategic culture reflects historical narratives of territorial integrity and rejuvenation. China's growing military capabilities align with its assertive posture in regional territorial disputes. Taiwan, in response to China's claims, emphasises a strategic culture rooted in self-determination and the maintenance of de facto independence.

In Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) faces the challenge of the resource curse, where abundant natural resources contribute to internal conflict and external meddling. The strategic culture of neighbouring countries, such as Rwanda and Uganda, intersects with the DRC's vulnerability, leading to a complex web of territorial disputes. Sudan and Ethiopia provide additional insights into the limitations of military action in the face of determined nationalism. The secession of South Sudan from the Sudan and Eritrea's separation from Ethiopia illustrate how historical and cultural factors influence territorial dynamics, with nationalism among the South Sudanese and Eritreans overcoming the military might of both the Sudan and Ethiopia respectively, leading to independence. Military strategies alone however often prove inadequate in resolving deeply rooted disputes, emphasising the necessity of comprehensive multidimensional approaches, largely predicated on diplomacy and international cooperation (Clapham, 1996).

Kenya's strategic culture echoes India's balanced approach. Like India, which navigates historical tensions with strong military capabilities while pursuing diplomatic solutions, Kenya recognises the need for a capable military alongside a preference for peaceful resolutions. This delicate balance manifests in Kenya's modernisation of its armed forces for self-defence, while pursuing peaceful solutions to territorial disputes like the long-standing border issue with Somalia. Further, the African context adds crucial brushstrokes to the Kenyan canvas. The challenges faced by neighbouring nations like the DRC, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia - marked by resource complexities, historical legacies and internal conflicts – resonate deeply with Kenya's own experiences. This shared regional experience underlines the complex interplay of historical contingencies, threat perceptions and decision-making models that shape Kenya's security landscape.

Understanding Kenya's strategic culture in light of this diverse global tapestry is crucial. Its historical experiences, shaped by colonialism, internal political dynamics and regional complexities, have woven a unique approach to security. Analysing these factors, as proposed in the broader study theme, from 1963 to 2023, sheds light on how strategic culture has influenced Kenya's national security decisions. This nuanced understanding is key to navigating future challenges, where diplomacy and military strategies must be meticulously balanced and interwoven, to assure national security and peaceful resolutions to territorial disputes.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The sought to explore the impact of strategic culture on national security, focusing on how Kenya perceives threats, articulates its national interests and decides how to achieve its objectives and by what means, whether military force, diplomacy or otherwise. A strategic culture in this context denotes predictability in decisiveness and consistency in state behaviour, in pursuit of its national interests. A strategic defensive culture prioritises maintaining a strong deterrent posture and/or seeking cooperative solutions to security challenges.

The foundation of national security decisions rests upon strategic culture, embodying the norms, ideas and practices that shape decision-making and the formulation of a grand strategy to achieve political

objectives (Biava *et al.*, 2011). It plays a pivotal role in influencing policymakers' perceptions of threats, state interests and defence strategies, defining a state's interests and values.

According to Pamba (2019), the issue of territorial disputes in post-colonial Africa continues to be a significant cause of conflict, particularly concerning the demarcation of international land and maritime boundaries. Irredentism, along with the presence of inconsistent and vague colonial maps, as well as the absence of prior delimitation or ineffective administrative measures during the transition from colonial to independent states, are contributing factors to the current territorial disputes in Africa. Kenya is currently embroiled in territorial disputes with its neighbouring countries of Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda. Kenya's territorial disputes on its Western, Northwestern and Southeastern borders have the potential to diminish its land and sea territory if neighbouring states' expansionist or revisionist claims are successful. Nevertheless, Kenya appears not to effectively demonstrate robust diplomacy and defence in order to gain a strategic advantage in the said territorial disputes.

The study seeks to comprehensively understand the historical precedence and influence of Kenya's strategic culture on national security, particularly through an examination of its responses to the territorial disputes. The key issue of investigation is Kenya's territorial integrity as seen through the manner in which the country has handled the Shifta War of 1963-1967, the Ilemi Triangle dispute with South Sudan, the Migingo Island dispute with Uganda and the Maritime dispute between Kenya and Somalia that ended up at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Notably, Kenya stands to lose maritime territory in the Indian Ocean border dispute with Somalia, if the 12 October 2021 ICJ ruling is anything to go by. It also has unresolved border determination over the Ilemi Triangle with South Sudan and the Migingo Island with Uganda, the latter of which has been under Ugandan authorities' control, who occasionally arrest Kenyan Police Officers and fishermen.

Territorial integrity holds paramount importance for Kenya, given historical and potential threats that could escalate into conflicts. At the core of a state's existence is its territory as defined by its boundaries. Boundaries are delineated/cartographic lines that establish and define the limits of a state, differentiating its independent territory from those of other states. It matters that boundaries be mutually agreed upon by the countries concerned, or else they would constitute territorial disputes. Boundaries are therefore significant as they establish the territorial jurisdiction of a country. Furthermore, boundaries also define national identity and serve as either a means of connection/enabler or a hindrance to achieving international peace and security. Additionally, international boundaries serve as a conduit for lawful activity, particularly in the realms of trade and migration. Most importantly, boundaries serve as a dividing line that might trigger international disputes and their contestations should therefore raise the brow of any policy maker.

Despite varied resolutions or attempts thereto, the security issues under investigation persist as a significant threat to national stability and there exists high potential for the situation or outcome in one case to implicate action and outcome in the others. The probability for conflagration of these disputes is also high, especially with external influences and the minerals/resource potential in the disputed areas.

It is imperative to discern how Kenya's strategic culture influences its security responses, considering the lingering impact of territorial disputes in other African regions. This study underscores the fact that unresolved territorial disputes can lead to protracted conflicts, as evidenced in West and North Africa, which necessitates their resolution.

The puzzle prompting this study revolves around Kenya's apparent inefficacy in leveraging its regional economic and military influence, characterised by consistence in shying away from definitive resolution

of its territorial disputes and the protection of its territorial integrity. Despite being an economic and military powerhouse in the region, Kenya faces challenges in projecting a strategic posture and diplomatic influence, to resolve these issues on favourable terms. The strategic culture import of this situation begs the question, why does Kenya appear so accepting/lenient/compromising in matters of territorial loss? The study assesses the effectiveness of the measures Kenya has taken to address the territorial disputes namely the Migingo Island, the Ilemi Triangle and the Somalia-Kenya Maritime dispute over the two countries' maritime boundary in the Indian Ocean, as they define national security policy and strategy.

