



The impact of Kenya-Egypt defence cooperation on Nile Basin internecine conflicts

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ABSTRACT

Power asymmetries frequently compound basin politics, raising the question of how to manage with riparian hegemony, such as those in the Rhine, Tigris-Euphrates, Turkey, Egypt, India, and China, in addition to Nigeria or South Africa. These hydro hegemony often refuse to be drawn into mutual multilateral basin fora, preferring to deal with weaker partners individually on a bilateral basis. Despite the coexistence of security collaborations, basin-internecine conflicts have continued unabated, thus raising significant concerns. The concurrent existence of defense cooperation initiatives and water-related tensions between Kenya and Egypt poses challenges in balancing security interests and resolving disputes over shared water resources. The objective of this study was to assess the impact of Kenya-Egypt defense cooperation on Nile Basin internecine conflict. The study was underpinned by structural realism theory, securitization theory, and conflict theory. It was guided by descriptive research design. The study areas were Nairobi, Kenya, and Cairo, Egypt. The total sample size was 225, drawn from a target population of Kenya Defence Forces and Egypt Defence Forces at Berenice military base in Egypt; officials from the Ministry of Defense; officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nairobi and Cairo, Egypt; the Egypt military attaché in Kenya; officials from the International Peace Support Training Centre; Kenya's High Commissioner in Cairo, Egypt; and Kenya attachés in Cairo, Egypt. Both purposive and convenience sampling were used. Both primary and secondary data collection were used. Data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Study findings indicated that the Kenya-Egypt defense cooperation is viewed as an element of a much greater strategy aiming at bolstering the security architecture of the region. Its cooperation with Kenya has been both a solution to the conflict through joint peace efforts, addressing environmental concerns, shared mutual state interests, and regional stability and a causal factor to the Nile internecine conflict through promoting Egyptian hegemony and creating diplomatic hubs. The study recommends that both countries, on a sustainable basis, adopt a dyadic approach in consolidating and coordinating their strategies, devoid of either national interest obscuring the collective security endeavor.

Keywords: Bilateral Relations, Basin Interdependence Conflicts, Defense Cooperation, Internecine Conflicts, Nile Basin

I. INTRODUCTION

The Euphrates–Tigris basin has been suffering for decades from political instability and mismanagement. The tension over the water allocation that was on the negotiating table since the 1960s ended with no substantial agreement between the riparian countries (Iraq, Turkey and Syria). The importance of basins in international relations is tied to issues of scarcity and security, which are primary considerations that states take into account when conducting their foreign policies. Basin politics are frequently compounded by power asymmetries, begging the question of how to manage with riparian hegemony for example Turkey, Egypt, India and China, in addition Nigeria or South Africa (Hanasz, 2014). These hydro hegemony often refuse to be drawn into mutual multilateral basin fora, preferring to deal with weaker partners individually on a bilateral basis (Herrer, 2022). Power relations between riparians largely dictate the control over water resources that each riparian use. Indeed, even the upstream downstream dynamic is predicated on power; those upstream use water to get more power, and that downstream use power to get more water.

The large number of riparian nations in the region complicates the procedures of multilateral cooperation and negotiation of discovering common ground for reaching agreement on collective action, norms or guidelines (Hanasz, 2014). Investments in water management are at the core of any society's ability for economic development and improvement of the well-being of its citizens. Consequently, states pursue defence cooperation to deter any act of interference or any form of aggression. Water cooperation can be seen as a political extension of water cooperation that is useful in situations where defence cooperation is at a stalemate with competing interests and different political agendas (Keskinen *et al.*, 2014).



The intersection of defense cooperation and basin interdependence conflicts highlights the interconnectedness between security, geopolitics, and resource management. The African continent has varied architecture in defense cooperation systems, which were influenced by a historical, geostrategic, and security background. The post colonial heritage, regional disputes and the urge to seek regional stability have contributed to the cooperative initiatives in commerce of defense offered by African states.

Civil wars in Africa can be attributed to the use of the same water resource in Transboundary Rivers, lakes, and groundwater (Swain, 2011). Populations as well as climatic changes and inefficient water facilities cause the continent to have substantial water-related issues. Water war is common in the Nile Basin, in the Congo River Basin, and in the Horn of Africa. Conflicts usually surround access to water on agricultural activities, hydroelectric power generation and household use. Moreover, the development of dams and water diversion projects may cause the conflict among nations dealing with the same resources (Swain, 2011).

In the past, Kagwanja (2007) asserted that Kenya and Egypt have collaborated in the defense sector with an aim of improving their defense capabilities, security and mitigating the challenges experienced in the region. The form this collaboration takes is bilateral agreements and joint military exercise, information sharing, and defense technology exchange. Even though both nations have geopolitical interests and security concerns, usually, they cooperate with each other in the domain of fighting terrorism, regional stability, and sea safety in the region of the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa. Nevertheless, Suarez (2011) argued that because of the combined interests, the peculiarities of mutual viewing of regional interactions, including the Nile Basin geopolitics and the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), the defense cooperation of Kenya with Egypt could be limited in scope and density.

Kenya Basin internecine conflicts with Egypt have basically been centered on the Nile River which is a source of necessary water between the two neighbors. Dams and water projects created by various countries alongside the upper Nile basin especially the GERD, by Ethiopia raise serious implications to the downstream countries especially Egypt. Egypt depends immensely on the Nile as its water source, and any development to the flow of the Nile as a result of upstream projects is likely to affect Egypt in terms of its water accessibility. Kenya, which is also found in the Nile Basin, has issues pertaining to water-related matters and interests in utilizing their water resources as a source of development.

