

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE KENYA - USA NAVAL DIPLOMATIC COOPERATION IN  
ENHANCING MARITIME SECURITY IN THE GULF OF ADEN**

**KARIUKI FREDRICK MWANGI**

**MIRD/2024/44067**

**A RESEARCH PROPOSAL SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY OF  
MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY**

**JULY, 2025**

## **DECLARATION AND APPROVAL**

### **DECLARATION BY THE STUDENT**

This research proposal is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university or for any other award.



Signature

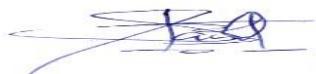
Date 09 Jul 25

**KARIUKI FREDRICK MWANGI**

**MIRD/2024/44067**

### **APPROVAL BY THE SUPERVISOR**

The undersigned certify that he has read and hereby recommend for acceptance of Mount Kenya University a proposal entitled ‘An analysis of the Kenya - USA Naval diplomatic cooperation in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden.’



Signature

Date

09 Jul 25

**REV. RTD. SGT. DR. ELIJAH ONYANGO STANDSLAUSE ODHIAMBO, PHD**

**DEPARTMENT OF ARTS, GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES**

**BOMET UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, KENYA**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my ever-supportive mother Nancy Mwihaki and brother Humphrey Kimani for their unwavering support during this journey. My achievement was made possible by their sacrifices and commitment.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

I take this opportunity to thank the Almighty God for the divine providence of existence and enabling me to progress this far in my academic career. I would like to express my gratitude to my lecturers from Mount Kenya University for their guidance and my project supervisor, Rev. Rtd. Sgt. Dr. Elijah Onyango Standslause Odhiambo, PhD who despite his busy schedule provided constructive comments, literature recommendations and critical appraisals of my findings, all of which helped during the formulation of this research proposal. I am also grateful to my friends, classmates, participants and everyone who helped me financially, socially, emotionally and spiritually during my studies, God bless you.

## **ABSTRACT**

The Gulf of Aden a critical maritime corridor joining the Arabian Sea to the Red Sea making it one of the busiest and most strategic waterways for international trade. However, the region has faced persistent maritime security challenges such as piracy, terrorism, illegal and unregulated fishing, smuggling, drug and human trafficking. These challenges have necessitated international cooperation and naval presence. Therefore, this study will analyze the Kenya - USA Naval diplomatic cooperation in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden. It will be guided by both general and specific objectives. The general objective being analyzing the Kenya - USA Naval diplomatic cooperation. The study set out four specific objectives: to examine the nature of Kenya - USA Navies diplomatic relationship; to determine the strategies used by both Kenya Navy and USA Navy in their diplomatic relationship to enhance maritime security in the Gulf of Aden and to find out the opportunities and challenges arising from the Kenya -USA Naval diplomacy. The specific objectives will be complemented with research questions. The literature review will be done thematically as guided by specific objectives. The research project will be based on Regional Security Complex theory, liberalism, realism, constructivism and deterrence theory. The research will be academically justified giving attention to the Naval diplomacy between Kenya and USA. It will be guided by Kenya's National Maritime Security Strategy (NMSS) and the African Union's 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (AIMS) policies which offer insights on need for partnerships to enhance maritime security and capacity. It will adopt both descriptive and survey designs while incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study will be done in Kenya covering Nairobi County, Mombasa County and Lamu County. Participants of the study will include Kenya Navy personnel, USA Navy personnel, Kenya Coast Guard Service personnel, Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs officials and diplomatic officials of Kenya and USA dealing with security matters, and a total sample of 381 respondents will be used. Convenience sampling will be used for easily accessible respondents while purposive sampling will help reach key informants based on their experience and expertise in the maritime sector. Data collection process will entail issuing of structured questionnaires to respondents and conducting semi-structured interviews to key informants for quantitative and qualitative data respectively. Document analysis will be helpful in qualitative data collection. Thematic analysis by use of NVivo 15 software will be adopted to analyze qualitative data. Statistical analysis through the use of SPSS 30 software and Excel will be applied for quantitative data so that descriptive analysis such as frequencies, percentages, mean score and standard deviation will be derived for all the quantitative variables. Simultaneous triangulation design will be applied to merge the results of both statistical and thematic analysis - for comparison, explanation and creating connections. The study will be done between June and August 2025. This study will bridge the existing literature gaps by expounding on Kenya-USA Naval diplomacy, integrating diplomacy and security and explaining Kenya Navy's role in regional security. The study's findings will be significant through contribution to scholarly understanding of bilateral naval diplomacy and also informing policy on how Kenya and USA can strengthen their maritime security cooperation in the Gulf of Aden. This study will adhere to ethical considerations by first seeking authorization from Mount Kenya University through the Ethical Review Committee and then ensuring informed consent, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity to the respondents.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION AND APPROVAL .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>DEDICATION .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENT .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS .....</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background to the study .....	1
1.2 Problem Statement .....	7
1.3 Purpose of the study. ....	8
1.4 Objectives of the study .....	9
1.5 Research Questions .....	9
1.6 Significance of the study .....	10
1.7 Justification .....	10
1.7.1 Academic Justification.....	10
1.7.2 Policy Jusification.....	12
1.8 Scope of the study... .....	13
1.9 Limitations of the study.....	14
1.10 Delimitations .....	15
1.11 Assumptions .....	15
1.12 Operational definition of key terms.....	16
<b>CHAPTER TWO .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>18</b>
2.0 Introduction .....	18
2.1 Empirical Literature Review.....	18
2.1.1 Kenya- USA Bilateral relationship.....	18
2.1.2 Maritime security threats in the Gulf of Aden.....	22
2.1.3 Role of Kenya Navy in maritime security.....	26
2.1.4 Role of USA Navy in the Gulf of Aden.....	29
2.1.5 Naval Bilateral relations, impacts and roles on maritime security.....	31

2.1.6 Bilateral challenges and opportunities arising from naval diplomacy.....	33
2.2 Theoretical Framework .....	35
2.2.1 Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) .....	35
2.2.2 Liberalism Theory.....	36
2.2.3 Constructivism Theory.....	37
2.2.4 Realism Theory.....	38
2.2.5 Deterrence Theory.....	38
2.3 Conceptual Framework .....	39
2.4 Recap of Literature Review.....	43
2.5 Research gap .....	44
<b>CHAPTER THREE .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>46</b>
3.0 Introduction .....	46
3.1 Research Methodology .....	46
3.2 Research Design .....	50
3.3 Location of the study .....	50
3.4 Target Population .....	52
3.5 Sampling Size determination and Sampling Procedure .....	54
3.5.1 Sampling Procedure.....	54
3.5.2 Sample Size Determination .....	54
3.5.3 Sampling Frame .....	59
3.6 Data collection Instruments .....	59
3.6.1 Questionnaires.....	60
3.6.2 Interviews .....	60
3.6.3 Document Analysis.....	62
3.7 Piloting of the instrument .....	63
3.8 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments .....	65
3.8.1 Validity of Research Instruments .....	65
3.8.2 Reliability of Research Instruments .....	65
3.9 Data Collection Procedures .....	67
3.10 Data Analysis Techniques .....	70
3.11 Ethical Considerations .....	70
3.11.1. Informed consent .....	71

