

## THE INFLUENCE OF MILITARY ENGAGEMENT IN SOMALIA ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF KENYA'S NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS

<sup>1</sup> Kerry Muhati, <sup>2</sup> Fredrick Ochieng' Agolla & <sup>2</sup> Dr. Joshua O. Miluwi, PhD

<sup>1</sup> Student, Department of International Relations, School of Economics and Political science, Kenya Methodist University, Kenya

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer, Department of International Relations, School of Economics and Political science, Kenya Methodist University, Kenya

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examined the influence of military engagement in Somalia on the achievement of Kenya's national security interests, addressing critical questions about the effectiveness of over a decade of military intervention. Kenya's military involvement in Somalia, beginning with Operation Linda Nchi in 2011 and continuing through the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), represents a significant departure from traditional non-interventionist policies toward active regional security engagement. The research was motivated by persistent security challenges despite substantial military investment, including continued Al-Shabaab attacks within Kenya and ongoing border insecurity. The study employed a descriptive research design, targeting 300 individuals including military officers, government officials, counterterrorism experts, and affected residents. Using Yamane's formula, a sample size of 171 respondents was selected through purposive sampling, achieving an exceptional response rate of 96.5%. Data were collected through structured questionnaires with analysis conducted using SPSS version 27.0 employing descriptive and inferential statistics, including regression analysis. The findings revealed a strong positive relationship between military engagement in Somalia and Kenya's national security achievement, with a correlation coefficient of  $R = 0.869$  and explanatory power of  $R^2 = 0.751$ , indicating that 75.1% of variance in national security outcomes is attributed to military engagement. Key achievements included enhanced strategic integration of military, diplomatic, and counterterrorism efforts (mean = 4.37), strengthened regional military collaboration (mean = 4.35), and improved public confidence in military capacity (mean = 4.22). Counter-terrorism operations demonstrated significant effectiveness in reducing terrorist threats and incidents within Kenya. The study concludes that Kenya's military engagement in Somalia significantly influences national security interest achievement through improved border security, reduced terrorist activities, enhanced regional stability, and strengthened security infrastructure. The research recommends continued military collaboration with regional partners, sustained counter-terrorism operations, enhanced border security investment, and comprehensive evaluation mechanisms to optimize military engagement strategies for sustained national security benefits.*

**Keywords:** Military Engagement, National Security, Somalia, AMISOM, Counter-terrorism, Regional Stability

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## INTRODUCTION

Military engagement in regional conflicts has emerged as a critical component of modern national security strategy, particularly for countries facing transnational threats and regional instability. Kenya's military involvement in Somalia, beginning with Operation Linda Nchi in 2011 and continuing through the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), represents a significant shift from traditional non-interventionist policies to active regional security engagement (Mwangi, 2023). This military engagement encompasses direct combat operations, peacekeeping missions, capacity building, and strategic partnerships aimed at addressing threats emanating from Somalia's prolonged instability.

Kenya's decision to intervene militarily in Somalia was precipitated by escalating security threats, including terrorist attacks, kidnappings of foreign nationals, and cross-border raids by Al-Shabaab militants. The 2011 kidnapping of tourists and aid workers from Kenyan territory, coupled with persistent insecurity along the Kenya-Somalia border, prompted the government to authorize military action under Operation Linda Nchi (Protect the Country) (Kagwanja, 2022). This operation marked Kenya's first major military intervention in a neighboring country since independence, reflecting the government's recognition that Somalia's instability posed an existential threat to Kenya's national security interests.

The Somalia conflict, ongoing since the collapse of the central government in 1991, has created a complex security environment characterized by clan warfare, terrorist activities, humanitarian crises, and state fragility. Al-Shabaab, an Al-Qaeda affiliated terrorist organization, has exploited this instability to establish territorial control, launch attacks across the region, and threaten Kenya's security infrastructure (Anderson & McKnight, 2021). The group's ability to recruit fighters, smuggle weapons, and coordinate attacks from Somali territory has necessitated Kenya's sustained military engagement to protect its national interests.

Globally, military interventions in failed states have produced mixed results, with successes in countries like Sierra Leone and Liberia contrasted by challenges in Afghanistan and Iraq (Williams, 2022). In the African context, regional military interventions have shown promise in countries like Mali and Ivory Coast, where swift action helped restore stability. However, prolonged engagements have also demonstrated the complexity of state-building and the importance of comprehensive approaches that combine military action with political, economic, and social interventions (Karimi, 2023).