1.1 Statement of the problem

According to Tawfik (2020), the Nile Basin has been a region marked by historical and geopolitical complexities, leading to occasional tensions and conflicts among riparian states. The Nile River Conflict has been fueled by the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). This project has raised concerns, particularly between Ethiopia, which sees the dam as crucial for its development, and downstream nations like Egypt, which fear potential disruptions to their water supply. Historically, Kenya and Egypt have engaged in defense cooperation to address various regional security challenges Kenya and Egypt have participated in joint military exercises aimed at enhancing their capabilities to respond to security threats. These exercises fostered interoperability and knowledge-sharing between the armed forces of both countries. Despite the collaborative efforts, challenges persist, especially in the context of the Nile Basin conflicts. The Kenya-Egypt defence cooperation faces challenges due to the ongoing tensions surrounding the GERD. As a downstream nation, Egypt's concerns about water security impact its regional engagements, potentially affecting its collaborative efforts with Kenya (Kagwanja, 2007).

While several studies have been done on Prospects of Cooperation in the Eastern Nile Basin (Tawfik, 2020; Zeidan, 2015), much focus was put on cooperation between the countries that have built several dams and reservoirs, hoping to limit the ravages of droughts and floods on the waters of the Nile River for this case Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan with little focus on non-Eastern Nile Basin riparian countries. Egypt enjoys military, economic and discursive power vis à vis other riparian states. Despite there being elaborate and comprehensive Kenya- Egypt cooperation, Kenya has faced backlashes occasioned by Kenya's intended withdrawal from NBT in 2004 which was seen as an 'act of war against Egypt'; as well as violation of 1929 and 1959 treaties over \$27.6 million 2004 project to allow Egypt extract water from Lake Victoria. This undermines regional interests of East Africa Community (EAC) countries common interest of protecting the Lake for economic interests (Kagwanja, 2007). Overlooking the influence of the Kenyan-Egyptian Defence cooperation influencing the management of internecine conflicts in the Nile basin could be the missing link in the failure to contain the tensions in the Nile basin. This study therefore aspires to fill this empirical gap.

1.2 Research Objective

The objective of the study was to evaluate the impact of Kenya-Egypt defence cooperation on Nile Basin internecine conflicts.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW



2.1 Theoretical Review

This study was guided by three theories. These are Structural realism theory, Securitization theory and Neo-Marxist theory

2.1.1 Structural Realism Theory

Structural realism was coined by Kenneth Waltz in 1979. The theory assumes that power is the most important factor and states will use this to make their mark in the international system (Waltz, 1979). Structural realist theories disregard social differences among states as well as variations in regime type, mainly because the international system creates the same basic incentives for all great powers. Structural realists view power as a means to an end the end being survival. States seek to be dominant in their region because they do not have a rival state capable of hurting them. According to Waltz (1979), the structure of the international system is the driving force for states' relations and not the internal characteristics of the states.

The structure of the international system ultimately forces states to behave aggressively which pushes states to engage in security competition because of no higher authority (Mearsheimer, 2006). The theory is relevant to the study in a sense that Egypt is the strongest amongst all the riparian states that is economically, politically and militarily and because of her power it forces the other riparian states to then join forces to try and contain Egypt's dominance. This is illustrated in the various agreements that have been signed along the Nile Basin all of which have attempted to get Egypt to sign that allows inclusivity and cooperation but also as a way to contain dominance over the Nile. Furthermore, this theory can be used to demonstrate how Kenya can leverage her geographical advantage to use the Nile for hydro-diplomacy and manage internecine conflicts and while Egypt will use power to leverage control about decisions concerning water sharing.

2.1.2 Securitization Theory

Securitization theory, developed by Ole Wæver and Barry Buzan of the Copenhagen School in the 1990s, offers a theoretical framework for understanding how issues are framed as matters of security, enabling states to justify extraordinary measures beyond normal political processes (Jackson & Sorensen, 2007). Key concepts include the referent object (what is being protected), securitizing actor (who frames the issue as a threat), existential threat (the perceived danger), audience acceptance (public or institutional support), and extraordinary measures (actions taken to address the threat). In the Nile Basin, both Kenya and Egypt have securitized water resources, framing them as existential threats to their national security. For Egypt, which relies on the Nile for over 90% of its water supply, any upstream activities, such as Ethiopia's Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), are perceived as existential threats. Kenya, on the other hand, views equitable access to the Nile's waters as vital for its development and agricultural sustainability. This framing has shaped Kenyan-Egyptian defense cooperation, focusing on protecting shared interests through military and diplomatic strategies.

2.1.3 Neo-Marxist Theory

Postulated by; Antonio Gramsci (1930), Andre Gunder Frank (1971), The Frankfurt School (1950) cited in Jay (1973) and Herbert Marcuse (1964) and Louis Althusser (1970). Neo-marxism emphasizes the structural inequalities inherent in the global capitalist systems, by analyzing power relations between states and social classes within broader (Jackson & Sorensen, 2007) framework of global capitalism and imperialism. This theory argues that capitalism drives states to compete and attempt to dominate each other. In its realist orientation, neo Marxism presumes that conflict and potential between states is the reality of international affairs; and that conflict is driven by the conflict between business interests and workers.

Neo-Marxist challenge rigid economic determination giving importance to individual and group agency in resisting oppression. That society is composed of different groups with competing interests. These groups are defined by their access to and control over resources, such as wealth, power, and social status. In the context of international relations, it highlights how unequal access to critical resources and imbalances in power shape tensions and conflicts among states. The theory posits that dominant groups seek to maintain their advantages, while subordinate groups struggle for greater access, creating a persistent cycle of conflict and contestation. Conflict theory provides a lens for understanding how disparities in resource distribution, political power, and economic influence contribute to tensions between states. It emphasizes that competition for scarce resources whether material, political, or strategic lies at the heart of social and international conflicts. Applied to the Nile Basin, the theory helps analyze structural inequalities, such as the historical water allocation imbalances stemming from colonial-era treaties, and assess how these inequalities influence defense cooperation between Kenya and Egypt. Further, conflict theory allows for the examination of external influences, such as the role of international organizations, alliances, or external states in either exacerbating or mitigating tensions. By focusing on power relations and systemic disparities, the theory also considers whether Kenya-Egypt

defense cooperation addresses or perpetuates these inequalities, particularly in the face of resource-based disputes like water access.