3.11.2. Privacy and confidentiality .....	71
3.11.3 Anonymity .....	72
3.11.4 Researcher's responsibility .....	72
3.11.5 Ethical challenges.....	72

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION**

4.0 Introduction .....	
4.1 Nature of Kenya–USA Naval Cooperation .....	
4.1.1 Quantitative Findings .....	
4.1.2 Qualitative Findings .....	
4.1.3 Integrated Interpretation .....	
4.2 Strategies of Kenya–USA Naval Diplomacy .....	
4.2.1 Quantitative Findings .....	
4.2.2 Qualitative Findings .....	
4.2.3 Integrated Interpretation .....	
4.3 Challenges of Kenya–USA Naval Diplomacy .....	
4.3.1 Quantitative Findings .....	
4.3.2 Qualitative Findings .....	
4.3.3 Integrated Interpretation .....	
4.4 Opportunities of Kenya–USA Naval Diplomacy .....	
4.4.1 Quantitative Findings .....	
4.4.2 Qualitative Findings .....	
4.4.3 Integrated Interpretation .....	
4.5 Summary of Findings .....	

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.0 Introduction .....	
5.1 Summary of the Study .....	
5.2 Conclusions .....	
5.2.1 Nature of Cooperation .....	
5.2.2 Strategies of Diplomacy .....	

5.2.3 Challenges of Diplomacy .....	
5.2.4 Opportunities of Diplomacy .....	
5.3 Recommendations .....	
5.3.1 Policy Recommendations .....	
5.3.2 Strategic Recommendations .....	
5.3.3 Capacity-Building Recommendations .....	
5.4 Suggestions for Further Research .....	
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>84</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Target Population.....	54
Table 3.2: Sampling Frame.....	59
Table 3.3: Summary of Research Instruments.....	62
Table 3.4: Data collection plan.....	69

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework.....	42
Figure 3.1: Simultaneous Triangulation Design.....	50

## LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix I: Letter of Introduction.....	84
Appendix II: Informed Consent Form.....	85
Appendix III: Study Questionnaire.....	86
Appendix IV: In-Depth Interview Guide.....	91
Appendix V: Research Project Budget.....	92
Appendix VI: Work Plan.....	93
Appendix VII: Map of Kenya and Map of Indian Ocean.....	94

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>AFRICOM</b>	USA Africa Command
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>BATUK</b>	British Army Training Unit Kenya
<b>CMF</b>	Combined Maritime Forces
<b>EAC</b>	East African Community
<b>EEZ</b>	Exclusive Economic Zone
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GoK</b>	Government of Kenya
<b>IDPs</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>IMO</b>	International Maritime Organization
<b>KCGS</b>	Kenya Coast Guard Service
<b>KN</b>	Kenya Navy
<b>LAPSSET</b>	Lamu Port South Sudan Ethiopia- Transport
<b>MOD</b>	Ministry of Defense
<b>NACOSTI</b>	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>SLOC</b>	Sea Lanes of Communication
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCLOS</b>	United Nations Convention on the Law of Seas
<b>USA</b>	United States of America

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will contain the background information of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, justifications, scope of the study, limitations of the study, delimitations, assumptions and operational definition of key terms. This is in order to analyze the Kenya Navy and USA Navy bilateral diplomatic relationships in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden.

#### **1.1 Background to the study**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the maritime domain has gained unprecedented significance due to its role in facilitating global trade, connectivity and the projection of power. Over 80% of global trade is transported by sea, making secure maritime routes essential for international economic stability. However, the maritime environment is increasingly vulnerable to a range of non-traditional security threats including piracy, maritime terrorism, smuggling, illegal fishing and transnational organized crimes. Global responses have been characterized by naval diplomacy, where states deploy naval assets not only for security operations but also as instruments of foreign policy and strategic influence. Major powers such as United States, China, Russia and European Union members have used naval diplomacy to protect economic interests, engage in cooperative security and expand their geopolitical presence (Rowlands, 2018). After the Cold War, the focus of naval diplomacy shifted from deterrence of rival powers to cooperative security, counter-terrorism, antipiracy and humanitarian missions. Navies became essential tools for: peacebuilding and regional and international cooperation, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and tools for capacity building.

The Gulf of Aden is a critical maritime corridor connecting the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea. It serves as a vital route for global maritime trade, with over 30,000 ships transiting annually,

including 20% of global oil shipments. However, its strategic location makes it a hotspot for persistent maritime insecurity driven by both state and non-state actors. Maritime security threats in the area include piracy, terrorism, illegal fishing, trafficking and smuggling which have disrupted maritime activities and posed risks to global trade. Geopolitical rivalries are other threats as international powers seek influence and dominance. Maritime security is a critical issue in a strategic waterway such as Gulf of Aden for global trade, regional stability and economic growth-necessitating robust global cooperation and naval partnerships.

The European Union Naval Force (EU NAVFOR) is the operational naval force of the European Union under the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). It is made up of several forces that contribute naval assets, personnel and resources-according to their diplomatic agreement. It was established in response to the increasing threats of piracy and armed robbery at sea, particularly off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden (Larsson & Widen, 2024). The flagship mission of EU NAVFOR is Operation Atalanta, launched in 2008 under the framework of UN Security Council Resolutions and with the invitation of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia. Its mandates include: protecting World Food Programme (WFP) vessels delivering humanitarian aid to Somalia, deterring and suppressing piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Aden, monitoring fishing activities off the coast of Somalia and supporting regional maritime capacity building (Aguilar, 2022). Since its launch, piracy incidents reduced and EU NAVFOR escort vulnerable vessels while conducting intelligence and surveillance operations. The mission has also led to the professionalization and training of regional maritime forces of Kenya, Djibouti and Somalia. EU NAVFOR is embodied on liberal perspective of collective security while realism principles are also evident as the mission ensures maritime security for European economic interests and power projection.

In recent decades, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has transformed into a formidable maritime power through the modernization of People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN). China has adopted an increasingly and assertive form of naval diplomacy to secure maritime routes, establish political influence, shape maritime norms and promote bilateral and multilateral naval cooperations (Li, 2023). According to Gao and Allen (2024), since 2008, China has conducted several joint antipiracy operations in the Gulf of Aden with navies of Pakistan, Russia and ASEAN states. The country has established a Military Base in Djibouti for logistical support to Chinese naval assets operating in the Gulf of Aden (Dutton et al., 2020). China's naval diplomacy has been shown through Port visits and joint exercises. In Africa, China has conducted naval visits to Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa, reinforcing diplomatic ties through military engagements. China's naval diplomacy adopts realists' thoughts since she wants to project power and protect her own interests by setting a base in Djibouti. As China's global trade and energy imports grow, she seeks to secure sea lanes of communication.