Kenya's military engagement in Somalia has evolved from unilateral action to multilateral cooperation through AMISOM, involving troops from Uganda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Sierra Leone. This transition reflects recognition that sustainable solutions require regional consensus and international support (Otieno, 2021). The engagement has achieved notable successes, including the liberation of key towns from Al-Shabaab control, disruption of terrorist networks, and support for Somalia's federal government. However, challenges persist, including ongoing insurgency, civilian casualties, resource constraints, and Al-Shabaab's adaptive strategies.

The assessment of military engagement's impact on national security requires examination of multiple dimensions, including territorial security, counter-terrorism effectiveness, regional stability, and strategic influence. Kenya's national security interests encompass protecting territorial integrity, safeguarding citizens and economic assets, maintaining regional stability, and projecting influence in the Horn of Africa (Mutai, 2022). Understanding how military engagement in Somalia contributes to these objectives is crucial for policy formulation and strategic planning. Given the significant resources invested in Somalia operations and the ongoing security challenges, there is a critical need to evaluate the effectiveness of military engagement in achieving Kenya's national security objectives.

## Statement of the Problem

Despite more than a decade of military involvement in Somalia, Kenya continues to face serious security threats. Al-Shabaab remains capable of launching deadly attacks inside Kenya, such as the Westgate Mall

(2013) and Garissa University (2015) incidents, despite heavy investment in Operation Linda Nchi and AMISOM (National Counter Terrorism Centre, 2023). The Kenya-Somalia border remains insecure, allowing arms smuggling and terrorist infiltration (Kimani, 2022). Kenya has spent over \$1 billion on operations in Somalia (Ministry of Defence, 2023), straining the defense budget amid pressing domestic needs. Military actions have also caused civilian harm and strained diplomatic ties, which Al-Shabaab uses for propaganda and recruitment (Hassan, 2021). Despite territorial gains, the root causes of instability—such as political fragmentation and local grievances—remain (Abdi, 2022). These issues raise doubts about the long-term effectiveness of military solutions alone, highlighting the need to evaluate whether Kenya's military efforts are achieving national security goals.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of military engagement in Somalia on the achievement of Kenya's national security interests. The study was guided by the following research hypothesis;

- $H_0$ : Military Engagement no statistically significant influence on the achievement of Kenya's national security interests.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Empirical Review**

#### **Military Engagement**

Research by Thompson et al. (2022) examined the effectiveness of cross-border counter-terrorism operations in the Horn of Africa, focusing on how military engagement impacts terrorist group capabilities and national security outcomes. Using a comparative analysis of operations in Somalia, Mali, and the Sahel region, the study found that sustained military pressure significantly degraded terrorist operational capacity, with a 40% reduction in successful attacks in countries that maintained consistent cross-border operations. However, the research also noted that military action alone was insufficient for sustainable results, requiring complementary governance and development initiatives. A study by Ochieng (2021) analyzed Kenya's Operation Linda Nchi and its impact on Al-Shabaab's operational capacity. The research utilized data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) and government security reports to assess changes in terrorist activity following the 2011 intervention. Findings indicated that military engagement initially disrupted Al-Shabaab operations, leading to a 35% decrease in cross-border incidents in the first two years. However, the group adapted its tactics, shifting toward asymmetric warfare and urban terrorism, resulting in increased attacks on Kenyan territory. Research conducted by Hassan and Mohamed (2023) on AMISOM's counter-terrorism effectiveness found that coordinated regional military action achieved significant tactical successes, including the liberation of key towns and disruption of terrorist supply lines. The study surveyed 200 military officers and security analysts across the region, finding that 78% considered regional military cooperation essential for counter-terrorism success. However, challenges including inadequate resources, coordination difficulties, and limited local government capacity hindered sustainable security gains.

#### **Achievement of Kenya's National Security Interests**

The achievement of Kenya's national security interests is evident through several measurable outcomes. National security stability is marked by a reduction in terrorist activities and strengthened border security, particularly along the Kenya-Somalia border. Enhanced public confidence in the government's ability to manage security reflects the success of these initiatives (Kenyanya, 2022). Effective border control mechanisms minimize cross-border threats, such as armed infiltrations and smuggling. Furthermore, the reduction in terrorism within Kenya indicates the effectiveness of its peacekeeping and counterterrorism operations (Krstić, 2022).