2.2 Empirical Review

Herrer (2022) offers a historical and game-theoretic analysis of the Nile dispute. He depicted how colonial-era treaties along with Egypt's downstream dominance, demographic pressures alongside upstream assertiveness have established persistent mistrust and limited cooperation. Tawfik (2020), in his research through interviews and investment data, elucidates how Egyptian business activities in Ethiopia and Sudan have generated mixed findings. In some instances, it fosters cooperation while at times cementing tensions due to weak political trust. At a wider scope, Kinne and Jonas (2017) empirically illustrate, adopting global network analysis, that defense cooperation agreements and bilateral lending co-evolve, with security and economic partnerships buttressing one another. This model hints possible insights for Nile Basin dynamics though not directly relevant to relations on Kenya–Egypt. Keskinen et al. (2014) introduces hydro-diplomacy concept, empirically illustrating reasons for combining diplomacy into technical water cooperation. The authors stress that political and diplomatic engagement is indispensable for overseeing transboundary water tensions. At the same time, Kimenyi and Mbaku (2015), via legal and institutional analysis outline the inadequacy of colonial-era Nile water regimes and the urgent need for inclusive legal frameworks so as to curb proliferation of disputes into militarized crises. Collectively, these research works elucidate the benefits of historical, economic, security, diplomatic, and legal dimensions in shaping Nile Basin conflicts. However, none directly looks at the role of Kenya–Egypt defense cooperation in influencing conflict or cooperation outcomes within the Basin. This portrays a critical void that this current study addresses by empirically evaluating how such bilateral defense ties impact internecine conflicts in the Nile Basin.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Descriptive research is directed at making careful observations and detailed documentation of a phenomenon of interest (Kothari, 2004).

3.2 Study Area

The study area was in Nairobi City and Cairo City in Egypt (Figure 1). Both Nairobi and Cairo serve as key decision-making centers for their respective countries. Nairobi is the capital of Kenya, and Cairo is the capital of Egypt.



Figure 1

Map Showing Kenya and Egypt

Source: GIS Expert.



Research conducted in the cities above allowed closer access to policymakers, military officials, and diplomatic representatives involved in shaping and implementing defense cooperation strategies. Nairobi and Cairo are strategically important cities in the context of the Nile Basin. Nairobi serves as a regional hub in East Africa, and Cairo is a major political and cultural center in North Africa. The implications of defence cooperation in managing conflicts in the Nile Basin are likely to have a significant impact on the overall geopolitical landscape of these region.

3.3 Target Population

The target population for the study comprised military personnel from the Kenya Army, Kenya Air Force, and Kenya Navy. In Kenya Army, the study targeted 250 personnel (On a strategic basis) 600 personnel (Operational level), and 400 personnel (tactical level). In Kenya Airforce, the study targeted 180 personnel (Strategic level), 250 personnel (operational level), and 320 personnel (tactical level). It also targeted Kenya Navy respondents, where 120 military personnel were targeted (Strategic level), 230 personnel (Operational level), and 150 personnel (tactical level). On KIIs, the study targeted the senior civilian officials from the defense ministry, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (40), officials (10) from the International Peace Support Training Centre (IPSTC) (20), senior military officials (50) and security as well as defense analysts (25). From the Egypt, KIIs targeted were the Egyptian Military Attaché (40) Egyptian Defence attaché (30), officials from the High Commission of Egypt. (50), Egyptian representatives from the defense sector (25), and Indian defense contractors and advisors (35).

3.4 Sample size and Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling was used in selection of participants, including, military officials, diplomats, government representatives, and experts in international relations. Additionally, the study used convenience sampling, where participants were selected based on their availability and accessibility. Given the geopolitical context of the study, convenience sampling involved selecting participants from locations where the defense cooperation activities are prominent. To arrive at the required sample size, the researcher used Yamane's (1967) formula to calculate the sample size.

$$n = N (1+Ne^2)$$

Where: n = minimum sample size

N = Population

E = precision set at 95% (5% = 0.05)

Hence; $n = 2500/1 + (2500 \times 0.0025)$

n = 280 participants

3.5 Data Collection methods

Primary data was collected using interviews and questionnaires while secondary data from document analysis, research publications, policy reports and government reports, website searches, and newspaper publications.