In Africa, the Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC) was adopted in January 2009 under the auspices of the IMO. It was developed in response to the dramatic rise in piracy and armed robbery against ships in the Gulf of Aden and the Western Indian Ocean. It was signed in Djibouti by 21 regional countries (Menzel, 2018). DCoC represents a milestone in African-led regional maritime diplomacy and security collaboration. It created a formal framework for countries in the region to share information, coordinate maritime patrols and build joint responses to piracy and other transnational maritime threats. It also aimed at improving maritime law enforcement and developing national and regional naval capacities. The Jeddah Amendment in 2017 expanded DCoC and addressed more crimes including: human, weapon and drug trafficking, smuggling, illegal fishing and marine environmental crimes (IMO, 2017).

The DCoC as an instrument of naval diplomacy has fostered regional naval diplomacy through providing a platform for East African, Gulf and Indian Ocean states to engage in dialogue, coordination and joint operations. It promotes civil-military partnerships through cooperations between naval forces, coast guards and civilian maritime authorities. The DCoC has attracted cooperation and support from external naval powers such as USA, Japan, UK, India and EU (IMO, 2020). The agreement reflects liberal principles by institutionalizing cooperative mechanisms and rule-based cooperation facilitated by IMO. Constructivism thoughts are evident as the regional states see themselves as victims of maritime insecurity and respond by combating the threats together. The DCoC has achieved reduced piracy incidents, establishment of maritime information sharing centers, capacity building and strengthened regional cooperation.

The Kenya Navy is tasked to protect state's maritime interests including SLOCs and EEZ and also secure territorial waters against threats through: surveillance, patrolling, search and rescue operations, amphibious operations, anti-piracy operations and joint operations with allied navies (Ministry of Defense Kenya, n.d.). Kenya Navy also plays a key role to enhance regional and international security through maritime diplomacy and participation in multilateral exercises and operations such as: Cutlass Express, Exercise Justified Accord and ATMIS. Kenya due to her proximity to the Gulf of Aden and also hosting the Mombasa Information Sharing Center (under DCoC), plays a critical role in enhancing regional maritime security (Ministry of Defense Kenya, 2025). The rising maritime insecurity threats in the region resulted to diplomatic ties between Kenya Navy and USA Navy, which has a significant presence in the Horn of Africa. The Kenya and USA Navies formalized their military collaboration in 1980s but the cooperation on maritime security in the Gulf of Aden intensified in 2000s due to rising piracy and terrorism cases off the Somalia coast.

In 1980, Kenya and USA signed the Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) allowing USA to use Kenyan military facilities such as Kenya Naval Base Mtongwe in Mombasa for regional security. After the 1998 USA Embassy bombings in Nairobi and 2002 Mombasa terrorist attacks, Kenya and USA strengthened naval cooperation to counter maritime threats along the East African coast. In 2009, Kenya and USA Navies began working together under the Combined Task Force 151 (CTF-151) of CMF to combat Somali piracy. In 2010, Kenya started taking part in Exercise Cutlass Express- a USA lead maritime security drill involving East African navies. Lately in September 2020, there was renewal of Kenya-USA Defense Agreement reinforcing naval collaboration, counter-piracy, counter-terrorism and security in the Gulf of Aden and Western Indian Ocean (Ministry of Defense Kenya, n.d.). The USA engages with Kenya to safeguard strategic maritime routes, protect global commerce and counter non-state actors. Kenya in turn, leverages this partnership to enhance her naval capabilities and assert her influence in regional maritime affairs- a realist perspective.

Kenya Navy and USA Navy have jointly conducted Exercise Cutlass Express annually which has the following objectives: Visit, Board, Search and Seizure (VBSS) training, counter illegal fishing and maritime operations interdiction. USA Navy has conducted several visits to Kenya's Port of Mombasa in efforts to strengthen maritime security cooperation. USS Hershel is USA Navy's ship that visited Kenya in 2021 that aimed to enhance interoperability with the Kenya Navy and reaffirm USA's commitment maritime security in the region. In early 2024, the United States Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC) and the Kenya Navy Special Operations Squadron (KN SOS) conducted a Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) in Mombasa. The four-week exercise focused on enhancing tactical proficiency, interoperability and maritime security capabilities and readiness against maritime threats in the Gulf of Aden- supporting the principles of liberal cooperation (AFRICOM, 2024).

Despite Kenya-USA naval diplomacy, the maritime security challenge continues to exist in the Gulf of Aden. Houthi rebel groups from Yemen have recently increased activities targeting ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. In March, 2024 the USA Navy reported shooting down four Houthi unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) targeting warships in Red Sea. Since November 2023, several cases have been reported on the resurgence of Somali piracy, including hijacking and armed robbery. In May, 2024 a merchant vessel reported an attempted hijacking 195 nautical miles east of Aden. A small craft carrying armed individuals approached the vessel but retreated after the onboard security team returned fire. In June, 2024 another merchant vessel reported that a missile landed in the water near its position, 52 nautical miles south of Aden, but the vessel sustained no damage and the crew remained safe (IMB, 2024).

While no specific joint operations between Kenya and USA Navies have been classified as failed, several operational challenges have impeded optimal mission outcomes. Joint maritime exercises such as Cutlass Express which involve both Kenya and USA and other regional navies, have revealed difficulties in achieving seamless coordination. Variances in communication, protocol and command structures have at times, delayed decision making and hindered real-time interoperability (U.S. AFRICOM, 2024). In operations involving apprehension of suspected pirates and smugglers, naval forces often face challenges related to the prosecution and detention of suspects especially when suspects are not caught in territorial waters (IMO Reports, 2023). Therefore, the role of this bilateral diplomatic relationship in enhancing the maritime security in the Gulf of Aden is yet to be realized and understood and thus this project will analyze the Kenya- USA Naval diplomatic relationship to help understand its nature, the approach and strategies it uses, the opportunities and challenges arising from the relationship in enhancing maritime security.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

The Gulf of Aden remains one of the world's most strategically important and simultaneously volatile maritime corridor. It serves as a key route for international trade, linking the Indian Ocean to the Suez Canal and Mediterranean Sea. Over 20,000 ships transit through this corridor annually, transporting oil, gas and manufactured goods between Asia, Africa and Europe (IMO, 2020). However, in recent decades, the region has witnessed a surge in maritime insecurity, including piracy, arms trafficking, human smuggling, illegal fishing, maritime terrorism and disruptions by non-state actors, such as Houthi rebels and Somali pirates. These challenges threaten regional stability, disrupt global trade and undermine international maritime law and cooperation.

In response, both regional and international actors have implemented a range of security strategies, including naval patrols, multilateral coalitions and bilateral defense partnerships. Kenya and USA have pursued bilateral naval cooperation through joint naval exercises, patrols, port visits, capacitybuilding programs, intelligence sharing and logistical support (AFRICOM, 2023). Kenya due to her strategic location and growing naval capacity, has become a key maritime security partner to the USA. USA in return, has invested heavily through the AFRICOM initiatives, to enhance Kenya's naval capacity. USA strengthened her diplomatic ties with Kenya by establishing a military base (Camp Simba) in Kenya in 2004, located at Manda Bay in Lamu County to aid in securing maritime area, especially the Gulf of Aden.