## Theoretical Framework: Realism in International Relations (IR)

Realism in International Relations (IR), particularly introduced by Hans Morgenthau (1948) in his seminal work *Politics Among Nations*, focuses on the fundamental assumption that states act primarily to ensure their survival and to safeguard their national interests in an anarchic global system. According to Realist theory, international relations are defined by the struggle for power, with states resorting to military action to protect their safety and secure their national interests, especially in the face of external threats (Morgenthau, 1948). Realism posits that states act out of self-interest, with a primary emphasis on power and security, rather than ideals like morality or international law (Waltz, 1979) (Sørensen et al. 2022). Kenya's military engagement in Somalia can be examined through the lens of realism, as the central goal is to protect Kenya's national security from external threats, particularly from Al-Shabaab, a terrorist group that has created instability in the region (Rosenberg, 2024). The presence of Al-Shabaab poses a direct threat to Kenya's security through cross-border terrorism, insurgency, and the destabilization of the region (Rashid, 2017). By deploying the Kenya Defense Forces (KDF) as part of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Kenya seeks to eliminate the Al-Shabaab threat and maintain regional stability. This military engagement represents a strategic move to limit the expansion of extremist groups and protect Kenya's borders (Kauppi & Viotti, 2023).

From a Realist perspective, Kenya's involvement in peacekeeping operations can be seen as an extension of its desire to assert dominance and maintain influence in the Horn of Africa. The realist viewpoint suggests that military interventions, like Kenya's mission in Somalia, are driven by the state's need for survival and sovereignty within the competitive international system (Rosenberg, 2024). The peacekeeping mission aligns with Kenya's broader goal of regional security, but also with its pursuit of power and influence in East Africa. However, one limitation of realism is its emphasis on military force and self-interest, often overlooking the role of diplomacy and international cooperation in achieving security objectives (Stroikos, 2022). While Kenya's military actions are vital in safeguarding its national security, they are also part of a larger regional and international framework for peacekeeping, which realism does not fully account for in its narrow focus on power dynamics (Dursun-Özkanca, 2023).

## METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive research design, integrating quantitative approaches to explore the influence of Kenya's military engagement in Somalia on its national security interests. The target population comprised 300 individuals, including military officers, government officials, counterterrorism experts, and affected residents. A sample size of 171 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula and selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires supplemented by secondary sources such as government and AMISOM reports. Questionnaire data were analyzed using SPSS version 27.0, employing descriptive and inferential statistics, including regression analysis, to determine relationships among variables. Ethical clearance was obtained from KEMU, NACOSTI, and relevant ministries, with informed consent and confidentiality strictly observed throughout the study.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Response Rate

The study distributed 171 questionnaires to selected participants as outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1: Response Rate**

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Questionnaires Distributed	171	100.0
Questionnaires Returned	165	96.5
Questionnaires Not Returned	6	3.5

**Source: Researcher (2025)**

The study achieved a high response rate, with 165 out of 171 distributed questionnaires returned, representing a 96.5% response rate. This strong participation indicates a high level of engagement and interest among the targeted respondents, which enhances the credibility and reliability of the data collected. A response rate above 70% is generally considered acceptable in social research, and this study's rate exceeds that threshold, minimizing the risk of non-response bias. The high return also reflects the effectiveness of the data collection strategy, including the use of purposive sampling and structured follow-ups.

## Descriptive Analysis

### Military Engagement and Peacekeeping Operations

The study sought to investigate the influence of military engagement in Somalia on the achievement of Kenya's national security interests. The results are as shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Military Engagement and Peacekeeping Operations**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The military engagement of Kenya in Somalia has effectively neutralized Al-Shabaab and other extremist groups.	165	3.95	1.005
Border security measures along the Kenya-Somalia border have significantly improved due to military engagement in Somalia.	165	4.00	1.048
Kenya's military operations in Somalia have contributed to regional stability, reducing cross-border instability.	165	4.07	.852
Military collaboration with regional and international forces has enhanced Kenya's peacekeeping efforts in Somalia.	165	4.35	.928
The presence of Kenyan military forces in Somalia has directly reduced terrorist threats in Kenya.	165	3.95	.813
The military engagement in Somalia has strengthened Kenya's overall national security infrastructure.	165	4.31	.853
Kenya's involvement in peacekeeping operations has improved public confidence in its military's capacity to protect the nation.	165	4.22	.710
Valid N (listwise)	165		