Therefore, the study aims to unravel the intricacies of Kenya's strategic culture and its impact on national security responses, with a focus on territorial integrity, offering insights and recommendations for enhanced strategic positioning, effective deterrence, power projection and influential diplomacy in the region.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed methods approach; and was based on a correlational research design. It was conducted in Nairobi, Kenya. The target population for the study was six (6) top level officials (two each from each organisation) and 13 middle cadre representatives from the Kenya Defence Forces, 13 from the National Intelligence Services (NIS), 13 from the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs and one each from the National Security Council Advisory Committee (NSAC) Secretariat, the Attorney General's Office and the Kenya International Boundaries Office (KIBO). Due to the small size of the population, all the 48 respondents were earmarked to take part in the study as Yin (2017) opined that when the target population is small; all the elements in the population take part in the study.

The researcher used a questionnaire as primary data collection instrument. The study also employed an interview guide for top-level expert/key informant interviews.

Quantitative data arising from the questionnaires was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, while the qualitative data sets were analysed by establishing the content in terms of key themes and discourse analysis. This involved coding of the data, identifying patterns and interpreting their meaning. The qualitative data that was analysed in various themes was presented in textual methods. Quantitative data from questionnaires was presented through charts, graphs, and tables as necessary.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Determination of the Origins/Sources of Strategic Culture

The sources of strategic culture are multifaceted, encompassing historical experiences, geographic considerations and national identity. Historical experiences shape a country's perceptions of threats and its approach to security challenges (Kari & Pynnöniemi, 2023). Geographic factors, such as proximity to potential adversaries or natural barriers, influence strategic thinking and defence policies. National identity, including cultural values and political ideologies, also play a significant role in shaping strategic culture (Rynning, 2003). Analysing these sources helps gain insights into how states perceive their security environment and formulate the appropriate policies and strategies to secure their interests.

Key Elements of Strategic Culture

Strategic culture comprises several key elements that shape a country's approach to security challenges. These elements include perceptions of adversaries, the role of military force, decision-making models and national identity. Perceptions of adversaries influence a state's threat assessment and its willingness to use

force (Gotz & Staun, 2022). The role of military force reflects a country's strategic preferences and its reliance on hard power versus diplomacy (Lo, 2015). Decision-making models, influenced by institutional structures and political dynamics, guide how states formulate and implement security policies. Finally, national identity shapes strategic culture by defining a country's values, interests and aspirations (Barthwal, 2022). These elements collectively determine how states respond to security challenges and shape their behaviour on the international stage.

Determination of the Influence of Strategic Culture in Response to Key Territorial Disputes

Strategic culture significantly influences how states respond to key territorial disputes, shaping their actions and choices. For example, Pakistan's strategic culture, characterized by a preference for military solutions and territorial revisionism, has led to repeated conflicts with India over the Kashmir region (Barthwal, 2022). Similarly, Russia's strategic culture, influenced by historical experiences and perceptions of vulnerability, has driven its military intervention in Ukraine (Gotz & Staun, 2022). An understanding the influence of strategic culture provides valuable insights into states' motivations and behaviours in territorial disputes, contributing to a deeper understanding of international security dynamics.

Strengths and Weaknesses of States' Strategic Culture in Addressing Key Territorial Disputes

The strengths and weaknesses of states' strategic culture become evident through their actions and outcomes in territorial disputes. For example, Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, driven by its strategic culture, has been criticized as a failure due to the prolonged conflict and inability to achieve decisive victory (Blinken, 2023; Rumer, 2023). In contrast, Kenya's diplomatic approach, influenced by its strategic culture of prioritizing peaceful resolutions and multilateral engagement, contributes to regional stability and conflict prevention (Burgess, 2018). Evaluating the effectiveness of states' strategic cultures in addressing territorial disputes, is key to identifying strengths as well as areas for improvement and opportunities for conflict resolution.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Path Dependence Theory

Path dependence theory, woven from the threads of economics, offers a compelling lens to examine how historical decisions and events create enduring patterns of behaviour influencing a nation's foreign policy. Like critical junctures in a tapestry, these historical contingencies set nations on specific paths, shaping the very fabric of their strategic culture. Scholars like Lantis (2002) and Götz & Staun (2022) illuminate this profound impact, arguing that past choices, even if suboptimal in the present, cast a long shadow over current decision-making.

This theory posits that a nation's past is not merely prologue, but rather a deeply influential force propelling it forward. Strategic culture, deeply rooted in these historical contingencies, becomes a guiding star, shaping how a nation perceives its security environment and responds to threats. While this adherence to established paths ensures continuity and stability, it can also act as a double-edged sword, potentially hindering innovation and agility in adapting to evolving security landscapes (Lantis, 2009).

The intricate dance between path dependence theory and strategic culture becomes crystal clear when examining critical junctures in history. Götz & Staun (2022) masterfully illustrate this in the case of Russia's attack on Ukraine. By delving into historical experiences like the dissolution of the Soviet Union, they unearth the profound impact these events have had on shaping Russia's strategic culture and consequently, its contemporary policies. This interconnection unlocks valuable insights into the often-

opaque world of national security decision-making, revealing how the echoes of the past continue to resonate in the present.

Furthermore, this framework encourages the consideration of the dynamic interplay between path dependence and agency. While historical forces exert a powerful influence, they do not necessarily preordain a nation's future. Leaders and policymakers can, through conscious choices and proactive strategies, navigate the constraints imposed by path dependence while simultaneously forging new paths more suited to the present realities. Understanding this complex interplay is crucial for formulating effective national security strategies in an ever-changing world.

Additional Theoretical Approaches

Comparative analysis, championed by Johnston (1995) posits that by juxtaposing different nations, the unique characteristics and variations in their strategic cultures are exposed. This approach, further extended by Kartchner & Johnson (2009), allows for the uncovering of culturally-based insights into how nations approach security policymaking and the crucial role cultural context plays in shaping strategic choices.

Further enriching this tapestry is Duyvesteyn's (2011) exploration of the intricate link between intelligence and strategic culture. He illuminates how a nation's intelligence practices are not merely information-gathering mechanisms, but rather tools deeply intertwined with its broader strategic outlook. This understanding sheds light on how information is perceived, interpreted, and ultimately used to inform decision-making.

