

# Implications of East-West Great Power Competition on Kenya's Defense and Security Policy (2003 – 2022)

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## ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the implications of East-West Great Power Competition on Kenya's defense and security policy between 2003 and 2022. The first section introduces the nature of East-West strategic competition and the second section analyses the implications of East-West strategic competition on Kenya defense and security policies. Four key areas of Kenya's Defense Policies are analyzed. These are: firstly, policies on military assistance to Kenya, secondly, Kenya's peace support operation policies, thirdly, Kenya's policies on military and security allies and fourthly, Kenya's counter-terrorism policies. The study is anchored on realism and the rational actor model of international relations. Review of related literature was done using various search engines utilizing the keywords of the study. A mixed research design and sampling techniques were used to generate a sample of eighty study participants from a target population that included policy makers in the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, Non-governmental organizations, National Government Officials, and international relations experts. The main methods for gathering data were questionnaires and interviews. This study revealed that, the implications of East-West Strategic competition on Kenya's Défense policy include rationality in decision making in regards to military assistance the country receives, a conscious choice of possible trading partners during procurement and acquisition of military equipment and arms, selective entry and signing of military pacts on military training and technology transfers. Moreover, the Kenya defense policy is non-aligned in regards to choice of allies. The defense policy further seeks to maintain traditional allies in the West while also courting of new allies in the East. Finally, the defense policy is assertive in fostering international peace and security as well in counter violent extremism. This study recommends Kenya defense policy strategist to maintain the status quo of balancing the East and the West so as to remain neutral in the wake revamped East West rivalry in the Horn and Eastern African region.

**Key Words:** East-West Great Power Competition, Strategic Military Competition, Kenya's Defense and Security Policy, Military Assistance, Old and New Military Allies

## INTRODUCTION

Great Power Competition (GPC) which refers to intense military competition between the Western and Eastern powers has in the recent past attracted scholarly attention. Lynch III (2020) asserts this great rivalry starting from 2017 resurfaced after 25 years of relative peace between the Great Powers. Commensurate to the Cold War period (1947-1991) where there were intense geopolitical struggles between the United States (US) and the Soviet Union (USSR), the East-West rivalry based on ideological rifts, secrete arms transfer and massive military buildup among Great Powers and their allies (Sempa, 2017), resulting in heightened tension between the East and West powers (Adamson, 2021). Ultimately, the Great Powers seem to be restructuring for new spheres of interests in Africa (Lynch III & Sunders, 2020).

The GPC in the form of military and strategic competition between the East and West greatly impacts on defense policies of Sub-Sahara Africa states among them Kenya. Defense policies refer to a set of activities initiated by representatives of defense ministries and departments that aims at advancing foreign policy interests in the area of defense and security policy (Pajtinka, 2016). Defense policies and diplomacy covers the functions of gathering and evaluating information on security and defense, advancing communication and

cooperation among states, and supporting business contracts in military and arms equipment (Muthanna, 2011). It also determines country position and response to international peace and security as well as counter-terrorism measures.

Foreign policy experts intimate that Africa is the new theatre for strategic military competition (Akum & Tull, 2023). United states and China's deepening and vibrant relations in Africa has raft of implications on the states in the continent (Hanauer & Lyle, 2014). Interest of China (considered as newcomer) for external military basing in Africa is threatening the already existing military pacts between, UK, US with African countries. The entry of China into the game of new scramble for Africa complicates the existing East-West competition between People's Republic of China (PRC) and US. China has rekindled the "near-peer" competition which seem to jostle US security strategy of restraint (Burbach & Posen, 2015). Although PRC and the US cooperate and collaborate on many aspects, the two powers seem to have irreconcilable economic and military interest in Sub-Sahara Africa. The conflicting ambitions may posit crisis for Kenya that has had longstanding defense pact with Western powers majorly UK and US. This strategic competition is also bent to influence Kenya's defense policies necessitating new military realignment in the dawn of emerging security dilemma in the Horn of Africa.

Many African countries, like Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, have had a long history of partnership with the Western powers including the UK and the US. On one hand, for the UK, the close ties with African countries, especially Kenya, are traceable to pre and during colonial administration as well as in the post-colonial legacies, and the continuing membership of both states in the Common Wealth. On the other hand, the US fermented her relations with many independent African states during the independence struggles between 1920-1960 when the US championed for immediate end of colonialism in Africa and Asia. The US also provided forums for championing Pan-Africanism. For this and other reasons, the relationship between the US and many African countries blossomed during the Cold War as the US continued to contain the spread of communism. The US dollar diplomacy and the Marshal plan that aided countries in the aftermath of the second world war also made the US foreign policy attractive to many states. Since 2001, after the terror attack on the World Trade Centre (WTC) in New York the US, through the Bush doctrine, begun drumming support for militarized counter terrorism in what is today referred global war on terror. This strategy has continued to cushion many countries including Kenya's effort in the fight against Islamist terrorism (Cannon & Mogaka, 2023).