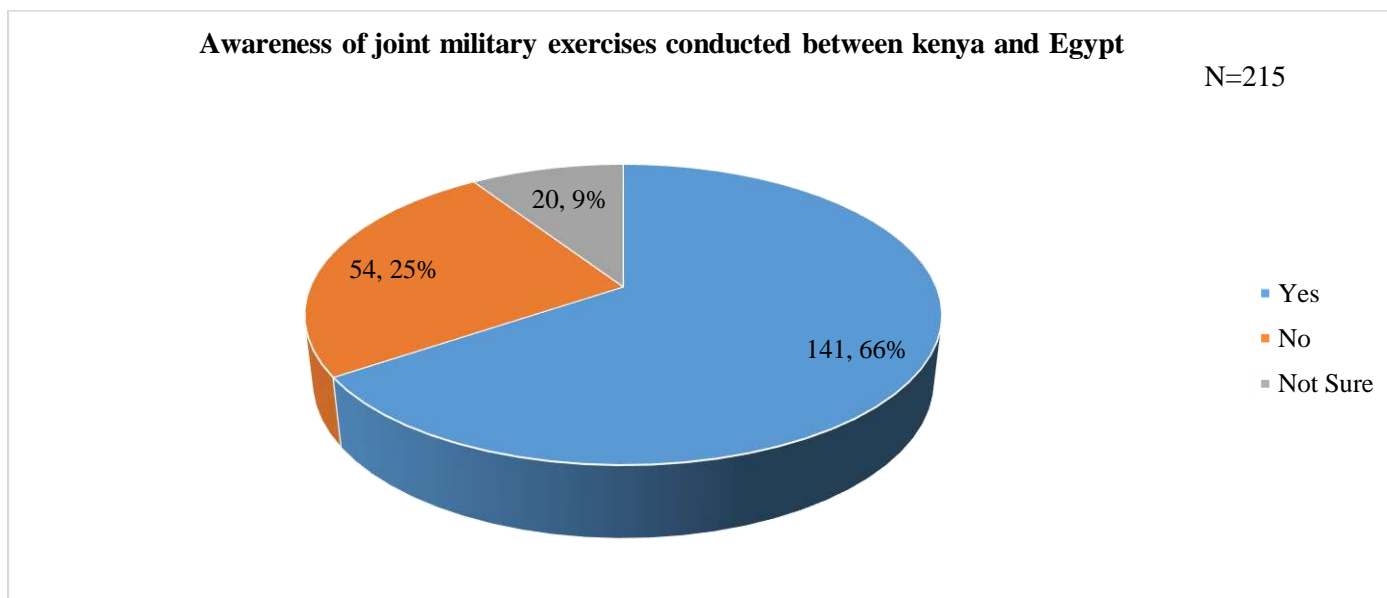
3.6 Data Analysis and Presentation

Qualitative data obtained from Interviews were analyzed using thematic techniques while quantitative data from the questionnaires were edited, coded and entered into a computer spread sheet in a standard format to allow descriptive statistics analysis. Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 and Microsoft Office Excel 2013 were used to analyze quantitative data. The analyzed data was then presented in descriptive form in terms of frequencies and percentages. The findings were then presented in tables, bar charts and pie charts.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Awareness of Joint Military Exercises Conducted between Kenya and Egypt

The data presented in Figure 2 highlights the level of public awareness regarding joint military exercises between Kenya and Egypt. Understanding public perception in this area is crucial for evaluating the visibility and impact of bilateral defense cooperation initiatives

**Figure 2**

Awareness of Joint Military Exercises Conducted between Kenya and Egypt

The findings on public awareness of Kenya-Egypt military exercises reveal a relatively high level of recognition, with 141 (66%) of respondents aware of these initiatives. This indicates that defense cooperation is a visible and significant aspect of bilateral relations. However, the 20 (9%) of respondents who were either unaware or indifferent to the exercises highlights a need for improved communication and outreach. By addressing this gap, both governments can foster greater public engagement and support for their defense partnerships. Improved awareness could also enable citizens to engage meaningfully with the geopolitical dimensions of military cooperation, contributing to a more informed and participatory approach to national security. Ultimately, the success of such partnerships depends not only on government action but also on public understanding and involvement, making awareness-building a critical component of defense and diplomacy.

In response to the foregoing, one of the KIIs revealed that:

“I have come across some information regarding the matter of Kenyan-Egyptian military cooperation and I don’t think that it provides much insight into the contents and usefulness of such shows. It seems like such issues are masked from our sight if we do not actively search them out. I believe that if the government desires more support from its subjects, it should make more efforts and include us in such topics”
(Interview with KII, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 7/28/2024, Nairobi).

Having informed the public about the military cooperation, for instance, joint exercises between Kenya and Egypt, they ensure the civil society understands the relationship between the military and the citizens. Schadlow, in his study conducted in 2017, pointed out that the understanding of the populace has a major impact on the acceptance and approval of the defence policies. When the public is aware of the military drills and their intentions a better perception and boosts confidence in the nation are portrayed. This can be confirmed with the different responses of most of the participants in the pie chart who have some understanding of Kenya-Egypt military exercises implying that they may view such a move as accruing to the security benefit of the nation and the region. Schadlow also highlights the importance of efficiency in using the state’s resources and of the government providing clear information to the public about military operations to help maintain the social contract between the people and the state.

However, the fact that 20 (9%) of respondents either stated that they were unfamiliar with these exercises or responded with unsure provided an insight into a possible missing link. As Herrer (2022) pointed out, defending policies commonly becomes an issue of significant concern due to the poor communication strategies of governments with the public on military issues. Such disengagement can result in erroneous and unfavorable perceptions and a lack of support, which may hinder the realization of military cooperation agendas. According to Davis, the public must be educated on the strategic importance of multinational operations since their effectiveness depends on public consciousness of multilateral training exercises. This approach helps increase public support and makes the citizens of a particular country more informed about their country’s defense and its relations with other countries.

The understanding that Kenya and Egypt have also had military exercises is not without some wider implications for the stability of the region. As stated by Okoth (2007), military cooperation is in a position of surging and maintaining stability especially in some African countries that are prone to conflicts. Such cooperation can also enhance the perception of security in both public domains as citizens of the two countries envision themselves as a team working



collectively for the same noble course against common adversaries. Using the example of military exercises such as Kenya & Egypt’s military, Menkhaus indicates that military maneuver is a confidence-building measure that is core to helping reduce conflicts and cooperate in the region. The high level of awareness could be because the respondents understand the strategic value of these exercises in promoting peace and security in the region.

On the other hand, a certain level of unawareness carried by a segment of society may potentially reduce the effectiveness of these exercises in promoting regional stability. According to Kimenyi and Mbaku (2015), if the public is not informed enough about military cooperation, there are misconceptions and doubt, thus less support for such cooperation. Such skepticism can be especially dangerous in those areas as it undermines relationships between states, especially if the historical experience of their conflicts is rather rich. In their paper, Bachmann and Hönke state that the broad public should be better informed and engaged in military cooperation and this is why more attention should be paid to the role of civil society organizations and media.