While these efforts exist, maritime insecurity is still imminent. Kenya since 2008 to 2020 have confronted several maritime insecurity challenges of terrorism and piracy which are blamed for reduced liner cruise tours to Kenyan coast waters from 35 in 2008 to zero visits in 2012 leading to loss of up to \$400 million in terms of shipping and cruise liner tourism (Njoya et al., 2022). There is limited empirical research assessing the effectiveness of Kenya-USA naval cooperation in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden. Existing literature have focused on multilateral

frameworks led by global powers such as NATO, CMF and EU, often overlooking the role of bilateral naval engagements comprising of African states like Kenya. There is lack of in-depth analysis on Kenya's naval role in enhancing regional maritime security. Moreover, the theoretical framing of such engagements-specifically through the lenses of realism and liberalism- remains insufficiently explored.

This lack of focused analysis presents a critical gap in understanding how bilateral naval cooperation contributes to long-term maritime security in the region. If this gap is not addressed, Kenya's evolving role as a regional maritime actor may not be fully optimized, and the USA's efforts to secure its strategic interests in East Africa may be compromised. Therefore, this study seeks to address these gaps by analyzing the Kenya Navy and USA Navy bilateral diplomatic relationship to help understand its nature, the approach and strategies it uses, the opportunities and challenges arising from the relationship. The analysis will be aligned with the relevant international relations theories as the research also aims to contribute to scholarly understanding of bilateral naval diplomacy and inform policy on regional maritime cooperation.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study.**

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the Kenya - USA Naval diplomatic cooperation and its contribution to enhancing maritime security in Gulf of Aden. The research aims to explore how diplomatic engagements, joint naval operations and training, strategic partnerships and capacity building initiatives between Kenya Navy and USA Navy contribute to mitigating maritime security threats such as piracy, terrorism, smuggling, trafficking and illegal fishing in the region.

## **1.4 Objectives of the study**

This study was guided by both general and specific objectives.

### **1.4.1 General objective**

To analyze the Kenya - USA Naval diplomatic cooperation in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden.

### **1.4.2 Specific objectives**

The specific objectives of the study are:

- i. To examine the nature of Kenya - USA Naval diplomacy in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden.
- ii. To assess the strategies used by both Kenya Navy and USA Navy in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden.
- iii. To evaluate the opportunities arising from Kenya - USA Naval diplomatic cooperation.
- iv. To identify challenges encountered in Kenya - USA Naval diplomacy in promoting regional maritime security.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

The study will aim to answer the following questions:

- i. What is the nature of Kenya - USA Naval diplomacy in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden?
- ii. What strategies are used by the Kenya and USA Navies to enhance maritime security in the Gulf of Aden? iii. What are the opportunities arising from the Kenya - USA Naval diplomatic cooperation?
- iv. What are the challenges encountered in Kenya - USA Naval diplomacy in promoting

regional maritime security?

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

This study holds both academic and practical significance in the field of international relations, diplomacy and maritime security. In an era where transnational threats such as piracy, terrorism and illegal maritime activities continue to endanger strategic sea lanes, the importance of collaborative security efforts cannot be overstated. The Gulf of Aden, a critical maritime corridor linking the Arabian Sea to the Red Sea, remains vulnerable to persistent threats that affect global trade and regional stability.

From a diplomatic perspective, this study sheds light on the growing use of naval diplomacy as a strategic tool for fostering bilateral and multilateral security cooperation. By focusing on the Kenya-USA naval partnership, the study offers insights into how diplomacy is operationalized through joint naval exercises, port visits, training programs and information sharing initiatives. Understanding these engagements contributes to how diplomacy can enhance hard and soft power in maritime affairs.

From a security and policy standpoint, the findings will be relevant to defense planners, security analysts and policy makers in both Kenya and USA. It will highlight effective practices and strategic gaps in bilateral cooperation, offering recommendations to strengthen maritime security frameworks and respond more effectively to maritime threats in the Gulf of Aden and broader Western Indian Ocean.

Academically, the study contributes to the growing literature on naval diplomacy, bilateral military cooperation and regional maritime governance. It provides an analysis that enriches theoretical and practical understanding of how small and major powers can collaborate in a strategic maritime environment.

The study is also significant to international organizations such as the IMO and AU. For the IMO, the study supports ongoing efforts to promote maritime safety and security under frameworks such as the Djibouti Code of Conduct. By showcasing how bilateral naval diplomacy can enhance operational capacity and information-sharing in the Gulf of Aden, the study provides a practical case that aligns with the IMO's objectives of improving regional maritime governance and securing international shipping routes.

For the AU, the study contributes to the objectives outlined in the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (AIMS). It highlights how partnerships with global naval powers can help African states build maritime capacity, foster regional stability and protect the continent's vast maritime resources. Kenya's experience with the USA Navy offers a model for other AU member states seeking to advance their maritime security through diplomacy and cooperation.

Furthermore, the study may inform future diplomatic strategies not only between Kenya and the United States but also among other regional and international actors seeking to secure maritime domains through cooperative defense mechanisms.

## **1.7 Justification of the study**

The study will adhere to both academic and policy justifications.

### **1.7.1 Academic Justification**

This study is academically significant as it contributes to the growing body of literature on maritime security and international relations by focusing on a bilateral partnership that is often overlookedKenya and United States. While much of the existing scholarly works largely emphasizes on multilateral maritime efforts, there is limited academic inquiry into how bilateral naval relationships, particularly between African states and major powers, contribute to maritime governance and security. By analyzing the Kenya – USA naval partnership, this research offers a unique case study that bridges diplomatic theory and strategic security practice. It expands

academic understanding of how naval diplomacy can be employed not only as a foreign policy tool but also as a mechanism for capacity building and regional stability.

Furthermore, the application of liberalism, realism, constructivism, deterrence and regional security complex theories provides a fresh framework for understanding the states behavior in the realm of diplomacy and security. This will be helpful in broadening the analytical tools available to scholars of international relations and security studies. This study contributes to Africentered scholarly work by highlighting Kenya's active role in international and regional security cooperation, an area that is often underrepresented in mainstream academic discourse.

### **1.7.2 Policy Justification**

This study holds strong policy relevance as it addresses critical issues at the intersection of diplomacy, defense and regional security. The Gulf of Aden is a critical maritime corridor mostly used for international trade. The region in the recent past has encountered maritime security threats targeting commercial ships, crew, passengers and other seafarers operating in the maritime area. Piracy and armed robbery threats peaked from 2008 targeting commercial ships for ransom while terrorism has been facilitated by the Al Shabaab militia of Somalia. Other threats include the illicit trafficking of drugs, weapons and human smuggling while foreign fishing vessels conduct illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the maritime area. These security challenges pose difficulties to users of the maritime corridor thus calling for regional and international policy responses.