The US dominance in global politics since the end of World War II has seen many states coalesce around her for military support. The US role in the North Treaty Organization (NATO) does not on only place the US at the center of international security discourse in Europe but has also made her a beacon of hope for countries facing threats of aggression from other powers and weaker states looking up for military support. The US started offering military aid to her allies in the 1940s. In reciprocating, the developing countries cooperate with the US and conduct joint military training. In East Africa, Kenya is the US closest ally and defense strategic partner. The US military has training bases in Kenya. Further, Kenya's consistent support for US, has attracted military aid from the US over many years since independence in 1963. The US Africa Command (AFRICOM) based in Stuttgart is the vehicle for the US continued presence in Africa. AFRICOM offers military support, intelligence for security and counter terrorism operations. In additions, security experts argue that the US is eying to establish military bases in multiple African countries including Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Namibia, the Seychelles, Tanzania and Kenya.

The triumph of capitalism after the fall of Berlin Wall and the onset of globalization in the 1990s alongside rapid growth of multilateral order in the first and second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen many new state actors, mostly the emerging economies in the Global South, including China, the Gulf states, Türkiye and India increase their presence in Africa (Akum & Tull, 2023). These so-called 'new' or 'emerging' powers have employed economic and trade diplomacy to build partnerships with the many states in Africa. Using a calculated combination of soft and smart power influence is increasing implicating of defense policies of African states over the traditional actors who seem to be losing grounds. According Odhiambo (2021), Anglo-Kenyan military diplomatic relations have been beset with challenges since the entry of new actors.

According to Hanauer and Lyle (2014), PRC has a long-established diplomatic relation with Africa. They date

to 1947 when the Communist Party came to power. By 1950 Sino-Africa cultural and military relation were already established (Krukowska, 2024). Her policy on peaceful rise has seen PRC become a new and vital investor in Africa. The interest of PRC in Africa encompasses but is not limited to oil deposits and other natural resources but also matters of trade, cultural and soft power as well as security. China has become an important small arms supplier to its African partners, organizes joint exercises, and sends military instructors and military assistance on a bilateral and multilateral basis (Krukowska, 2024). Although China has single military base in Djibouti, it is feared that China is seeking to expand her bases in Africa. The following are potential destination: Equatorial Guinea, Angola, Namibia, Seychelles, Tanzania and Kenya. Further, China aggressive ambition is to maintain Chinese Communist Party rule and domestic stability at home, continue economic growth at high levels, maintain favorable global/regional environment, dominate selected technological areas, and gain dominant position in selected key markets in Africa. In Asia, China continued presence in Taiwan and South China Sea is regarded as progress to attaining regional security hegemony over the US military bases in Asia.

China's presence in Africa is discernible through infrastructure development under the Bridge Road Initiative (BRI), but China also advances her military interests in aiding countries. According to Krukowska (2024), China establishes ties with African countries by donating military equipment, transmission systems and funding personnel training programmes through workshops and scholarships. While the aim of these gestures may be to protect Chinese' interests, many African states have been influenced and shifted their allegiance and traditional sources of military supplies and procurement from the West and the new preferred destination is China (Munyi, 2020). Moreover, China military equipment is gaining traction in Africa. Kenya has received Chinese military equipment in the past – for example 12 Y-12 transport aircraft were delivered in 1997-2000, 32 WZ-551 armored personnel carriers were delivered in 2007, and nine Z-9WA helicopters were received in 2010-2015 (Defense web, 2024). China has also sold military equipment to other Sub-Saharan African countries. Munyi (2020) estimated that the share of African arms imports from China has reached US\$ 3.2 billion with 20% rise from 2009 to 2020. From 2008 China military presences in Africa has steadily increased. China participates in annual global anti-piracy mission that had affected its trade interests in the Horn of Africa (Pieter, Siemon, & Lucie, 2011). The Chinese Navy continues to deploy military personnel as well as equipment's as part of maritime security operations.