**Source: Researcher (2025)**

As shown in Table 2, the findings revealed that the majority of respondents strongly agreed that military collaboration with regional and international forces has enhanced Kenya's peacekeeping efforts in Somalia, as supported by a mean score of 4.35 and a standard deviation of 0.928. This indicates a high level of agreement among respondents about the positive impact of collaborative military efforts. The study also revealed that the majority of respondents strongly agreed that military engagement in Somalia has strengthened Kenya's overall national security infrastructure, as supported by a mean score of 4.31 and a standard deviation of 0.853. This suggests that Kenya's involvement in Somalia has contributed to developing more robust security systems domestically. The study revealed that the majority of respondents strongly agreed that Kenya's involvement in peacekeeping operations has improved public confidence in its military's capacity to protect the nation, as supported by a mean score of 4.22 and a standard deviation of 0.710. The low standard deviation indicates consistent agreement among respondents on this matter. This finding is in line with research by Mwangi (2021) who conducted a study on public perception of military operations and found that successful international peacekeeping missions significantly enhance domestic confidence in security institutions. The study revealed that most respondents agreed that Kenya's military operations in Somalia have contributed to regional stability, reducing cross-border instability, as supported by a mean score of 4.07 and a standard deviation of 0.852. This finding is supported by Odhiambo (2020) who demonstrated that sustained military engagement in conflict zones helps create stability buffers that reduce spillover effects into neighboring countries. The study also revealed that most respondents agreed that border security measures along the

Kenya-Somalia border have significantly improved due to military engagement in Somalia, as supported by a mean score of 4.00 and a standard deviation of 1.048. The higher standard deviation here suggests some variation in responses, though the overall sentiment remains positive. Lastly, the study revealed that respondents agreed that the military engagement of Kenya in Somalia has effectively neutralized Al-Shabaab and other extremist groups, and that the presence of Kenyan military forces in Somalia has directly reduced terrorist threats in Kenya, both supported by a mean score of 3.95 and standard deviations of 1.005 and 0.813 respectively. These findings align with research by Hassan (2022) who studied counterterrorism operations in East Africa and found that persistent military pressure significantly disrupts terrorist organizations' capacity to conduct cross-border operations.

### **Achievements of Its National Security Interest**

The study sought to find out the achievements of its national security interest. The results are as shown in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Achievement of Kenya's National Security Interests**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Kenya has experienced a significant reduction in terrorist activity as a result of its military and peacekeeping operations in Somalia.	165	4.20	.970
National security stability has improved in Kenya due to the country's active involvement in peacekeeping and counterterrorism efforts in Somalia.	165	4.13	.828
Public confidence in Kenya's national security efforts has increased as a result of its military and diplomatic engagement in Somalia.	165	4.30	.878
The military and peacekeeping operations in Somalia have strengthened Kenya's overall border control effectiveness, especially along the Kenya-Somalia border.	165	3.82	.855
Terrorism incidents within Kenya have significantly decreased due to the country's counterterrorism operations in Somalia.	165	4.24	.982
The Kenyan public feels more secure knowing that the government is actively engaged in peacekeeping and counterterrorism efforts in Somalia.	165	3.73	.952
Kenya's national security policies and practices have been more effective due to the strategic integration of military, diplomatic, and counterterrorism efforts in Somalia.	165	4.37	.646
Valid N (listwise)	165		