Yet, to fully appreciate the dynamism of strategic culture, there is need to venture beyond material factors and delve into the realm of ideas. In this regard, constructivism theory, spearheaded by They (2018), emphasises the crucial role of social construction in shaping national identity and consequently, strategic culture. Through interactions with other actors and historical experiences, states develop multiple, socially constructed identities that influence their perceptions of themselves and their role in the world. This, in turn, shapes their strategic behaviour and decision-making.

Complementing these approaches, constructivism theory emphasises the social construction of strategic culture. According to constructivists, ideas play a central role in influencing behaviour. States can have multiple socially constructed identities, shaped through interactions with other actors (They, 2018). This theory is potent in understanding how a state's perceptions of itself and its role, derived from shared narratives and historical experiences, shape its strategic culture. The combination of these theoretical frameworks enriches the exploration of strategic culture, providing a nuanced understanding of its multifaceted dynamics.

IDENTIFIED GAP

Based on the literature review, the researcher established the existence of a dissertation study on Uganda and Tanzania's role in Somalia in 2017, as premised on their strategic culture. Notably, despite its incursion into Somalia in 2011 to contain violent extremism threats posed by Al Shabaab militants, Kenya has not been included in this study. Nor is there any other traceable study on Kenya's Strategic Culture, which presents a knowledge gap on the subject matter under study. A separate study by Achieng (2017), investigated Kenya's approaches to threats to her territorial integrity, but it was also not predicated on strategic culture. Thus, there has not been any other traceable study on Kenya's strategic culture and its nexus with national security, which presents a knowledge gap on the subject matter under study.

FINDINGS

Response Rate

The researcher administered 42 questionnaires, out of which only 33 respondents were able to return fully filled questionnaires. This represented a response rate of 78.6% which conforms to Ørngreen & Levinsen (2017) stipulation that a response rate of 50 percent is adequate for analysis. The response rate of 78.6% was therefore even better. Moreover, the response rate for the interviews was five (5) out of a targeted six (6), which represents 83.3%.

Background Information

The respondents were asked to indicate their gender. Their responses were summarised and are presented in Figure 1.

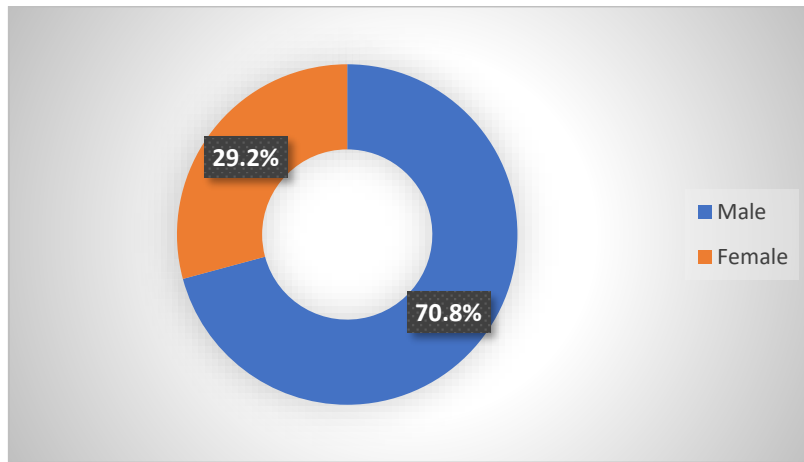


Figure 1: Gender of the Respondents
Source: Field Data (2024)

The study sample included 70.8% male and 29.2% female respondents. This gender distribution reflects the male-dominated nature of the industry being studied and is therefore assessed as inclusive enough to ensure the generalisability of the findings.

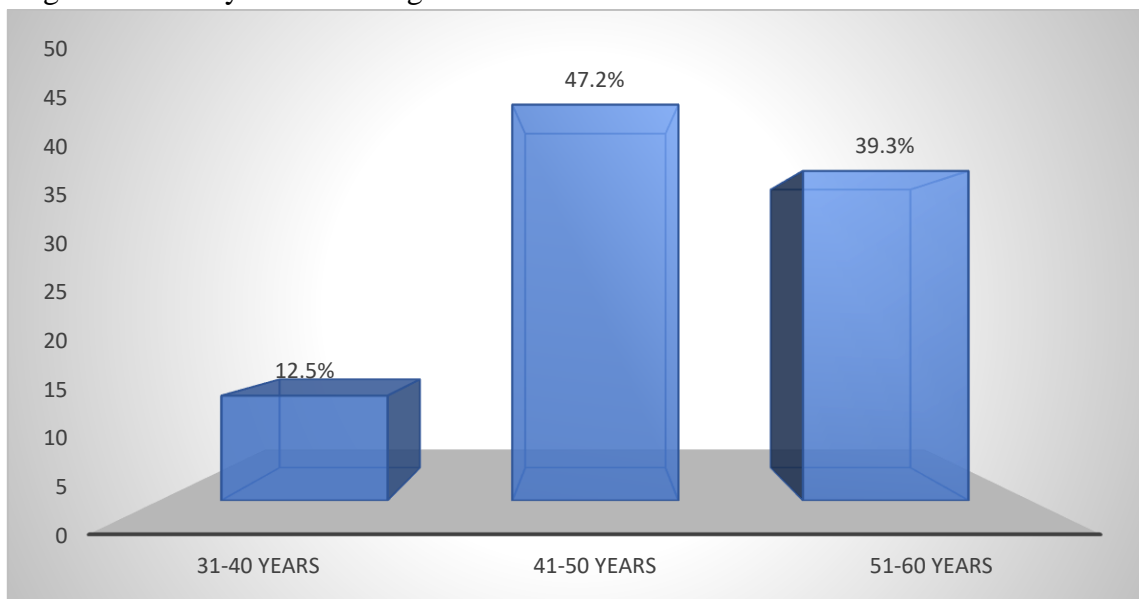


Figure 2: Respondents' Age Bracket
Source: Field Data (2024)

The findings revealed that 47.2% of the respondents were aged between 41-50 years, 39.3% were aged between 51-60 years, while 12.5% were aged between 31-40 years. This shows that most of the respondents were mature enough and hence could understand and give reliable information as sought by the study.