US-China strategic competition is not accidental (Banasik, 2024; Winkler, 2023). They are manifestation of competing interests and foreign policy objectives on the part of great global powers. Interest of great powers lies in economic and military power (Mazarr, 2022). Throughout its history, the United States has participated in various overseas interventions. According to the widest definition of military intervention, the US participated in close to 400 such operations from 1776 and 2023, with more than half of them taking place after 1950 and over 25% in the post-Cold War era (Ploch, 2011). Economy, territory, social protection, regime change, protection of US nationals and diplomats, policy change, empire building, and regime building have all been goals of various operations. Interventionism, which favors military, diplomatic, and economic intervention in other nations, and isolationism, which opposes these actions, have historically been the two main schools of thought in the United States regarding foreign policy.

Kenya obtained ownership and direction of its Foreign Policy upon its independence in 1963, paving the way for active engagement in regional and international affairs. Kenya's diplomacy has gradually evolved since then, propelled and guided principally by the desire to promote and safeguard its national interests. Kenya's Foreign Policy perspective, like that of other countries, has been shaped by domestic and foreign events (Mabera, 2016). It is a significant accomplishment that Kenya's Foreign Policy was published in 2014 for the first time since the country's independence since it serves as a reference work on its international relations. Kenya's foreign relations and diplomatic activities in the modern international context are broadly outlined in the Foreign Policy Booklet. The Policy describes the development of Kenya's diplomacy since independence and provides information on the strategic direction taken to advance Kenya's interests at home and abroad (Rono, 2018). Evidently, the overarching goal of Kenya's foreign policy stems from a shared desire for a peaceful, unified, and wealthy nation as expressed in the national anthem of Kenya, the Constitution of Kenya 2010, and the country's development plan, Vision 2030.

From its inception, Kenya's defense policy has been greatly impacted by its history as well as internal and

international changes. Kenya made a number of actions and activities upon gaining its independence that continue to emphasize the nation's place in the world system. Kenya's credentials as a Pan-Africanist nation were established by its participation in the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the necessity of defending the right to self-determination, and support for an end to decolonization in Africa. Since its inception, Kenya's foreign policy has shown a propensity for an Afro-centric orientation that continues to affect the nation's dedication to the East African Community (EAC) integration, the realization of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, and continental integration as envisioned in the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The Nairobi headquarters of the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) was one of Kenya's early diplomatic achievements in 1972. This solidified Kenya's unique status as the sole UN Headquarters in the Global South, gave rise to the nation's ambition to take a more active part in the international organization, and still shapes the nation's goals within the international community. The growth of Kenya's diplomacy has also been impacted by various domestic processes. Successes in the democratic process and the building of the country's governance structure, which culminated in the adoption of the Constitution of Kenya (2010), have improved Kenya's reputation in the international community and given the country leverage in diplomatic negotiations.

In May 2024, the US elevated Kenya to status of non-NATO security ally. The current global power competition between China, Japan, Russia, North Korea and United States' interest in Kenya and East Africa can be likened to the power competition in the Indo-Pacific frontline, akin to Southeast Asia, the islands of the South Pacific, and the Persian Gulf that were regarded highly strategic for the interest of the great powers. The question now becomes how can Kenya deal both proactively and effectively within this high-stakes, high-risk context to maintain and even expand its national interests.

Great power competition is driven by divergent national interest of each country. On one hand, the USA and her West allies' interest in sustaining global military competition seeks to preserve her homeland security, prevent attacks on her interests, protect national security of allies, avoid rise of regional hegemonies, preserve longstanding relations with traditional allies, avoid major wars and dominate the global security paradigm as well as maintain her global influence. Moreover, the USA seeks to have strategic access to the entire continent of Africa to counter threats to her overall survival of her territory and citizens. On the other hand, China is poised to secure and maintain new resources and markets for manufactured goods as well as ensure safety of her national working abroad. Further, at home, China seeks to maintain the ruling of the Communist Party, ensure domestic stability, sustain her rapid economic growth, find favorable markets, sustain technological advancement, gain global recognition and push for the Taiwan claim. Other factors driving China into the arena of global competition is to continue her push to be global leading power economically and militarily. China has used military arms sales to advance her military diplomacy and develop its foreign policy interests. Within the regional context, China continues to arm India's neighbors through developing strong military ties as part of reducing India's influence (Pieter, Aude & Alexandra, 2018). Advancement in arms trade is therefore a key impetus towards defining foreign policy interests as well as diplomacy.