To Kenya, the study will inform national security and foreign policy decision-making especially when leveraging diplomatic and defense partnerships to enhance maritime domain awareness, naval capabilities and defense strategies. The study will be helpful to the Kenya's National Maritime Security Strategy (NMSS) body that aims at addressing maritime challenges and aligns

with international obligations, such as the Kenya and USA Navies bilateral relationship. The strategy focuses on regional cooperation and has participated in developing a Regional Maritime Security Strategy that addresses regional maritime challenges such as the maritime security problems at the Gulf of Aden (Government of Kenya, 2016). The study findings will provide proposals and recommendations on how best to apply the Kenya's vision 2030 through maritime security and effective utilization of marine resources.

For the United States, the study offers an opportunity to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of its naval engagement with African partners. The USA-Africa maritime Security strategy has been in place for long time aimed to strengthen African Naval capabilities in combating maritime security threats (US Department of Defense, 2015). Therefore, the study will help refine its security programs and align its foreign relations goals with regional stability and sustainable maritime security.

At regional level, the study supports the African Union's 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (AIMS), which advocates for maritime stability, economic development and environmental sustainability around maritime area of Africa (African Union, 2012). The findings of the study may guide the development of policy frameworks that enhance regional ownership of maritime security while fostering productive partnerships with international actors.

In addition, the study contributes to the implementation of international maritime security frameworks such as Djibouti Code of Conduct, by emphasizing on the role of bilateral diplomacy in operationalizing these agreements. DCoC works hand in hand with IMO to promote safe, secure and environmentally sound shipping through global cooperation and regulatory development. Therefore, the study will provide insights and recommendations on best practices for maritime cooperation with international organizations, aimed at security and stability.

## **1.8 Scope of the study**

This research will be conducted in Kenya focusing Kenya-USA Naval collaboration from 2010 to 2024. According to International Maritime Bureau (2011), the year 2010 marked the peak of piracy and maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Aden whereby 200 pirate attacks cases were recorded-prompting increased international naval deployments and the formalization of regional security frameworks. This period saw the strengthening of Kenya – USA defense relations, including regular joint naval exercises, port visits and maritime security training-providing a rich ground for analysis (AFRICOM, 2020). The period was characterized by the operationalization of the Djibouti Code of Conduct and its 2017 Jeddah Amendment, whereby Kenya and USA were key players that supported the operational goals-making it a relevant timeframe for evaluating policy impacts (IMO, 2017).

The study will be done in Mombasa targeting Kenya Coast Guard Service (KCGS) and Kenya Navy personnel. It will also be done in Nairobi to target the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry Defense, USA Embassy and USA Military and Defense Attaches in Kenya. Part of study will be done in Lamu County to reach Kenya and USA Naval personnel at Kenya Naval Base Manda Bay. The study will be conducted between June and August 2025 aiming to collect data on nature of Kenya Navy-US Navy bilateral diplomatic relationship, the approach and strategies it uses, the opportunities arising and challenges encountered in the Kenya - USA Naval diplomacy.

## **1.9 Limitations of the study**

The problem of geographical constraint is imminent during this study because conducting field research in the Gulf of Aden may not be feasible due to logistical and security concerns. The research is likely to encounter data bias due to reliance on government and diplomatic reports, policy documents and media sources. These sources often emphasize on the successes of naval

diplomacy and may underreport failures, challenges or internal disagreements between Kenya and USA.

Another limitation is the Western-centric perspectives, particularly in the interpretation of maritime security and diplomacy. Most of literature, policy frameworks and strategic doctrines used in analysis are developed by Western institutions such as NATO, the US Department of Defense and international think tanks based in the global North. These sources may prioritize Western security interests and values, potentially overshadowing African perspectives and approaches to maritime governance. Hence the study may reflect an imbalanced view that places more weight on USA strategies and objectives rather than capturing Kenya's regional narratives.

### **1.10 Delimitations**

To overcome the challenges that are likely to be experienced in this study, the researcher will use multi-source research, expert consultations, academic journals and institutions to ensure neutrality in data collection. The study will cross-check information from multiple sources to eliminate bias while critical assessment will be employed to look for gaps and challenges rather than successes only. To counter Western- centric views and ensure that African security priorities are represented, inclusion of local and regional voices will be employed, including documents from Kenya Navy, AU and local maritime experts. To overcome the limitation on geographical constraint the researcher will rely on USA personnel available such as Military and Defense Attachés and USA Embassy officials to collect data. The researcher will use policy analysis and secondary data analysis where fieldwork is restricted, so as to achieve a comprehensive analysis of Kenya-USA Naval diplomacy and maritime security.

### **1.11 Assumptions**

It is assumed that Kenya and USA naval diplomacy remained viable, cooperative and mutually beneficial throughout the study period. This viability is essential for enabling sustained naval

collaboration and joint security operations and initiatives in addressing maritime security threats thus, allowing adequate assessment and comprehensive research.

### **1.12 Operational definition of key terms**

**Bilateral diplomacy:** The direct and formal interaction between two sovereign states to manage their relations, foreign policy goals and promote mutual agreements.

**International waters:** Areas of the sea that go beyond a country's jurisdiction (beyond the EEZ) and are governed by international law (UNCLOS, 1982).

**Maritime area:** Any portion of the Earth's water-covered surface that is governed by maritime law and subject to various jurisdictional zones. It includes internal waters, territorial seas, contiguous zones, EEZs, continental shelves and the high seas (UNCLOS, 1982).

#### **Maritime safety:**

The technical and operational standards necessary to ensure that ships are safe to operate and that seafarers and the environment are protected from harm (IMO, 1974).

**Maritime security:** Measures taken to protect ships, ports and other maritime facilities against threats such as terrorism, piracy, armed robbery and unlawful acts (IMO, 1974).

**Maritime smuggling:** Illegal transportation of goods and contrabands through seas and international waters.

**Maritime terrorism:** Criminal acts carried out at sea with the intent of killing, causing casualties, creating fear, disrupt trade and pose a great threat to maritime security.

**Maritime trafficking:** Illegal transportation of people, drugs, weapons, wildlife or contrabands

through international waters.

**Naval diplomacy:** The cooperation of various naval forces from different states through peaceful engagements and deliberations to promote each state's national interests and enhance maritime security while strengthening international relations.

**Naval operations:** Coordinated activities carried out by naval forces (warships, submarines, aircraft and personnel) to achieve specific military, security, humanitarian and diplomatic objectives at sea. These operations include: Combat missions, exercises, training, patrols, warfare, counter-piracy, counter terrorism, search and rescue, humanitarian assistance, disaster response, surveillance and cooperative operations with other nations.

**Piracy:** Any illegal acts of violence or detention, or any act of depredation, committed for private ends by the crew or passengers of a private ship or aircraft, and directed on the high seas against another ship or aircraft or against persons or property onboard such ship or aircraft (UNCLOS, 1982).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter will cover an empirical review of existing literature in areas related to Kenya- USA bilateral diplomatic relationships in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden. It will emphasize on the significance of bilateral cooperation in addressing the region's complex security challenges. The Gulf of Aden has been faced by maritime security threats including piracy, terrorism, smuggling, and trafficking of arms and drugs. This chapter will highlight the importance of collaborative security measures, joint naval operations, intelligence sharing and capacity building initiatives aimed at projecting maritime security. This analysis will create a notable research gap concerning a systematic and theory- based analysis of how Kenya- USA naval relations contribute to maritime security in the Gulf of Aden. This section will also cover the theoretical review including liberalism, realism, constructivism, deterrence and regional complex theories to provide a framework for understanding, interpreting and analyzing the study. A conceptual framework of the study will be developed to establish the relationship between variables.