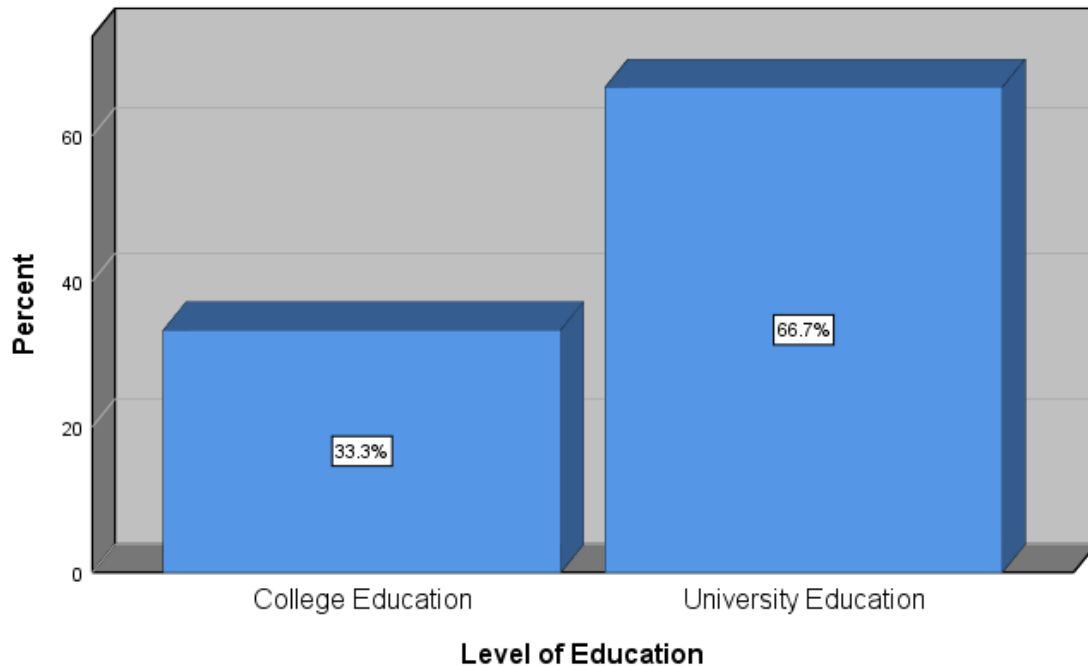


Figure 3: Respondents’ Highest Level of Education
Source: Field Data (2024)

As per Figure 3 above, 66.7% of the respondents reached the university level of education, while 33.3% reached the college level. This implied that majority of the respondents were learned enough to understand the subject under study.

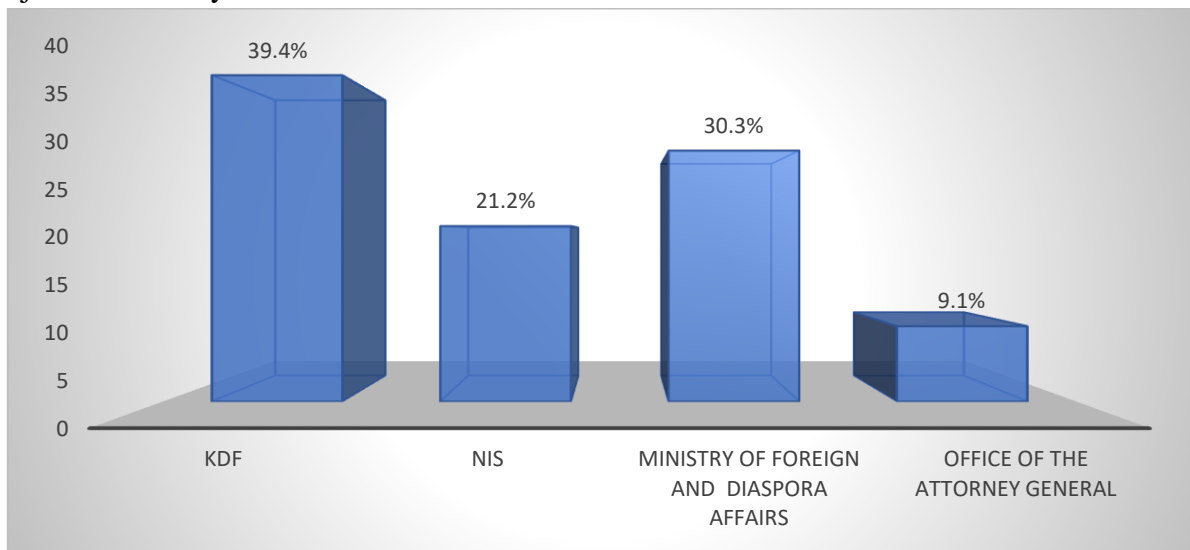


Figure 4: Distribution of Respondents by Organisation

Field Data (2024)

The findings revealed that 39.4% of the respondents were from KDF, 30.3% from the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, 21.2% from the NIS and 9.1% from the Office of the Attorney General/KIBO and

NSAC. This implied that all the respondents used in this study were able to give reliable data regarding the subject matter since they were all from the key national security and related departments in the country.

Multifaceted Origins of Kenya’s Strategic Culture

The study aimed to determine the multifaceted origins of Kenya’s strategic culture. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which Kenya relies on its military to resolve territorial conflicts and threats to national security. The findings are presented in Figure 5.

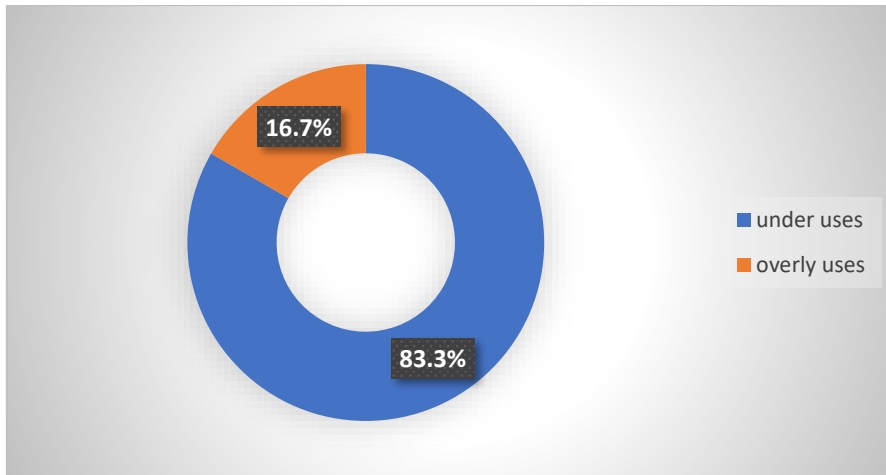


Figure 5: Extent to which Kenya Relies on its Military to Resolve Territorial Conflicts and Threats to National Security

Field Data (2024)

The findings revealed that 83.3% of the respondents indicated that Kenya under relies on its military to resolve territorial conflicts and threats to national security. The rest (16.7%) indicated that Kenya over relies uses its military to resolve territorial conflicts and threats to national security.