Before the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the interest of the great powers the US, the People Republic of China (PRC) and Russia was not in sub-Saharan Africa which was seen as less strategic as compared Asia, Europe, the Western Hemisphere, and the Middle East. But over time Sub-Sahara Africa has increasingly become area of intense global power competition. Positioned as dominant power in the world, the US is very concerned about Chinese and Russian basing in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Russia and PRC interest seem to be in conflict with the US interest. The areas of competition include, economic engagement, military, paradigmatic and ideological competition as well as alignment of what is regarded as key allies. It is in this backdrop that this study seeks to analyze the revamped great military competition in Africa and her influence on Kenya defense policy.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have witnessed intense military competition between the Western and Eastern powers in Africa thus attracting scholarly attention commensurate to the tensions during the Cold War period. By all means, post-independent sub-Sahara Africa was never a focus for strategic rivalry for great powers. Traditionally, security dynamics in Asia, Pacific and the Arctic region and how to contain those threats were the borne of the East-West contestations. However, the revamp of the West-East competition in 2017 has



brought in new dynamics in international relations. What started as ideological rifts, secrete arms transfer and proxy wars involving great powers and her allies in Asia and Pacific has rippled into Africa. Foreign policy experts intimate that Africa is the new theatre for strategic competition (Akum & Tull, 2023). China deepening and vibrant relations in Africa has jostled the traditional allies in the West. The Western Powers including the United States of America, Britain and France are therefore, not sitting at ease any more. The rejoinder of Russia and the interest of other Asian tigers like North Korea, Iran, Jordan India, Turkey among other states is complicating the Sino-America competition. The Cold War tension seem to have paved way for revamped intense involvement of these great powers in Sub-Sahara Africa (Adamson, 2021). Military competition between the East and West greatly impacts on defense policies of Sub-Sahara Africa states among them Kenya. It is in this context that this study sought to establishes the implication of East-West Strategic competition on Kenya's Défense policy.

### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of this study was to investigate the implications of East-West military strategic competition on Kenya's defense policy five aspects namely, on military assistance, security allies, peace support operations and the counter-terrorism policy.

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

The question as to whether the strategic competition between the East and West in in Sub-Sahara Africa can influence defense policy of state can be examined by reviewing literature on foreign policy formation and orientation in this context. The point of departure is to first conceptualize a foreign policy. According to Hill (2003), foreign policy is about the fundamental question of how organized groups as states interrelate. Alade (1997) defines foreign policy as "the actions of a state towards external environment. Thus, foreign policy is about the state and the interstate system (Campbell 1998) on how state relates other states and inter-state organization.

According to the majority of international policy analysis, foreign policy is always evolving hence the necessity for secrecy in how it is handled (Flockhart, Smith, Hadfield, & Dunne, 2012). There are two reasons for the necessity for secrecy in foreign policy. First, the general public's view is unreliable since it is erratic and uniform. Secondly, free speech encourages internal disagreement, which makes the state less powerful in cross-border relations. The underlying presumptions are that polities have always had foreign policies and that secrecy is necessary due to the fundamentally unique nature of foreign policy (Dunne, Hadfield, & Smith, 2012). The definition and the nature of foreign policy is crucial in understanding the secrecy of defense policy and secrete undercurrent interaction among states in matters of security.

The link between defense policy and foreign policy is lean in existing literature. According to Magnani (2022) foreign policy is transformed as a function of changes in defense policy. The strategic aspect of nations defense policy examines both internal and external threat to country assets and the analysis of the regional and international context. Adar (1994) argues that Kenya's defense policy has dominated Kenya's foreign policy. The practice of foreign policy formulation holds that all policies have to conform to national interest. National defense strategies are developed focused on how well they can help the state's foreign policy goals, rather than on how they stand on their own. In other words, military realignment is related to the identification of strategic assets that need to be protected, the potential means of protection, the threat identification, and the study of local and global situations (Magnani, & Barreto, 2022). By taking into account these components of national defense, a crucial political aspect of the relationship between defense and foreign policy—the ways in which defense policy affects foreign policy—remains largely unexplored. Defense policy affect foreign policy, particularly when taking into account the definition of foreign state actors that pose a danger to the interests of the State.

According to Mwangi (2016), the defense policy of Kenya forms an important part of Kenya's overall foreign policy. The overall assertiveness of the Kenya's foreign policy impacts on the defense policy requiring the state forces to take an active role in global war on terror, counter terrorism and in countering transnational organized crime. Kenya defense policy is therefore, forceful to counter new threats. This largely informed

Kenya's military intervention in Somalia which depicts the assertiveness of the Kenya defense policy.