4.2 Reasons for Kenya-Egypt Defense Cooperation

Figure 3 illustrates the various reasons behind the defense cooperation between Kenya and Egypt as perceived by the respondents. Analyzing these motivations provides valuable insight into the strategic, security, and diplomatic factors that drive military collaboration between the two nations.

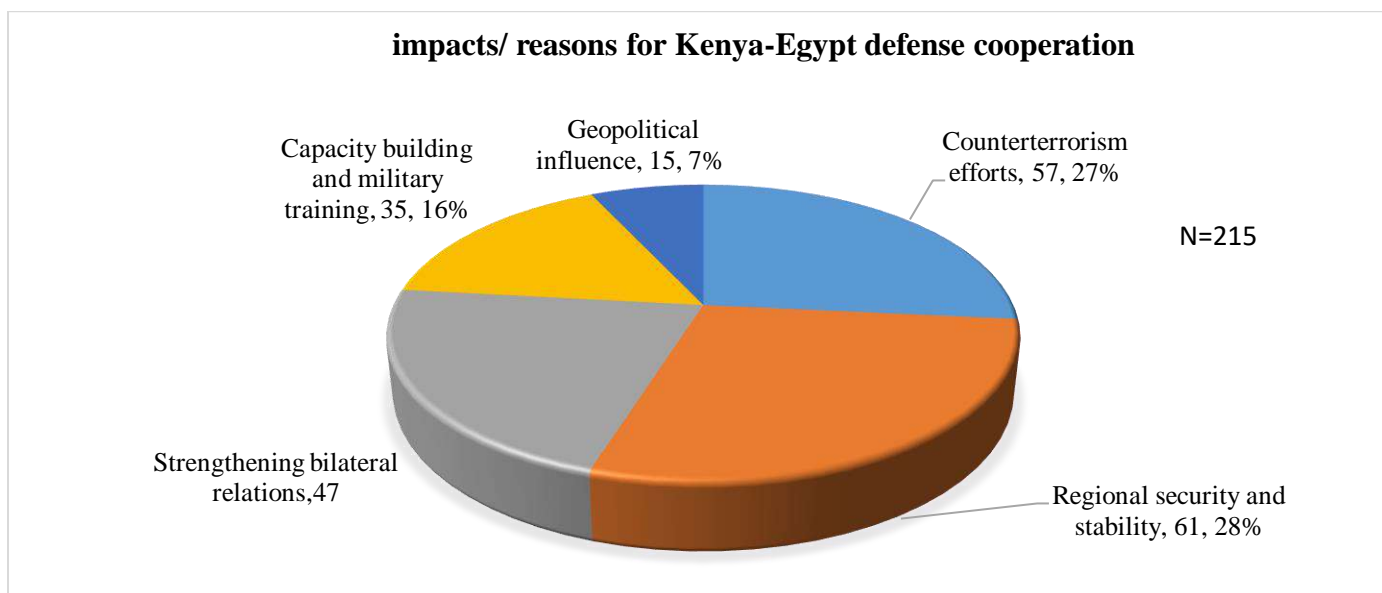


Figure 3
Reasons for Kenya-Egypt Defense Cooperation

Out of 215, the study found out that, 57 (27%) stated that counterterrorism efforts contributed to defense cooperation between Kenya and Egypt. Besides, 61 (28%) reasoned that regional stability security and stability was a reason, 47 (22%) argued that strengthening bilateral relations was the reason for cooperation, 35 (16%) stated that capacity building and military training was a factor defining Kenya- Egypt defense cooperation and 15 (7%) stated that geopolitical influence was the reason for defense cooperation.

The study reveals that respondents view Kenya-Egypt defense cooperation as driven by diverse and interconnected factors, reflecting the complex dynamics of bilateral and regional security. Capacity building and military training emerged as the most frequently cited factor, with 61 (28%) of respondents identifying it as the primary motive for Kenya-Egypt defense cooperation. This reflects the recognition of the critical need to modernize military capabilities through cooperation and technology sharing. Joint exercises provide opportunities for both nations to train together, gain tactical and strategic insights, and enhance their readiness to address domestic and regional security challenges. According to Kinne and Jonas (2017), capacity-building initiatives in defense partnerships are vital for preparing militaries to operate effectively in modern warfare. Respondents likely recognize that investments in training and development result in better-equipped and better-trained forces capable of addressing evolving threats. In a rapidly changing security environment, such efforts strengthen both nations' abilities to maintain peace and stability within their territories and beyond.

Counterterrorism measures were identified as a primary motive by 57 (27%) of respondents, reflecting the shared security concerns of Kenya and Egypt. Both countries face significant threats from terrorist groups such as Al-Shabaab in the Horn of Africa and ISIS-affiliated groups in Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula. Collaborative efforts in



counterterrorism allow the two nations to pool resources, share intelligence, and coordinate operations, enhancing their ability to combat these threats effectively. The parity between counterterrorism and capacity building in the responses underscores the urgency of addressing terrorism as a shared threat. Adar and Check (2011) highlights the importance of counterterrorism partnerships in maintaining regional and international stability. Respondents appear to recognize that cooperation between Kenya and Egypt extends beyond their borders, contributing to global counterterrorism efforts and ensuring security for neighboring regions as well. Regional security and stability were identified as key factors by 47 (22%) of respondents. The respondents likely view Kenya-Egypt defense cooperation as a stabilizing force in a region characterized by ongoing and historical conflicts. Both nations have roles as prominent actors in African geopolitics, with the potential to influence regional security dynamics positively.

The emphasis on regional stability highlights the importance of defense partnerships in preventing conflicts, resolving disputes, and fostering peace. Scholars like Adar (2011) and Tawfik (2020) argue that bilateral defense cooperation can have far-reaching implications for regional security, particularly in areas prone to political instability and crises. The responses suggest that Kenya and Egypt's collaborative efforts are seen as a means of strengthening the broader security architecture in Africa.