Further, the respondents were asked to state whether they believed Kenya leans more towards diplomacy than military action in resolving territorial conflicts and other threats to national security. Figure 6 displays the findings.

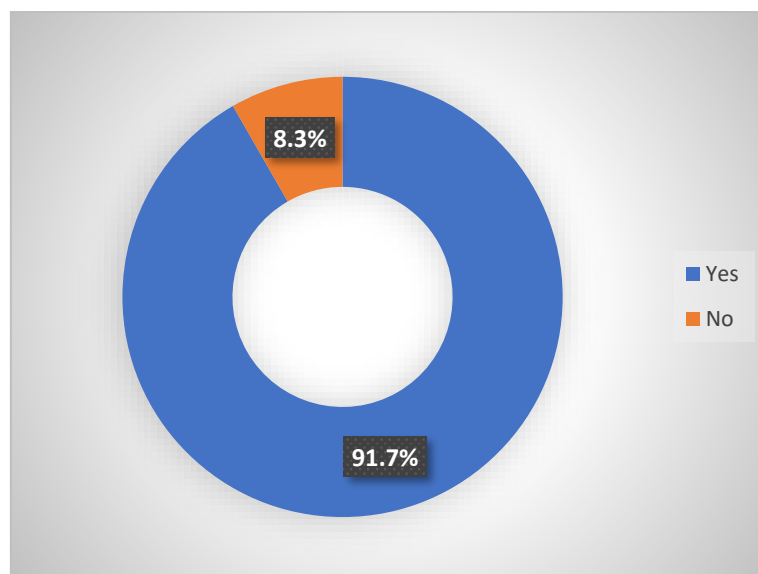


Figure 6: Diplomacy versus Military Action in Resolving Territorial Conflicts and Other Threats to National Security

Field Data (2024)

The results revealed that 91.7% of the respondents indicated that they believed Kenya leans more towards diplomacy than military action in resolving territorial conflicts and other threats to national security. The respondents were asked to indicate whether they considered Kenya’s political system, characterised as a constitutional democracy with imperatives for public participation, as supportive or restraining in its responses to key territorial disputes or threats. The findings are as shown in Figure 7.

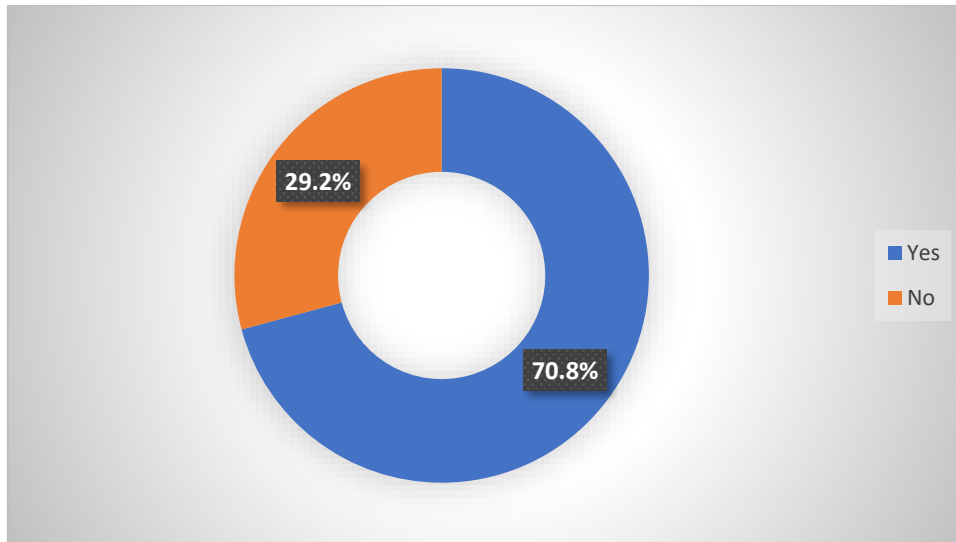


Figure 7: Kenya’s Political System

Field Data (2024)

According to Figure 7, 29.2% of the respondents indicated that Kenya’s political system, characterised as a constitutional democracy with imperatives for public participation, is supportive in its responses to key territorial disputes or threats. These views are premised on the democratic principles of public participation in decision making, which most respondents felt portends well for Kenya’s governance and other matters of national importance. The rest (70.8%) indicated that Kenya’s political system was restraining. The respondents were of the view that a constitutional democracy is an impediment to developing unimpeachable military capabilities for deterrence and necessary responses to threats to territorial integrity. The democratic space in Kenya allows for diverse opinion which is important as a democratic public participation value in decision making on policy issues, but one that also slows down decision making especially where divisive politics and the incessant inclination for litigation by private citizens set in. They indicated that this was because more emphasis is given to individual rights and freedoms than to the need to defend territorial integrity. There is also restrictive bureaucracy that requires parliament’s approval to deploy the military internally. Civilian control of the military is a core democratic principle but one that can also negatively impact a country’s decision making, especially in a situation where political polarity and partisanship overshadows national interests.

Effects of Kenya’s Strategic Culture on Territorial Disputes/Threats to National Security

The research aimed to examine the effects of Kenya’s strategic culture on territorial disputes. The respondents were asked to rate the following factors in terms of their influence on Kenya’s apparent lenient/compromising/indecisive response to key territorial disputes/threats to national security. The results are as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: The Rate of Factors in Terms of Their Influence in Kenya’s Apparent Lenient/Compromising/Indecisive Response to Key Territorial Disputes/Threats to National Security

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Leadership and Decision-Making Model of the State - Decisions, policy direction, leadership style/quality, capabilities and personal style/beliefs/assertiveness of the president and their significance in shaping Kenya's response to national security challenges	3.625	0.939
External Influences - Alliances, international institutions/norms/agreements (e.g. the United Nations, the African Union, or the East African Community), regional dynamics, geopolitical context, and relationships with other states significantly impact Kenya	3.708	0.988
Societal Factors - The size and quality of the population, national character (intellectual and moral qualities), public opinion, citizens’ values, norms, beliefs, economic status, level of education, culture, ethnicity, and societal pressure as playing a crucial role in influencing Kenya’s responses to threats	4.750	0.532
Aim for Use of Coercive Means - The offensive or defensive military posture, threat perceptions and the level of aggression a state intended to project, along with its willingness to use force/coercive measures, as crucial determinants of Kenya's response	3.583	0.501
Threat Perceptions - How Kenya perceives the risks and challenges it faces, the nature of the threat(s), threat proximity, potential consequences, and their influence on the state’s willingness to compromise or assert itself and their significance in shape	2.750	0.982
How Coercive Methods are used - Influence of deterrence, compellence, military power projection beyond borders, alliances, partnerships and psychological operations/information manipulation on Kenya's strategic response to national security threats	3.333	0.606