Kenya's national interests dominate its foreign policy decisions. The Kenyan Foreign Policy Framework aims to advance Kenya's economic success, project Kenya's image and prestige, promote international cooperation, and advance and defend Kenya's interests. The pursuit and accomplishment of these goals form the basis of Kenya's connections with and participation in other states (Okumu, 1973). Kenya's foreign policy therefore aims to further these goals at the national level. Like all other African nations, Kenya chooses between maintaining friendly ties with the East and the West while also pursuing its own national interests (Howell, 1968).

The Kenyan foreign policy has had an impact on its military realignment. Kenya has always realigned itself in the military capacity with countries that shares its objectives of its foreign policy. But Kenya belongs to the global anarchic order, which is marked by statist individualism and the subsequent need for survival (Hellsten, 2008). In this view, one of the main forces behind Kenya's foreign policy is the country's desire for stronger military capabilities to strengthen Kenya's survival in keeping with its sovereign needs. Since the late 1990s, Kenya has also been a target of international terrorism, which has worsened the country's domestic security situation and increased need for more weaponry for national security. To close this security gap, Kenya modifies its foreign policy toward the Russian Federation. Since Kenya lacks a military-industrial complex, the Russian Federation is likely one of its key sources of military weapons. To suit its military requirements, Kenya routinely buys attack helicopters, armored personnel carriers (APCs), and reconnaissance vehicles from Russian arms producers like Rosoboron export (Goldman, David 2012). In order to obtain its military hardware and the crucial foreign policy instruments to aid it in doing so, Kenya engages with the Russian Federation through its foreign policy.

In addition to the requirement for military equipment, Kenyan foreign policy strives for its military realignment due to the country's location in a volatile neighborhood that is full of continuing risks. Due to security threats, Kenya lacks the full understanding and capability to confront. International terrorism and piracy are security risks that Kenya faces because they are asymmetrical kinds of warfare that Kenya lacks the means and knowledge to successfully resist. This restriction forced Kenya to change its foreign policy.

The military is the simplest tools at a state's disposal for promoting its national security goals, foreign policy decisions. This is why a state is more likely to realize its military and security capabilities and achieve a desirable position within the community of nations if it pursues a decent foreign policy (Mendis, 2001). Foreign policy is a sensitive and deliberate activity, and decisions made at the government level among individuals concerning the relationships between related governments continue to have an influence (Godana, 2001).

Foreign policy impacts how governments try to influence other countries' conduct as part of their relationships (Jason & Strakes, 2015). He continues by pointing out that, depending on the situation, foreign policy is crucial for both promoting behavior change and sustaining present behavior. He comes to the conclusion that foreign policy is crucial for both effecting change and maintaining the status quo, to the extent that it serves national interests. For instance, in response to the state of Kenya's ongoing security concerns from Somalia at the time, the Kenya Defense Forces (KDF) entered Somalia in October 2011. This response received a lot of attention on a local, national, regional, and global scale.

The rise of multilateralism is one of the elements that has affected the way Kenya has implemented its foreign policy in the past. Along with more established institutions like the African Union (AU), Non-aligned Movement (NAM), and United Nations, Kenya has recently taken an active part in interacting with other nations at multilateral forums like the Forum on Africa-China Corporation (FOCAC), Tokyo International Conference on Africa Development (TICAD), and other Asian nations under the New Asia-Africa Strategic Partnership (NAASP) (Onjala, 2008).

The outcome of China's "Go-Out" policy and Kenya's "Look East" policy has improved economic ties between Kenya and China. President Kibaki's 2005 visit to China resulted in a five-part agreement that included energy and infrastructure, expanded aviation services, technical assistance and modernization broadcasting equipment.

Kenya's imports from China increased from Ksh 23.0 billion in 2005 to Ksh 110.1 billion in 2010 (African Economic Outlook, 2011). Chinese building Firms (CCFs) have made tremendous progress in the infrastructure building industry in Kenya. According to Chege (2008), there are roughly 44 Chinese construction companies doing business in Kenya. The three biggest ones are China Road and Bridge Construction Company, Sichuan International Economic and Technological Cooperation Company, and Jiangsu International Economic and Technological Cooperation Company. Continued presence of Chinese firms in Kenya influences her defense policies.