Enhancing diplomatic relations was cited by 16% of respondents as a significant reason for defense cooperation. This response underscores the broader diplomatic and political benefits of such partnerships. Defense cooperation serves as a subfield of foreign policy, facilitating stronger ties between Kenya, representing East Africa, and Egypt, a major player in North Africa and the Middle East. Through defense collaboration, Kenya and Egypt can foster closer relations in other areas, such as trade, technology, and education. Respondents likely understand that improved bilateral ties create opportunities for addressing shared challenges and advancing mutual interests. As Keskinen *et al.* (2014) note, defense partnerships often act as catalysts for broader diplomatic and economic engagement.

Geopolitical influence was the least cited factor, with only 15 (7%) of respondents identifying it as the main motive for Kenya-Egypt defense cooperation. While this was the least popular response, it reflects an understanding of the strategic considerations involved in such partnerships. Defense cooperation enhances the strategic positions of both nations, enabling them to assert greater influence within regional and international organizations such as the African Union and the Arab League. According to Tesfaye (2014), closer defense collaboration between Kenya and Egypt strengthens their combined ability to influence global decision-making and defend their sovereignty interests. Respondents who chose this option likely recognize the potential of the partnership to amplify the voices of both nations on the international stage.

The distribution of responses underscores the multifaceted nature of Kenya-Egypt defense cooperation. Capacity building and counterterrorism measures highlight the immediate security concerns that drive collaboration, while regional stability and bilateral relations reflect the broader diplomatic and political advantages of such partnerships. Although fewer respondents emphasized geopolitical influence, its inclusion demonstrates an awareness of the strategic dimensions of the relationship. Taken collectively, these findings suggest that Kenya-Egypt defense cooperation serves multiple purposes, addressing urgent security threats while also fostering long-term diplomatic and strategic gains. The respondents' recognition of these diverse factors highlights the complexity of defense partnerships and their significance for both nations.

The researcher therefore argues that, the study's findings reveal that Kenya-Egypt defense cooperation is driven by a combination of capacity building, counterterrorism, regional stability, bilateral relations, and geopolitical influence. Each of these factors reflects a unique aspect of the partnership, contributing to its overall significance. The respondents' emphasis on capacity building and counterterrorism underscores the pressing security challenges that both nations face and the importance of collaborative efforts to address them. Meanwhile, the focus on regional stability and bilateral relations highlights the broader diplomatic and political benefits of defense cooperation. Although geopolitical influence was less frequently cited, its inclusion demonstrates an awareness of the strategic considerations that underpin the partnership. By pursuing a multidimensional approach to defense cooperation, Kenya and Egypt are not only enhancing their own security but also contributing to regional and international stability. These findings provide valuable insights into the perceptions of defense cooperation and underscore the importance of sustained collaboration between the two nations. In view of the immediate statement, one of the KII eviscerated:

“Regional security is not a luxury but a reality, and the cooperation with Egypt is based on this fact that security cannot be achieved alone” (Interview with Senior Kenyan Military Official, 30/7/2024, Nairobi, Kenya).

This sentiment underscores the importance of collaboration in the pursuit of security and stability within the region. This point is also underscored in the literature where it is argued that no country can be secure by itself in the contemporary world, let alone in volatile regions such as Africa. Horn of Africa and North Africa are the areas that have complex securities threats that are hard to separate from the global system; thus, Kenya and Egypt must liaise. Thus, the issue of defence cooperation does not only lie in the processes of responding to threats in the present, but also in the creation of long-term conditions and norms of preventing conflict situations in the future.



4.3 Impact of Defence Cooperation on Internecine Nile Conflict Situation

The study sought to establish the impact associated with Kenya- Egypt Cooperation the Nile Conflict context. The findings are as indicated in table 1.

Table 1

Impacts of the Cooperation on the Nile Conflict

Impacts of Cooperation	Yes		No		Don't Know	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Create Diplomatic Hub	150	58.7	45	9.1	33	8.8
Shared Mutual state interests	190	69.9	32	8.4	92	24.5
Joint Peace Efforts	210	82.4	36	9.6	30	8.0
Address Environmental Concerns	193	71	47	12.5	62	16.5
Regional security and stability	185	69.1	77	20.5	39	10.4
Enhanced Egypt Monopoly	200	81.2	34	20	40	21.4

From the results it was identified that the impacts of the cooperation include: joint peace efforts 210 (81.2%), enhanced Egypt Monopoly 200 (81.2%), addressing environmental concerns 193 (71%), shared mutual state interests 190 (69.9%), regional stability and security 185 (69.1%) and creation of Diplomatic Hub 150 (58.7%).

Outcomes of this study resonate with earlier research on the dynamics of Nile Basin. The high rating of joint peace efforts (81.2%) conforms to Herrer (2022) study, who underscores that cooperative models, if strategically framed, can ease historical mistrust. He hinted that Kenya–Egypt defence cooperation contributes to confidence-building within the Basin. The notion that the partnership increases monopoly of Egypt’s (81.2%) is in line with Kimenyi and Mbaku’s (2015) observation that colonial-era asymmetries continue to bolster dominance downstream, with defence ties potentially reinforcing Egypt’s hegemonic posture. Confronting environmental concerns (71%) concurs with Keskinen et al. (2014), who debated that water diplomacy must integrate political and technical cooperation. These outcomes posit that military partnerships can avail platforms for broader environmental security agendas. Pointing shared mutual state interests (69.9%) mirrors Tawfik’s (2020) research that economic and political interdependence can generate cooperative incentives, though the persistence of mistrust can impeded their effectiveness. For regional stability and security (69.1%) is reinforced Kinne and Jonas (2017) empirical evidence which depicted defence agreements serve as stability tools. This is by linking security to enlarge cooperation networks. Finally, establishing diplomatic hub (58.7%) agrees with Keskinen et al.’s (2014) and Tawfik’s (2020) emphasis on diplomacy and multi-actor engagement. This hints that Kenya–Egypt defence cooperation avails a geopolitical platform for dialogue beyond the military sphere. To this end, the above outcomes depict convergence with existing literature but extend it by offering empirical evidence on the underexplored dyadic function of Kenya–Egypt defence cooperation in shaping conflict and cooperation results in the Nile Basin.