Field Data (2024)

With a resounding mean score of 4.750, societal factors emerged as the most significant driver. This suggests that public opinion, values, cultural norms, and even economic realities deeply influence decision-making. This may likely be attributable to Kenya’s political system as a participatory constitutional democracy. Similarly, cultural values of pacifism versus assertiveness shape Kenya's willingness to compromise or project strength. Economic constraints or dependence on trade partners can

further limit response options. External influences were rated to hold substantial weight (mean score: 3.708). Alliances, international norms and regional dynamics all play a part. Membership in regional security organisations also likely influence preference for collective and collaborative action against external threats over unilateralism. State action under such social and institutional norms can tend to be constrained.

While slightly less influential (mean score: 3.625), leadership and decision-making remain vital. The President's style, assertiveness, and personal beliefs were rated as likely to significantly impact strategic choices. Strong leadership is often crucial in navigating complex and evolving threats. Kenya's military posture, willingness to use force, and threat perception (mean score: 3.583) significantly influence response intensity. Striking a balance between deterrence and measured action is key. How coercive methods are employed (mean score: 3.333) holds moderate significance. Data shows that the effectiveness of military interventions, alliances, and information operations can significantly impact outcomes. Choosing the right tools and using them strategically becomes crucial. Kenya's perception of threats (mean score: 2.750) is rated as moderately significant. Accurate assessments of the severity of the threat, potential consequences and threat proximity are essential for informed decision-making.

These findings paint a complex diversity of the forces shaping Kenya's response to national security threats. Understanding and addressing each factor is crucial for crafting effective strategies. Engaging with the public, navigating complex regional dynamics and fostering strong leadership are just some of the areas requiring careful consideration. Ultimately, a holistic approach that recognises the interplay of internal and external influences is key to safeguarding national security interests.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Kenya's Strategic Culture in Addressing Key Territorial Disputes/Threats to National Security

The research aimed to assess the strengths and weakness of Kenya's strategic culture in addressing territorial disputes. The respondents were asked to indicate what they believed were the pros and cons of a diplomatic or military response to the Ilemi Triangle Dispute in relation to the protection of Kenya's territorial integrity. One KDF official stated that:

Diplomatic and military responses are time and situation based if there is political goodwill. The diplomatic approach is more advantageous and this is the right time for Kenya to exploit the opportunity.

A NIS official noted that:

Diplomacy has continued to embolden the Government of South Sudan and its peoples to now extend their claim beyond Ilemi to the Kenyan territory in the area between Nadapal and Nakodok. The lack of coherent and forceful diplomatic and legal approach to the disputes with Uganda and Somalia undermine Kenya's reputation and image.

The respondents were further asked to indicate what they believed were the pros and cons of the outcome of the International Court of Justice ruling on the maritime border dispute between Kenya and Somalia in relation to the protection of Kenya's territorial integrity. Respondents stated that a key strength of the approach taken by Kenya was its demonstration of resilience against powerful external actors that were/are using Somalia as a proxy to foment a maritime dispute. The respondents however pointed to a drawback associated with Kenya's policy not to abide by the ICJ ruling and the burden both economically and militarily, to have to exercise effective occupation and control of the disputed maritime territory. Others indicated that the pros of diplomatic means are that it promotes peaceful settlement, fosters cooperation and avoids the potential human and economic costs associated with military action. Respondents however,

observed that diplomacy was bound to take time and that its success depends on the willingness of all the parties to negotiate, some of whom may not be willing to do so.

A KDF official stated that:

Diplomacy has failed and the court [ICJ] has pronounced itself. Kenya's position stands- not an inch more or an inch less. That is a policy statement, and speaks to the fact that Kenya is ready to defend all its territory by all means.

The respondents were further asked to give their opinion on how Kenya's strategic culture affects national unity and consensus when addressing national security and territorial disputes. They indicated that the effect is adverse because of divergent political interests - that strategic culture is shaped by the government of the day, which is limited in forging national unity within Kenya's political polarity. Moreover, the lack of a National Security Strategy informed by national interests, that transcends political transitions, will continue undermining how Kenya addresses national security and territorial disputes. Also, Kenya's strategic culture does not inspire a lot of confidence in the readiness, ability and willingness to defend territorial integrity at all costs. Neither does it inspire national unity nor build strong consensus when dealing with territorial disputes.

The researcher also asked the respondents to indicate how multiagency coordination and/or government ministries, departments and agencies working in silos impacted Kenya's strategic culture or coherence in the formulation and implementation of national security policy and strategy. Respondents further indicated that multi agency approach in implementing national security policy and strategy is a great opportunity whose benefits Kenya is yet to fully realise due the fact that government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) prefer to work in silos or even at cross purposes. These working in silos cannot help achieve the necessary synergy for the delivery of national security. Moreover, respondents felt that there has often been a replication of projects and efforts as well as lack of proper coherence in the formulation and implementation of government policies and strategies, which robs the country of the much-needed focus. This is largely driven by competition for budgetary resources by various entities for the perceived benefit accruing from such budgets. Further, the multiagency concept is a novel idea meant to enhance collaboration and coordination, which requires the involvement of all MDAs and by extension, the public, in working seamlessly, in the protection of Kenya's national interests. Respondents argued that working in silos has only resulted in disjointedness and derails the implementation of very noble ideas and policies. One NIS official indicated that:

[A] Multiagency framework has had significant impact in bolstering national security and should be enhanced. This has been a strategic direction which has improved our security and the lack of it would have had disastrous results as regards our security.

A KDF officer also opined that:

The lack of multiagency coordination has greatly undermined our unity of purpose as a country and created competition among agencies that is full of short-sightedness.

Another KDF Officer observed that:

Multiagency bundling without a clearly designated leader, who wields the legal and professional gravitas and personal oomph to drive collaborative action across agencies could well result in bystander effect and the diffusion of responsibility where no single individual or agency can be called out for not acting as expected.