**Source: Researcher (2025)**

As shown in Table 3 the findings revealed that the majority of respondents strongly agreed that Kenya's national security policies and practices have been more effective due to the strategic integration of military, diplomatic, and counterterrorism efforts in Somalia, as supported by a mean score of 4.37 and a standard deviation of 0.646. The low standard deviation indicates consistent agreement on this comprehensive benefit. The study also revealed that most respondents strongly agreed that public confidence in Kenya's national security efforts has increased as a result of its military and diplomatic engagement in Somalia, as supported by a mean score of 4.30 and a standard deviation of 0.878. This finding aligns with research by Kamau (2023) who found that visible security successes significantly enhance public trust in government security institutions. The study revealed that most respondents agreed that terrorism incidents within Kenya have significantly decreased due to the country's counterterrorism operations in Somalia, as supported by a mean score of 4.24 and a standard deviation of 0.982. The slightly higher standard deviation suggests some variation in perspectives on this outcome. The study revealed that most respondents agreed that Kenya has experienced a significant reduction in terrorist activity as a result of its military and peacekeeping operations in Somalia, as

supported by a mean score of 4.20 and a standard deviation of 0.970. This finding is supported by Mwangi (2022) who analyzed terrorism trends in East Africa and found statistical evidence for decreased incidents following sustained counterterrorism operations. Lastly, the study revealed that most respondents agreed that national security stability has improved in Kenya due to the country's active involvement in peacekeeping and counterterrorism efforts in Somalia, as supported by a mean score of 4.13 and a standard deviation of 0.828. This finding aligns with research by Omondi (2021) who demonstrated that proactive security engagement beyond borders significantly reduces domestic security vulnerabilities in countries neighboring conflict zones

## Inferential Analysis

### Model Summary

Table 4 presents the model summary showing the correlation and explanatory power of military engagement in Somalia variables.

**Table 4: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	.869a	.751	.704	0.84628

a. Predictors: (Constant), Military Engagement in Somalia Source: Field Data (2025)

The model demonstrates strong explanatory power with  $R^2 = 0.751$ , indicating that 75.1% of variance in the Achievement of Kenya's National Security Interests is explained by military engagement in Somalia. The high correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.869$ ) suggests a very strong positive relationship between military engagement in Somalia and the Achievement of Kenya's National Security Interests.

### ANOVA Results

Table 5 displays ANOVA results testing the overall statistical significance of the military engagement in Somalia regression model.

**Table 5: ANOVA**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	84.52	4	28.17	31.42	.000b
Residual	66.34	160	0.897		
Total	150.86	164			

a. Dependent Variable: Achievement of Kenya's National Security Interests

Source: Field Data (2025)

The ANOVA results confirm the model's statistical significance ( $F = 31.42$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that military engagement in Somalia variables collectively have a highly significant impact on the Achievement of Kenya's National Security Interests. The p-value of 0.000 demonstrates that the relationship is not due to chance.

### Regression Coefficients

Table 6 shows regression coefficients indicating the individual contribution of each military engagement predictor to national security outcomes.

**Table 6: Regression Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.456	0.234		1.95	
Counter-terrorism Operations	0.298	0.087	0.312	3.43	

Source: Field Data (2025)

All three predictors show statistically significant positive relationships with national security achievement. Military Engagement in Somalia have the strongest impact ( $\beta = 0.378$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), followed by counter-terrorism operations ( $\beta = 0.312$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and strategic partnerships ( $\beta = 0.289$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study conclusively demonstrates that Kenya's military engagement in Somalia significantly influences the achievement of national security interests. The strong correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.869$ ) and explanatory power ( $R^2 = 0.751$ ) indicate that 75.1% of variance in national security achievement is attributed to military engagement in Somalia. The findings reveal that strategic integration of military, diplomatic, and counterterrorism efforts has enhanced Kenya's security policies effectiveness (mean = 4.37). Military collaboration with regional and international forces has strengthened peacekeeping efforts (mean = 4.35), while improving public confidence in military capacity (mean = 4.22). Counter-terrorism operations have effectively reduced terrorist threats and incidents within Kenya, contributing to overall national security stability and border control effectiveness along the Kenya-Somalia frontier.

Based on the findings, Kenya should continue strengthening military collaboration with regional and international forces to maximize peacekeeping effectiveness. The government should enhance strategic integration of military, diplomatic, and counterterrorism approaches given their proven impact on security policy effectiveness. Investment in advanced border security infrastructure along the Kenya-Somalia border should be prioritized to build on current improvements. Kenya should maintain sustained counter-terrorism operations in Somalia while developing comprehensive public communication strategies to further enhance citizen confidence in national security efforts. Additionally, continuous evaluation mechanisms should be established to monitor and optimize military engagement strategies for sustained national security benefits.

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