## METHODOLOGY

This study utilized mixed research design and sampling techniques. A sample size of eighty (80) derived from a target population that included policy makers in the military and Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, Non-governmental organizations, National Government Officials, and international relations experts. The main methods for gathering data were questionnaires and interviews. Besides, content analysis was used to collect secondary data to triangulate primary sources. Collected data was examined, condensed, and categorized in order to find recurring themes and draw accurate conclusions. Frequencies and percentage were used to report the quantitative results while narrative and verbatims were used to present qualitative findings.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### Implication of East-West Strategic Competition on Military Assistance to Kenya

This study sought to evaluate the implication of East-West strategic competition in Kenya's defense policy. The study observed that the East-West strategic competition has significant implications for Kenya's defense policy, particularly in the area of military assistance, arms transfer and training. This study noted that the growing rivalry between global powers, especially the United States and China, has led to increased engagement with Kenya, as both sides seek to secure their strategic interests in East Africa. The table 4.6 provides findings on the impact of this competition on Kenya's defense policy using a five-point Linkert where: 5= Strongly Agree 4= Agree 3= undecided 2= Disagree 1= Strongly Disagree.

Table 1: Implication of East-West Strategic Competition on Military Assistance to Kenya

Statements on Implications of the East West Strategic competition	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Undecided	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
East West strategic competition influences the source of military equipment used in Kenya	8.75%	16.25%	22.5%	23.75%	28.75%
East West strategic competition influences secret arms deals and trade of weapon for Kenya.	10%	1.25%	17.5%	26.25%	35%
East West strategic competition influences Kenya on her decision to found military pact and alliance	7.5%	13.75%	13.75%	40%	25%
East West strategic competition influences training	12.5%	11.25%	15%	33.75%	27.5%
East West strategic competition influences Technology transfer	2	8.75%	22.5%	30%	36.25%

Table 1: presents the participants' views on the implications of the East-West strategic competition on Kenya's defense policy, specifically in relation to military equipment, arms trade, alliances, training, and technology transfer. The findings are measured on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), providing insight into how Kenya's defense policy has been shaped by global strategic competition.

The majority of participants 28.75% and 23.75% strongly agreed and agreed respectively that the East-West strategic competition influences the source of military equipment used in Kenya. This suggests that Kenya's defense forces rely on both suppliers from the East and West for their military hardware, thus balancing between US and China sources. As one military procurement officer noted during the interviews, "we often find ourselves comparing the technology, cost, and reliability of equipment from the U.S. and China. The competition provides us with more options, which is beneficial." (KII, KDF, 2024). The study noted that the Kenya Air Force is currently serviced by a fleet of Y-12 aircraft both from China and the F-5 fighter plane purchased from the US. Kenya also received military vehicles and engineering equipment from China meant to aid the Kenya Army. The military aid was meant to bolster Kenya-China relations in matters of economic growth as well as in defense and security (KII, KDF, 2024).

Similarly, Kenya in 2024 received military equipment worth \$418 from the US. The equipment package purchased included 'twelve Air Tractor AT- 802L converted crop-dusters, two AT-504 trainer aircraft and some weapons' (Akwei, 2024). Kenya was also to receive 16 helicopters and 150 armed vehicles to boost her military capabilities in 2024. According to the US Embassy in Kenya, the military aid was meant to maximize KDF capabilities in air support and short-field craft capable of using precision munitions and cost-effective logistics.

A significant 35% of participants strongly agreed that the East-West strategic competition influences secret arms deals and the trade of weapons in Kenya. This finding points to the discreet nature of military procurements that may occur behind the scenes, influenced by both geopolitical pressure and Kenya's need to enhance its defense capabilities. One interviewee mentioned, "Some of our arms deals with foreign powers aren't always made public, particularly when strategic interests are at stake. The East-West rivalry means we're constantly fielding offers from both sides" (KII, KDF, 2024). The revelation by this informant demonstrates the influence East West strategic competition on Kenya's defense policies.

A notable 40% of participants agreed that East-West competition influences Kenya's decision to form military pacts and alliances, with 25% strongly agreeing. This reflects Kenya's strategic positioning in East Africa, where it forms alliances based on the benefits offered by both Western powers and Eastern countries. As an interviewee highlighted, "Kenya has to carefully consider its military alliances, whether it's through African Union peacekeeping missions or cooperation with Western-led coalitions. The East-West dynamic complicates this but also provides room for negotiation" (KII, Kenyatta University, 2024).

When it comes to military training, 33.75% of participants agreed, and 27.5% strongly agreed, that Kenya's training programs are influenced by the East-West competition. US and PRC military training programs provide Kenya with distinct skill sets and capabilities, with Western training often focusing on counterterrorism and conventional warfare, while Chinese programs emphasize logistical and peacekeeping training. As one military trainer pointed out, "We have benefited from specialized training from both sides. While the U.S. emphasizes rapid response, China helps us with long-term sustainability and logistics" (KII, KDF, 2024).