4.3.1 Joint Peace Efforts and agreements

Multiple attempts have been undertaken including treaties, cooperation frameworks, summits in which Kenya has also anticipated, however, most of these approaches have suffered mediation shortcomings more so partiality. The Nile basin countries have also formally agreed through the NBI on a shared vision that seeks to achieve sustainable socio-economic development through equitable utilization of, and benefit from, the common Nile water basin.

As noted by an interview with Egyptian attaché:

“Egypt aims to promote understanding especially among African people and states; It promotes cooperation through education, culture, investment and diplomacy through agreements inform of programs and projects for mutual benefits of all parties involved” (interview with Egypt attaché in Cairo on June 4th 2024).

This assertion is in agreement with a study by Swain (2008) advocates for a framework that prioritizes inclusive cooperation among economically underdeveloped nations, acknowledging shared challenges while advancing sustainable resource utilization.

4.3.2 Egypt Monopoly

Oloo (2007), notes that Egypt has worked strenuously to guarantee its dominance over the Nile’s resources, leveraging its political and military power to maintain control. Additionally, the structural realists view power as a means to an end the end being survival. The structural realism explains how states behave and in this case Egypt operate and live in an anarchic system where states have no higher authority to answer to which consequently forces the state to be as powerful as possible in the pursuit of power. States seek to be dominant in their region because they do not have a rival state capable of hurting them. It strikes at the complex relations between foreign policy within the international



structure and domestic influences (Kinne & Jonas, 2017). Further Tawfik (2020), notes that Egypt uses political incentives, investments, economic and defence cooperation in Kenya and other riparian states such as Ethiopia and Sudan to improve its position in Nile Negotiations and promote state level interdependence. Specific to Kenya, Military training as one of the integral forms of cooperation in the framework of defense relations is also consistent with the general strategic perspectives for Kenya and Egypt. This gives Egypt discursive and bargaining power leveraging over Kenya. However, other scholarly literature questions Egyptian dominance as a challenge which continues to dissent over cooperative and bilateral initiatives.

4.3.3 Regional Security and stability

Both Kenya and Egypt have been at the fore front championing for security and stability in East Africa as well as Middle East and North Africa respectively. For instance, Kenya participated in the Hydromet project alongside Sudan, Tanzania, Egypt, Uganda, UNDP AND World Meteorological Organization (WMO). The aim was to evaluate the balance of the Lake Victoria catchment in order to control the lake levels as well as the flow of water down the River Nile.

Both countries work together through the defence cooperation to combat common challenges such as terrorism and cross border-trade. There is also evidence of Egypt’s support during Kenya’s tenure on the United Nations Security Council 2021-2022, which amplifies Africa’s voice on global peace and security matters.

The two countries have an added advantage of dominance within respective regional jurisdictions as noted by various scholars. This historical position as regional leaders led to the development of Kenya- Egypt joint Declaration for strategies and Comprehensive Partnership 2024. These platforms provide Kenya a chance to seek stronger regional alliances. This observation is supported by studies Mekonnen (2010) and Herrer (2022).