#### **2.1 Empirical Literature Review**

This section will analyze past scholarly works based on the highlighted thematic topics to identify a research gap.

### **2.1.1 Kenya- USA Bilateral relationship**

Kenya and the U.S. have complicated and multifaceted relationships for over 60 years. At first, they were talking to each other diplomatically. This initial alliance has expanded to include multiple strategic domains that now include diplomatic, security, trade, technological and regional political aspects. The economy of Kenya dominates East Africa and positions itself as one of the key political players across the region which results in substantial effects on economic development and safety measures. Kenya provides strategic value to the United States in the Horn of Africa while being exploited by America to pursue its goals therein despite enduring persistent terrorism threats and unstable governments and pirate activities in the region. Their bond has developed into deeper relations for the past few years. The diplomatic relationship between Kenya and the United States deepened across modern fields including technology and business in addition to conventional sectors such as military accords. The following analysis explores the history of Kenyan-American relations through an examination of their most critical issues faced during different periods. Through historical context combined with relevant present-day events along with practical illustrations, the paper demonstrates operational processes.

Cooperation to combat terrorism alongside other security problems stands as the primary essential element in Kenya's relationship with the United States. The United States has maintained Kenya as its main partner throughout its anti-terrorism operations across East Africa for many years. Such significance exists because the area has evolved into a hub for radical activities. The United States of America identifies Kenya as its principal regional security guaranteeing partner which led to giving military support along with training and intelligence collaboration (Chome, 2021). Directly following the cataclysmic terrorist attacks at the United States Embassy in Nairobi in 1998 that killed 224 persons and injured hundreds more the relationship between Kenya and the United States strengthened dramatically. A major change took place in America-Kenyan diplomatic relations

following this incident. The terrorist attacks at the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi caused the American government to prioritize Kenya's fight against East African terrorism. This tragedy revealed the shaky position of Kenya and demonstrated the requirement for worldwide collaboration against increasing international terrorism threats. After that incident the United States decided to dedicate attention and specialized tools for training Kenya to better deal with security problems especially those threats terrorism groups brought to East Africa. Authorities implemented these measures in order to let Kenya better confront upcoming problems.

The fight against the Al-Shabaab terrorist group stands as a highlight of Kenya- USA collaboration because the group carried out the notorious 2013 Westgate Mall attack in Nairobi that killed many people (International Crisis Group, 2018). Through their military war against Al-Shabaab the United States provides Kenya with financial assistance and logistical support. Through U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) Kenya receives modern military equipment and intelligence capacities while training programs focused on counterterrorism serve as the main aspect of bilateral cooperation. The U.S. military organization AFRICOM serves as the key coordinator for defense support to Kenya in order to expand its military strength. In exchange, Kenya hosts U.S. military soldiers at Camp Simba, a key post in Lamu serving as a hub for counterterrorism operations in the Horn of Africa. The strategic site of Camp Simba offers dual advantages which allow both U.S. troop movements and provides crucial resources and information meant to assist Kenya and other partner nations in fighting terrorism. The battle against terrorism in the region has been made possible because of the successful collaborative relationship which addresses security issues generated by Al-Shabaab alongside other extremist organizations.

Trade activity together with business has steadily increased throughout the years which indicates the robust relationship between the U.S. and Kenya. The United States considers Kenya to be its

essential trade partner throughout East Africa since its economy offers inclusive development opportunities. The data from 2024 shows that U.S. exports to Kenya grew by more than 60% (Ocholla, 2025) thus indicating enhanced business partnerships between the two nations. The United States plays a large role in developing the energy sector as well as infrastructure and agriculture throughout Kenya. American businesses seek to benefit from growing markets and regional economic center status in the country. American companies show increasing interest in developing Kenya's green energy industry. General Electric together with Power Africa actively support Kenyan infrastructure development through their work on wind power and solar energy and geothermal projects. The leadership of Kenya has designed Vision 2030 as a national development blueprint to transform it from its current lower-middle to middle-income industrial status by 2030. The participation follows the established plan.

Items from Kenyan origin can enter the U.S. market without duties through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). These international agreements strengthen the trade activities between Kenya and the United States (Jureńczyk & Szatłach, 2023). The textile and flower industries have been the main beneficiaries of this agreement which benefits Kenya substantially. The future of AGOA remains uncertain because the United States shows signs of reviewing its trade ties with nations in Africa. The country investigates new trade opportunities since the future of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) remains uncertain so Kenya focuses on pursuing free trade agreement negotiations with the United States. Keen market access to U.S. markets would give Kenya better prospects for competitiveness within the global market. The continuing discussion of an FTA demonstrates the rising significance of economic partnership between Kenya and the United States.

Digital collaboration together with technological advancements assume greater importance in the Kenya- USA diplomatic relationship. For the past ten years Kenya's technology sector growth has

earned it the title of "Silicon Savannah" in Africa thus making it an influential sub-Saharan innovator. Telecom companies offering mobile money services throughout the country enabled Kenya to establish dominant roles in mobile technology innovation and financial inclusion throughout the region. The United States regards Kenya as a leading tech hub that prompts extensive investments toward advancing its digital infrastructure. Through multiple collaboration and development schemes American tech companies Google, Microsoft, and IBM actively support Kenyan tech sector development (Oloo, 2023). Both the United States and Kenya cooperate on digital skill training to establish qualified employees who will drive technology sector development. Technical support from the Kenya- USA Digital Economy Cooperation Framework enabled Kenya to build better e-commerce facilities and reach more people with broad internet services including rural areas. These initiatives will help Kenya establish dominance over the regional digital economy to support its objective.

The United States enjoys complex relations with Kenya that demonstrate strength and complexity together. The partnership between these two countries has established major outcomes concerning trade agreements combined with technological cooperation and counterterrorism efforts and regional safety measures. Although both nations maintain strong bilateral relations problems stemming from domestic political turmoil alongside human rights concerns and Chinese growing influence in Kenya obstruct the smooth relationship. The path of future Kenya-USA diplomatic relations will develop based on mutual efforts to resolve present difficulties while actively promoting areas of shared interests. Both countries expect the Kenya- USA relationship to continue forming the foundation of their East African and broader international foreign policy. Kenya together with the United States can direct the development of African politics and economics by resolving regional issues and strengthening engagement in new economic domains.