The highest level of agreement 36.25% pertains to the influence of the East-West competition on technology transfer. Participants acknowledged that Kenya benefits from the technological advancements of both US and PRC military systems. One interviewee stated, "Technology is where we see the greatest impact. The competition between the US and PRC has enabled us to access cutting-edge equipment that would have otherwise been out of reach" (KII, KDF, 2024). The assertion of this key informants illustrates the East-West implication on Kenya defense technologies.

In summary, the findings from Table 1, highlight that East-West strategic competition have significantly influenced Kenya's military equipment sourcing, arms deal, alliances, training, and technology acquisition.



The competition offers Kenya the opportunity to access a wider range of resources and expertise, but also presents challenges in navigating complex geopolitical relationships.

### Implication of East-West Strategic Competition on Kenya's Defense Policies

The impact on the following defense policies were evaluated: non-aligned policy, assertiveness in peace and security, policies on counter-terrorism, maintenance of traditional allies and courting of new allies. This study observed that the East-West strategic competition, primarily between the United States and China, has influenced various aspects of Kenya's defense policy, including military partnerships, arms procurement, technology transfer, and training. The table 4.7 provides findings on the impact of this competition on Kenya's defense policies using a five-point Linkert where: 5= Strongly Agree 4= Agree 3= undecided 2= Disagree 1= Strongly Disagree.

Table 2 Implication of East-West Strategic Competition on Varied Kenya's Defense Policies

Statements on Kenya's defense policy	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Undecided	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
East West strategic competition influences Kenya to adopt the non-aligned security policy.	21.25%	10%	18.75%	32.5%	17.5%
East West strategic competition influences Kenya to adopt an assertiveness policy in peace and security.	7.5%	12.5%	15%	27.5%	37.5%
East West strategic competition influences Kenya to adopt strong stance when it comes to global war on terror and counter-terrorism.	10%	15%	20%	25%	30%
East West strategic competition influences Kenya to adopt balancing act of maintain traditional allies while courting of new allies.	5%	13.75%	22.5%	25%	33.75%

Table 2 presents participants' views on the influence of East-West strategic competition on four aspects of Kenya's defense policy as captioned in the table. The responses highlight varying degrees of agreement regarding key policy adaptations in response to this global rivalry as discussed in the preceding sections.

### Implication of East West Strategic Competition on Kenya Peace and Security policy

According to Howell (1968), the analysis of the Kenya's foreign policy demonstrates Kenya's assertiveness and more radical approach in regards to international peace and security. Since 1969, Kenya has participated in peace support operations as troop contributing country. Kenya is ranked six among troop contributing countries for peace keeping. Kenya has individually participated in peace operations as well as joined peace keeping coalitions under the United Nations Peace Keeping Mission or African Union approved peace support operations. Kenya has participated in many peace support operations since 1979 in both UN peacekeeping missions and the African Union Missions. According to the primary data collected, there was highest level of agreement (37.5%) regarding the influence of strategic competition on Kenya's adoption of an assertiveness policy in peace and security. An interviewee with extensive experience in regional security noted that Kenya has become more assertive in its peacekeeping roles, particularly in Somalia, where external interests from both sides push us to take a stronger stand. This suggests that the competing interests of global powers have necessitated a more proactive approach from Kenya. Therefore. Kenya has a strong stance on global war on terror. About 30% of participants strongly agreed that East-West competition has influenced Kenya to adopt a

robust position in the global war on terror. An interviewee from the Kenya Defense Forces asserted that the Kenya Military counterterrorism efforts have been significantly bolstered by partnerships with Western nations, particularly the US. This is a direct response to the threats the country faces, compounded by the dynamics of global power competition.

### **Implication of East West Strategic Competition on Kenya's Military and Security Allies**

Kenya's longstanding military ally is the Great Britain. This is rooted in the colonial legacy and Anglophone bilateral relations according to Odhiambo (2021). Besides Britain, the US, Russia and Germany are the other security allies of Kenya and the main sources of military equipment and arms for many nations in Sub-Saharan Africa (Pieter, Aude & Alexandra, 2018). However, trends in arms transfer in the recent past have shifted with the rise of other new great powers. The entry of China into the current geopolitics among other new players has made many nations to search for new allies. With new security allies, the source of Kenya's military equipment's continues to change gradually. Kenya in 1996 imported aircrafts from China (Pieter, Siemon, & Lucie, 2011). China and Turkiye have intention to establish military bases in Kenya. Kenya can be regarded as an epicenter of military activity by foreign interests especially in the Horn of Africa. Foreign troops and base continue to be deployed as part of managing threats to global peace, subduing pirates and terror groups, and supporting foreign security initiatives. Other motivations towards establishing foreign military bases in Kenya include protection of commercial needs and interests, alignment with friendly regimes, and expression of dominance in the continent where there is rise in global competition (Pieter, Aude & Alexandra, 2018). China has continued to advance its interests in military equipment's and bases in Kenya since 2008 when it actively participated in the global anti-piracy mission that had affected its trade interests in the Horn of Africa (Pieter, Siemon, & Lucie, 2011). The Chinese Navy continues to deploy military personnel as well as equipment's as part of maritime security operations.