4.4 Whether Defense Cooperation between Kenya and Egypt Impacts on Security in East Africa

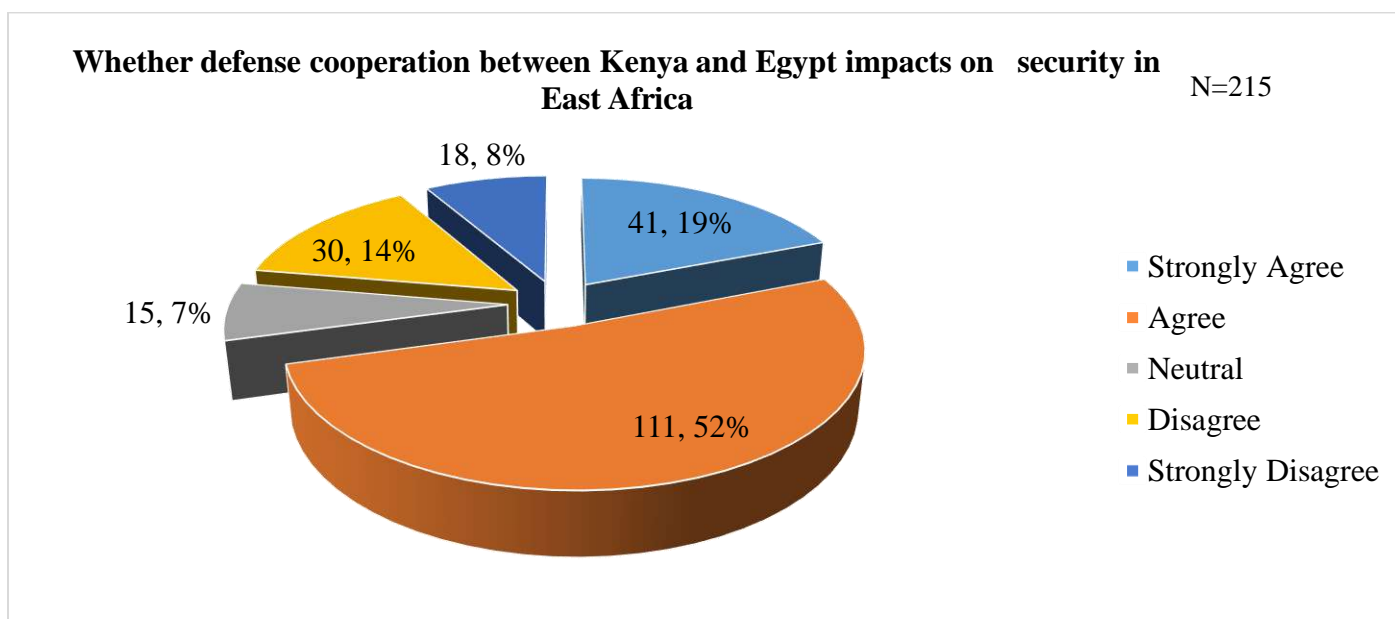


Figure 5
Whether Defence Cooperation between Kenya and Egypt Impacts on Security in East Africa

Out of 215 respondents 41 (19%) strongly disagreed with inquiry 111 (52%) agreed with the inquiry 15 (7%) were neutral 30 (14%) disagreed to the inquiry and 18 (8%) strongly disagreed with inquiry. A majority of respondents, 111 (52%) of the respondents agreed that defense cooperation between Kenya and Egypt positively influences East African security. This majority reflects a belief that joint efforts in areas such as intelligence sharing, combined military operations, and training contribute to the region's security architecture. Respondents likely perceive this partnership as enhancing regional stability by addressing shared threats, such as terrorism and transboundary conflicts. Scholars such as Kimenyi and Mbaku (2015) argue that collaborative defense initiatives can act as deterrents to external threats while fostering a unified approach to regional security. Kenya and Egypt’s cooperation likely resonates with these respondents as a model for leveraging bilateral relationships to strengthen collective security mechanisms. Additionally, the symbiosis between the two nations rooted in mutual interests and shared goals may be seen as an efficient framework for addressing regional challenges, as highlighted by Hanasz (2014).



The debate surrounding the impact of Kenya-Egypt defense cooperation on East African security reflects broader academic discussions about the role of bilateral partnerships in regional security. Keskinen *et al.* (2014) emphasize the importance of trust and inclusivity in fostering effective security collaborations. In the case of Kenya and Egypt, their partnership in military training, intelligence sharing, and joint operations represents a strategic effort to address shared threats. However, as the findings suggest, the impact of such cooperation is not straightforward. While proponents highlight its potential to enhance security and stability, critics point to the challenges of aligning interests, managing asymmetries, and addressing broader regional dynamics. The diversity of opinions among respondents underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of the factors influencing regional security and the role of bilateral defense partnerships.

The findings reveal a spectrum of opinions on the impact of Kenya-Egypt defense cooperation on East African security, reflecting the complexities of regional dynamics and the challenges of assessing bilateral partnerships. While a majority of respondents view the partnership positively, a significant minority express skepticism or opposition, highlighting the need for trust-building, inclusivity, and greater transparency. Scholarly perspectives support the notion that defense cooperation has the potential to enhance regional security, but they also caution against the risks of exclusion and asymmetry. By addressing these concerns and fostering a more collaborative approach, Kenya and Egypt can strengthen their partnership and contribute to a more secure and stable East Africa.

A rationale for the asserted positive relations between defense cooperation between Kenya and Egypt is that it makes the region more secure through better organization and resource management. Kimenyi and Mbaku (2015) posit that defense cooperation with other countries can increase security in East Africa because it enhances the sharing of intelligence and preparedness. The plausibility of this argument is that the terrorism threats in Kenya and the Middle East can be easily tackled through cooperation between the Kenyan and Egyptian governments. For instance, the Kenyan strong strategic geographical location and Egyptian huge experience in military affairs will complement to create a sound security architecture to deal with matters of insurgency and piracy.

However, there are worries that optimism on defense cooperation will not necessarily translate to better security status. Others have noted that such relationships can at times complicate existing conflicts or even generate new security threats. According to Tawfik (2020), the emphasis on bilateral and defense cooperation can diminish the attention on regional challenges and fail to address the multifaceted nature of the conflicts. Focus on security may diminish understanding of other forms of conflict and development patterns, thereby creating a gap in addressing the fundamental causes of insecurity. One of the KII participants provided a detailed response indicating daunting skepticism on the general effectiveness of the Kenya-Egypt defense cooperation.

He said,

“Kenya and Egypt are working together towards enhancing the level of security in the region but what has been realized is that there is sometimes little or no provision for looking into the root causes of conflicts that prevailed in East Africa; meaning that conflicts that arise due to ethnic practices or even economic inequality might not be solved through defense cooperation, meaning that those who are relying on the measures will obtain only the short term solutions while the root causes of remain unresolved” (KII with official from High Commission of Egypt, 23/7/2024, Nairobi, Kenya).

The researcher, therefore, argues that, one can state that the cooperation in the sphere of defense between Kenya and Egypt can either positively or negatively influence security in East Africa. It is even doing it while potentially exacerbating conflicts at the roots and while some question how much it addresses local security needs. The outlined array of opinions on this topic highlights the fact that the analysis of the outcomes of defense cooperation should be considered through the prism of advantages and possible disadvantages of cooperation within the framework of multidimensional security threats in East Africa.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that, the Kenya-Egypt defence cooperation is viewed as an element of a much greater strategy aiming at bolstering the security architecture of the region. Its cooperation with Kenya has been both a solution to the conflict through: joint peace efforts, addressing environmental concerns, shared mutual state interests and regional stability; and a causal factor to the Nile internecine conflict through promoting Egypt Hegemony and creation Diplomatic Hubs.

5.2 Recommendation

The study recommends that, both countries, on sustainable basis adopt a dyadic approach in consolidating and coordinating their strategies devoid of either national interest obscuring the collective security endeavor.



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