The respondents were asked to indicate whether there were any specific areas or aspects where improvements or adjustments to Kenya's strategic culture are needed. They indicated that legislation on

creation of a multi-agency framework for the management of Kenya's international boundaries is key. They also advocated on the need to inculcate the tenets of strategic culture across all government institutions. Further, there is also need to develop a shared understanding on national interests by all and sundry and cascade the same in all social and political spheres. A KDF official stated that:

An overdependence on diplomatic resolution to disputes should be avoided despite what may on the face of it appear like overwhelming advantages of using it as a means of resolving conflict. It is not deterrent and may encourage more claims on own territory. The strategic culture consider serious force in and around areas where such territorial claims are made, in order to display clear intent to defend our territory at all costs.

The respondents were also asked to share any additional views they had based on their experience as to how Kenya can foster a robust strategic culture that provides clarity and predictability in national security policy and strategy. They indicated that it is important to invest in strategic communication targeting regional and global audience on Kenya's international boundaries/territorial integrity. Respondents opined that despite past efforts to resolve the matter, Kenya and South Sudan still do not have a mutually agreeable position on their common boundary and particularly regarding the Ilemi triangle.

Theoretical Implication of the Findings

The analysis of Kenya's strategic culture in managing territorial disputes offers valuable insights that may contribute to the understanding of decision-making processes and their complexities. They confirm the dominance of the path dependence theory, painting a nuanced picture where historical legacies, leadership styles, and internal as well as external dynamics significantly influence responses, sometimes hindering a purely objective or threat-driven approach.

Based on the fact that the decisive approaches employed by the first two presidents of Kenya are not replicated by follow on regimes, the study appears not to explicitly endorse a rigid interpretation of the path dependence theory, where future decisions/actions are solely predicated on past choices, regardless of the prevailing threats or circumstances. Instead, it reveals a more intricate interplay of factors: the Shifta War's decisive military response and the resolute counteraction to Idi Amin's claim over Kenyan territory set a precedent for prioritising territorial integrity, which by the theory's projection, ought to have influenced subsequent leaders' approaches, but did not. The first two presidents' responses may however be more linked to the regime typologies of the time (both Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel arap Moi did not face any direct elections under Kenya's system of governance of the time), their idiosyncrasies and the emergence from an armed independence struggle, than an entrenched offensive national character. The deviation also finds explanation in O'Reilly (2012) assertion that while strategic culture is heavily influenced by historical events, leading to a level of consistency, it may be disrupted by external shocks, and thus democratisation appears to have prompted a shift in the nation's strategic culture.

The case of the Ilemi Triangle, which can be termed as the most enduring of the three disputes, dating back to the elasticity of the Kenya-Sudan border as early as 1902 to 1950, however demonstrates great consistency in Kenya's strategic culture and approach to the resolution of territorial integrity issues. The border was adjusted northwards a record four times over 48 years, largely to accommodate either the British and Ethiopian interests and later on to ward off clashes between the Sudan and the British East Africa forces and interests at the time, ignoring the local communities' common ancestry and utility of the land. The adjustments were however never at any time agreed upon between Kenya and Sudan, and the ambiguity was unfortunately carried forward to the present day, with South Sudan's independence in 2011.

The consistency of Kenya's dithering echoes the assumptions of the path dependence theory, with the developments in the Migingo Island dispute and the Kenya-Somalia maritime dispute clearly mirroring the approaches Kenya has all along taken on the Ilemi Triangle. They affirm the study's conjecture and subject of investigation, showcasing Kenya's strategic culture as one given to leniency and compromise, favouring peaceful coexistence over confrontations.

Differences in leadership styles, like Kenyatta and Moi's proactive and resolute stances compared to follow on administrations, appear to be outlier occurrences in the country's strategic culture. They however demonstrate that individual decisions can deviate from established paths, an aspect that is also largely situation dependent. Political interests, economic considerations and public opinion all exert pressure, leading to responses that reinforce the path dependence theory's position and Kenya's antimilitaristic postures.

The findings advocate for a more nuanced approach than solely advocating for an increased militaristic stance. The study highlights the potential downsides of relying heavily on military interventions, including economic burdens and escalation risks. This suggests a preference for measured responses based on cost-benefit analysis. Moreover, while criticising shortcomings in diplomatic efforts, the research acknowledges the potential benefits of pursuing diplomatic solutions and legal frameworks before resorting to military action. Further, the emphasis on poor multi-agency coordination and silo approaches suggests that strengthening collaboration and utilising alternative or a combination of tools and not just the military could yield better or more sustainable outcomes for national security as well as regional peace and stability.

This analysis contributes to theory as it reinforces the interpretations and assumptions of the path dependence theory. It highlights the fact that even amidst the complex interplay of historical legacies, leadership styles and internal as well as external environmental dynamics, states tend to have a predictable stance in how they safeguard their national interests and protect their perceived spheres of influence. For Kenya, that path has not veered off its proclivity to leniency, compromise, defensive measures and international cooperation. This antimilitaristic and largely cooperative strategic culture, more given to compromise, defines Kenya's national character throughout the period under study and likely informs its low threat perception that has seen the country not exert its influence to resolve the disputes it faces.

Kissinger's reflections on the role of geography and climate in shaping a country's strategic culture are affirmed by the study. All states, Kenya inclusive, are constrained by existing in an international anarchic system. A country's courses of action are thus based on its relative power when measured against other states. Kenya's location in a volatile region in the Horn of Africa portends geostrategic and geopolitical constraints that necessitate the keen consideration of the regional security dynamics, including the posture of her volatile neighbours as weighed against Kenya's relative economic development in the region. An armed conflict may therefore portend direr consequences for Kenya than any of her neighbours, which may explain her resort to peaceful resolution of conflicts as opposed to the use of force. Climate as a source of Kenya's strategic culture obtains in the fact that there are constant reminders of the unresolved disputes over Migingo Island and Ilemi Triangle occasioned by the clash of the communities from the neighbouring countries and Kenyan citizens in these areas, over resources. The resource strife is attributed to climate change effects, which are compounded by growing populations, which exacerbate the situation, making a case on the need to have the disputes resolved.

Based on the experiences of countries such as Nigeria, Ethiopia and Pakistan, the study moves beyond a false dichotomy between purely militaristic responses and complete pacifism, advocating for a balanced

approach that weighs various options based on context and national interests. It lays emphasis on a diligent scan of the strategic landscape and a nuanced appreciation of the constraints imposed by the international environment.