### **2.1.2 Maritime security threats in the Gulf of Aden**

Gulf of Aden is an essential sea corridor connecting the Red Sea to the Arabian Sea, and it is an important part of world trade, especially for moving oil, gas, and other goods. However, because it is strategically important, it has become the center of many security problems, such as piracy, terrorism attacks, and international disagreements. In the last 20 years, there have been different levels of piracy in the area. Somali pirates have slowed down maritime trade. Recently, unexpected dangers like Houthi rebel attacks on business boats have made things even more complicated when it comes to security. International navy troops and security measures have eased some concerns, but new problems are still making marine activities in the area less stable. To deal with these issues, we need a multifaceted plan that includes armed protection, political involvement, and long-term economic plans to ensure that boats travelling along one of the world's most important trade lines are safe.

One of the most persistent dangers of the Gulf of Aden is piracy. Peaking between 2008 and 2012, Somali piracy harmed maritime commerce badly by causing many hijackings and ransom payments (Galgano, 2024). Recent statistics show a resurgence of pirate activities even if anti-piracy initiatives like naval patrols, armed shipboard security, and Best Management Practices (BMP) have significantly reduced them. There was an apparent increase in pirate attacks, given 33 documented occurrences of armed robbery and maritime piracy against vessels in the first quarter of 2024 alone. These attacks resulted in the abduction of nine seafarers and the imprisonment of 35, highlighting the continuous insecurity of vessels operating in the region (The Gard, 2025). Though not as common as ten years ago, piracy remains a significant concern, particularly in light of Somalia's weak government and economic uncertainty, which support a climate favorable to piracy.

Other than piracy, the rise of complex dangers from non-state players has worsened security problems. The Houthi rebel group in Yemen has been striking commercial ships more often with drones, rockets, and boats full of explosives to stop trade on the water. Five sailors were killed when the Houthis attacked more than 100 merchant boats in November 2023 (Gambrell, 2021). They sank two of the boats and hurt four others. Shippers have had to change the boats' routes because of these attacks, making operations more expensive and speeding up travel times. The Houthis use this strategy to put political pressure on the Yemeni government as well as to mess with business. This new development makes the security situation in the Gulf of Aden more complicated and makes people wonder if countries in the area, like Iran, are directly backing these actions.

Trafficking refers to the illegal trade or transport of people or goods often for the purposes of exploitation or profit. Trafficking in the Gulf of Aden is a critical humanitarian and security issue, largely centered around human trafficking, though it can also include illicit trade in weapons and other goods. Thousands of migrants from Ethiopia, Somalia and Eritrea attempt to cross the Gulf of Aden to reach Yemen and the Gulf states, often seeking jobs or safety. Traffickers exploit them by charging high fees, then subjecting them to abuse, forced labor, sexual exploitation or kidnapping for ransom. Weapons are trafficked across the Gulf to fuel conflicts in Yemen and Somalia, often in violation of international arms embargoes (Tadesse & Tafesse, 2024). Trafficking in the region remains a grave concern, particularly human trafficking driven by conflict, poverty and desperation.

Smuggling is the illegal movement of goods or people across borders, typically to avoid taxes, import/ export restrictions or legal prohibitions. It involves drugs, weapons, counterfeit products, or endangered animals. Smuggling in the Gulf of Aden is a significant maritime security issue due to its strategic location. Weapons are smuggled across the Gulf to conflict zones in Yemen and

Somalia, often fueling insurgencies and criminal groups. Iran has been accused of smuggling arms to Houthi rebels in Yemen via sea routes. The Somali pirate groups and militias also receive weapons through illicit maritime channels. Fuel smuggling from Gulf countries is often done for profits. Drugs and narcotics particularly from South Asia pass through the Gulf towards East Africa or Europe. These illegal activities undermine law and order, fuels conflict and causes humanitarian crises (Siebels, 2020).

Terrorism in the Gulf of Aden is a significant threat to regional and international security, driven by militant groups that exploit the region's instability and strategic location. The Al- Shabaab of Somalia and Al- Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula area the main terrorist actors operating around the Gulf. These groups use the region for recruitment, training, fundraising and launching attacks both on land and at sea. Terrorists attack government institutions, security forces, civilians and international organizations. Terrorism financing is through smuggling of weapons, drugs and people across the Gulf, illegal charcoal trade and collaboration with organized crime networks (Abir, 2020). Their activities have impacted negatively on global trade, security, safety of maritime routes and led to humanitarian crises. Terrorism remains a persistent threat that undermines regional stability, maritime security and global trade.

International military alliances have increased their presence in response to these threats. For instance, to combat piracy and terrorist operations, the U.S. has sent out guided-missile destroyers like the USS Spruance and USS Gravely (Roche, 2025). These ships have been actively stopping smuggling, intercepting illegal weapons shipments, and discouraging assaults on commercial ships. However, there are dangers associated with the region's militarization. Direct conflicts are more likely when large naval forces are involved, especially if Houthi troops or other non-state actors intensify their assaults. The expanding military reaction to marine threats is shown by the

recent U.S. airstrikes against Houthi locations, but they also raise worries about potential destabilization and inadvertent civilian losses (Roche, 2025).

As a way to make things better for business ships and boost security, the Maritime Security Transit Corridor (MSTC) was built. This route, which goes through the Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and the Gulf of Aden, is watched over by countries working together and using up-to-date marine maps that show real-time security alerts (Maritime Security Transit Corridor (MSTC), n.d.). Even though the MSTC sets up a sound security system, the program cannot work without ongoing military missions and private shipping companies willing to follow security rules. Some significantly smaller fishing and cargo ships are still vulnerable because they cannot add as many security steps as bigger ships.

Finally, the security problems in the Gulf of Aden signify a more prominent geopolitical conflict where criminal activity, regional conflicts, and business interests come together. Since piracy, asymmetric warfare, and geopolitical rivalry are ongoing, long-term solutions will need a mix of military deterrence, diplomatic engagement, and economic growth. This is true even though international naval operations have reduced some threats. The Gulf of Aden will remain a center for maritime security issues that significantly affect world trade and stability as long as there is no regular international cooperation and stability in the region.

### **2.1.3 The role of the Kenya Navy in maritime security**

The Kenyan Navy is essential for keeping the Indian Ocean and the country's coast safe to sail in. The Navy, part of the Kenya Defense Forces (KDF), protects the country's national areas, keeps its marine resources safe, and works to keep the region stable. As long as Kenya is located along the East African coast, maritime security will remain a significant national and regional issue. This is because Kenya is close to many important international trade routes. The Navy does more than

protect the country. It also fights illegal trade, stops illegal fishing, stops pirates, and helps with foreign security tasks.

One of the most crucial tasks the Kenyan Navy is in charge of is the battle against piracy, a persistent issue in the Western Indian Ocean. Over the last twenty years, especially off the coast of Somalia, piracy has endangered regional economies and international commerce. The Kenyan Navy has worked with naval forces from other nations to discourage and destroy pirate activities in response to this (Mbugua & Mwachinalo, 2017). Kitimo (2021) claims that via more patrols and information sharing, regional navies—including Kenya's—have significantly reduced the frequency of pirate events. Kenya Navy has participated in Exercise Cutlass Express, a USA-led multinational naval exercise focused on improving maritime law enforcement and combating piracy. This has improved commerce and helped to create a safer marine environment. By actively participating in the battle against piracy, the Kenyan Navy helps to safeguard marine commerce routes, which are vital to the nation's economy.