Primary data gathered by this study showed that approximately 33.75% and 25% of the of the study participants strongly agreed and agreed respectively that the East West strategic competition influences Kenya to adopt balancing act of maintain traditional allies while courting of new allies. One diplomat remarked, "Kenya must navigate a delicate balance, ensuring that we strengthen ties with the U.S. while also exploring opportunities with countries like China. This dual approach is vital for our national interests." (KII, US Embassy, 2024). This reflects the strategic maneuvering required to benefit from various alliances. In summary, the insights from interviewees provide a deeper understanding of the responses in Table 4.2, illustrating the complexities and motivations behind Kenya's defense policy adaptations amid ongoing East-West strategic competition.

### **Implication of East West Strategic Competition on Kenya's Counter-terrorism Policy**

Counter terrorism refers to proactive actions to pre-empt or disrupt efforts terrorism or activities of violent extremists such as radicalization, recruitment and mobilization of followers to violence. Counter-terrorism as seeks to address specific factors that facilitate recruitment and radicalization to violence. There are many strategies used in countering terrorism encompassing military action, police and changes in security policies. Although counter-terrorism has been in existence since the rise of terrorism, the events of September 11, 2001 following terror attack of the World Trade Center in New York change the whole discourse of counter terrorism. Through the Bush doctrine the concept of war on terror was introduced. Since then, many governments around the world have tried various approaches in dealing with terrorism (Sederberg, 1991) According to Sederberg, terrorism can be dealt as equivalent of war through military intervention of it can be dealt with through the court system. The most relied upon counter-terror strategy is repression. Other strategies include: increased physical security, intelligence gathering, attacking terrorist financial sources, retaliation, international cooperation, concession and reforms, negotiations among many more. In general, there are many counterinsurgency strategies that are available to governments. No one technique is a "magic bullet" that will always work to deal with every terrorist situation. (Lutz 2011)

Data collected indicated that East West strategic competition influences Kenya to adopt strong stance when it comes to global war on terror and counter-terrorism with 25% and 30% of the study participants strongly agree and agree respectively. Kenya has highly been influenced to use isolation strategies by the US doctrine on war

on terror but also forced to use engagement strategies (Lederach 2012). Isolation essentially proposes a strategy of identifying, targeting and eliminating individuals and groups who espouse violence defined as terrorism famously referred to as 'listing'. Some of the isolation strategies used in Kenya include the military intervention and police crack downs. The introduction of terrorism bill and act is also an isolations strategy. Since 1998, Kenya has become very assertive in the war on terror in the region. Further Kenya designation as major non-NATO ally by US puts Kenya at the centre of counter-terrorism making her role very assertive in the Horn of Africa.

Engagement as counter-terrorism strategy refers to strategies that require contact, consultation and dialogue. In particular, it suggests that successful peace building and conflict transformation demands that engagement must happen with a wider set of people and stakeholders at multiple levels of society (Lederach 2012). Engagement suggests continuous contact, consultation, deliberate dialogue inclusive of all views, and developing accurate understanding of the underlying causes of violent extremism and addressing them through a range of nonviolent change strategies.

## CONCLUSION

This study has established that the implication of East-West Strategic competition on Kenya's Défense policy include rationality in decision making in regards of military assistance the country receives, influence on possible trading partners during procurement and acquisition of military equipment's and weapons, selective formation and signing of military pacts and alliances, and finally restricted military training and technology transfers between old and new found allies. Due to East-West influence, the Kenya defense policy is non - aligned, though assertive in fostering international peace and security as well in countering terrorism. The defense policy further seeks to maintain traditional allies in the West while also courting of new allies in the East.

## RECOMMENDATION

This study recommends Kenya defense policy strategist to maintain the status quo of striking a balance between the East and the West so as to play middle ground in the wake of revamped East West rivalry in the Horn and Eastern African region. This strategy will not only benefit Kenya in military assistance but will also help in maintaining Kenya's strategic significance in the region. Moreover, the strategy will also ensure Kenya relevance in the East-West Strategic Competition.

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