Notably, in its defensive posture and international cooperation stance, Kenya is not alone in its approach, with countries like India and Australia manifesting sustained military effectiveness, combined with astute diplomacy and skilful statecraft, to further their national interests. Kenya however does come out as consistently lenient and compromising where its spheres of influence are encroached by other states and probably requires to be more assertive and resolute, given its volatile neighbourhood.

CONCLUSION

The examination of Kenya's strategic culture reveals a multifaceted interplay of historical, cultural and geopolitical factors. Kenya's geostrategic location in the Horn of Africa and the attendant regional geopolitics have somewhat constrained her offensive options, which renders credence to the potency of geography in shaping a country's strategic culture. Effects of climate change, mainly dwindling fish, pasture and water occasion clashes among neighbouring communities, which exacerbates the unresolved border issues over Migingo and Ilemi. Historical experiences, including the struggle for independence and a desire for regional stability, contributed to Kenya's unique strategic outlook. The emphasis on diplomacy and multilateral engagement emerges as a significant source, underscoring a commitment to peaceful conflict resolution. The results of the study also demonstrated that while external influences shape the geopolitical landscape, internal dynamics, such as the political system or regime type and the state's decision-making models, have also played a crucial role in crafting Kenya's approach to national security. The synthesis of these sources, as the study found, provides a comprehensive understanding of the roots of Kenya's strategic culture, which emphasises cooperation over confrontation.

The results of the research further demonstrated that Kenya's strategic culture significantly influences its responses to territorial disputes and threats to national security. The use of diplomacy over military action, as the study found, emerges as a cornerstone, offering a peaceful and cooperative framework for conflict resolution. Kenya's participation in regional organisations, commitment to diplomacy and peaceful resolutions emerges as a guiding principle that reflects a commitment to collective security, which is a strong point. This is evident in the handling of the maritime boundary dispute with Somalia. Kenya's emphasis on cooperative security and engagement with international institutions positions her favourably as an island of peace and stability in the East African region, which is a strength. However, weaknesses persist, as seen in potential weaknesses identified in the country's decision-making models and compromising management of the disputes. The interplay of these factors, as the study found, shapes Kenya's strategic responses in a dynamic geopolitical environment and are illustrative of strategic prudence over the rush to military action, which can occasion unintended consequences.

Comparative analysis with other nations, such as Ethiopia, Pakistan and Nigeria who have been militaristic juxtaposed with antimilitaristic states such as India, Australia and Tanzania, as the study deduced, underscores the importance of due diligence in strategic choices on the use of force. The intricate interplay of the geopolitical environment and economic advancement, as weighed against the adverse effects of conflict, contribute to Kenya's choices and approach.

In a nutshell, Kenya has consistently adopted a non-confrontational approach even when faced with blatant provocation, such as the situation with Migingo Island and Somalia's claims to its territory in the Indian Ocean. It has also vacillated on resolving the boundary on the Ilemi Triangle, which has persisted from

Kenya's colonial era to independence, essentially carrying over the dilemma from her colonial legacy. This exemplifies a national inclination towards compromise and antimilitarism, rather than power projection with credible deterrence. Over time, this character has coalesced into a strategic culture of lenience and compromise on matters national security. The leniency and inclination to compromise could lead to outcomes that are not favourable to Kenya.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Historically, Kenya has either administered or had political jurisdiction over all of the disputed territories. Kenya has administered the Ilemi Triangle since 1936, and Somalia's claim to the maritime territory in the Indian Ocean has been under Kenya's sovereignty since 1979, with the posture of the Kenya - Somalia maritime boundary according with that between Kenya and Tanzania. Based on initial findings from the 2009 Joint Boundary Commission, the demarcation maps from 1926 indicate that Migingo Island is located 500 metres inside the Kenyan boundary and Kenyans have been residing on the Island since 2004. Kenya, is a key country in Africa with regional economic and military dominance, which can be translated to potent capacity to resolve territorial disputes and preserve its territorial integrity. However, she struggles to protect her national interests. To address these challenges, Kenya needs to leverage her military, political, diplomatic and economic power, as part of a comprehensive national plan. The country's handling of the territorial disputes under study and other national interests, will likely determine the manner in which its neighbours relate to it on matters of territory and other conflicting national interests. This study is not in any way, a beating of the drums of war. It is a realistic acknowledgement that Kenya faces existential threats to its territorial integrity, a supreme national interest that is precariously balanced between political negotiation, legal determination and potential armed confrontation. It ought to concern Kenya that the manipulative external forces targeting Africa's wealth may find geopolitical value in fomenting conflicts to satisfy their imperial proclivities. Accordingly, the following recommendations are proffered:

- The Kenyan Government should prioritise the effective occupation and control of the disputed territories, as well as the pre-emptive permanent resolution of the underlying ownership conflicts through the diligent application of the tools of statecraft at its disposal, including diplomacy, before they can blow up into greater crisis.
- Secondly, Kenya also needs to institute an interdisciplinary think tank, charged with the responsibility of crafting an integrated long-range national security and development blueprint/grand strategy. The grand strategy and the whole of government/multiagency approach to its implementation, should be anchored in law to make it binding and form part of the instruments to be handed over to all incoming presidents during inauguration. The think tank should also be tasked with the role of inducting a new president and key members of their administration to include Cabinet Secretaries, Principal Secretaries and other key docket holders on Kenya's national interests, within the framework of a long-term blue print or grand strategy. The induction of government officials on Kenya's national interests and aspirations should also be cascaded to the country's education system so as to entrench a strategic culture of national pride and unity of purpose in the Kenyan society.
- Moreover, the study recommends adopting a long-term and proactive vision and mindset for safeguarding national interests, including territorial integrity, that is independent of political cycles/changes in government, which will provide a guiding light for future actions, that are deeply rooted in statecraft. To this end, the study proposes a continual review and adaptation of security

policies in response to evolving geopolitical dynamics. Conducting regular assessments on the effectiveness of current policies and strategies is key, to ensure that Kenya remains agile in addressing extant and emerging threats. Pre-emptive planning and resource allocation to address potential disputes should be prioritised. Equipping relevant agencies with resources and expertise, including knowledge of contested areas and historical precedents, will strengthen their ability to manage these issues effectively.

- Lastly, it is imperative for Kenya to cultivate strength, expertise and finesse in its diplomatic, legal and defence strategies in order to effectively safeguard its historical advantage and secure the disputed territories. Pursuant, Kenya's legal and diplomatic capabilities need sharpening. Prioritising diplomatic engagements and negotiations can yield mutually beneficial outcomes. Investing in maritime and boundary legal expertise will enable effective representation should a legal settlement become necessary.

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