The Navy's job is to stop illegal fishing in Kenya's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Illegal, unreported, and uncontrolled (IUU) fishing threatens the jobs of people who live near the coast and uses up marine resources. Studies show that illegal fishing costs Kenya millions of dollars annually in missed income and environmental damage (Maina, 2025). To deal with this issue, the Navy scans the area daily and works with the Kenya Coast Guard Service to catch foreign boats fishing without permission. These steps will help protect Kenya's blue economy and sea ecosystem for future generations.

Kenya's Navy is also crucial in preventing transnational crimes like drug and human trafficking and marine smuggling. Criminals use unregulated shipping routes to transport illicit goods, as the country's maritime borders are weak. According to a Renovic and Hamilton (2019) article, the largest port of Kenya, Mombasa, has acted as a transit hub for illegal drug cargoes bound for outside

markets. The Navy reacts to enhance national and regional security by carrying out thorough, coordinated operations and monitoring with other security forces to prevent these illegal trafficking actions.

Kenya Navy has played a vital role in counterterrorism. The navy works with other national security agencies to safeguard Kenya's maritime domain against the infiltration and movement of terrorist groups such as Al- Shabaab, which has historically posed threats along Kenya's coastline and maritime borders. The Manda Bay Naval Base in Lamu County, which hosts Kenyan and USA forces, serves as a strategic outpost for monitoring extremist activity, conducting air and sea patrols and launching coordinated counterterrorism operations in the region (Jureńczyk, 2021).

The Kenya Navy plays a vital role in maritime search and rescue (SAR) operations, often collaborating with international partners to enhance regional maritime safety and security. In October 2024, the Kenya Navy and KCGS participated in joint SAR exercises with the EU Naval Force as part of Operation Atalanta. These exercises included simultaneous rescue missions and maritime interdiction operations, enhancing interoperability and response capabilities between the forces. Notably, the EU flagship ESPS SANTA MARIA and Kenya Navy's KNS SHUJAA conducted combined maneuvers, including boarding party operations (Ministry of Defense - Kenya, 2025).

Kenya Navy and United Kingdom's Royal Navy have maintained a robust and evolving partnership aimed at enhancing maritime security, countering regional threats and building long-term naval capacity. The formation of the Kenyan Marine Commando Unit (KMCU) in 2023 was modeled after the UK's Royal Marines. The Royal Marines has continued to facilitate training to KMCU to become a self-sustaining elite force within the Kenya Navy. UK Navy' ship HMS Lancaster paid a Port visit to Kenya in July 2024 and during their stay, they conducted joint naval exercises with the Kenya Navy within Kenyan territorial waters. These drills enhanced tactical skills and

strengthened the collaborative framework between the two navies. Continued cooperation between Kenya Navy and Royal Navy has majorly impacted on capacity building of Kenya Navy thus facilitating her readiness and capability in combating maritime threats (Ministry of Defense - Kenya, 2025).

In addition to its work in Kenya, the Navy is also involved in military and security tasks worldwide. It backs global and regional projects like the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF). AMISOM was a regional peacekeeping operation established by AU to support the Somali government in fight against terrorism. The Kenya Navy maintained a significant naval presence off the Somali coast, enforcing a blockade that restricted smuggling, piracy and terrorism activities of Al- Shabaab. According to the Ministry of Defense (Kenya), these relationships help keep the region safe and make Kenya stronger in international security issues (Ministry of Defense - Kenya, 2025).

Combined Maritime Force is a voluntary and non- binding multinational naval partnership established in 2001 with its headquarters in Bahrain. It is aimed at promoting security, stability and prosperity in maritime regions of Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Arabian sea Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. Kenya is a member of CMF and has participated in joint operations, information sharing and capacity- building initiatives launched by CMF, to improve maritime domain awareness and interoperability. Kenya Navy has conducted counter- terrorism and counter- piracy operations to deter the threats in the region, particularly off Somali coast (No, 2021). By working with CMF, Kenya Navy has fostered efforts towards maritime security in the Western Indian Ocean which would eventually result to regional stability. CMF also provides Kenya Navy with access to resources and expertise, strengthening her operational readiness.

Kenya's Navy is vital for anti-piracy operations, counter- terrorism, marine resource preservation, smuggling prevention, and involvement in regional and international security efforts to help

preserve maritime security. Its efforts safeguard national interests and help maintain regional stability in the Western Indian Ocean. Maintaining investment in naval capabilities and working with other countries will be more important as maritime threats evolve -to strengthen Kenya's maritime security system.

#### **2.1.4 The role of the U.S.A Navy in the Gulf of Aden**

The Gulf of Aden is a significant place for the U.S. Navy. It is a strategically important route that connects the Arabian Sea to the Red Sea. This area is an important overseas trade route, especially for oil supplies through the Suez Canal. Because it is so important for trade and politics, the Gulf of Aden has been the site of pirates, regional wars, and global tensions. Due to concerns about terrorists, protecting foreign trade lines, and maintaining marine security, the U.S. Navy is in the area.

One of the main goals of the U.S. Navy in the Gulf of Aden is to fight piracy. In the early 2000s, Somali piracy was a significant threat to commercial ships, so international military groups like the Combined Task Force 151 (CTF-151) were formed to protect them. The U.S. Navy, a big part of this task force, has done several counter-piracy actions to stop and prevent pirate activities. Ahorsu et al. (2024) note that the presence of military troops in the area has made pirate attacks much less common. Attacks have gone from being very common in 2011 to rarely happening in recent years. The U.S. Navy has been essential in keeping business ships safe in these seas by patrolling, monitoring, and getting involved directly.

Apart from counter-piracy efforts, the U.S. Navy conducts more thorough maritime security operations in the Gulf of Aden. Many security threats in the region include extremist groups like Al-Shabaab and Houthi rebels that have targeted naval and marine vessels. The Navy conducts cooperative drills and intelligence-sharing initiatives with allied forces to offset these dangers

(Shinn, 2020). These projects help maintain regional peace and protect international economic interests by preventing unlawful activities like terrorism and arms trafficking.

The U.S.A Navy helps with crisis aid and other charity work in the Gulf of Aden. The Gulf of Aden is close to war zones like Somalia and Yemen and therefore, navy troops have been significant in helping affected places by getting supplies and medical care to them. Even though security is terrible, the U.S. Navy has ensured that relief aid packages can safely pass through during the current civil war in Yemen, ensuring that people who need it get it (Aljazeera, 2024). These acts show how committed the Navy is to helping people in need and how it helps keep things stable when there are no wars.

The U.S. Navy has a range of duties in the Gulf of Aden, managing everything from regional conflicts and humanitarian crises to terrorism and piracy. Its initiatives have strengthened marine security, reduced pirate sightings, and facilitated the safe movement of commercial and humanitarian goods. The U.S. Navy has to remain present in the area to maintain stability and safeguard the strategic interests of the USA and her allies. The U.S. Navy keeps the Gulf of Aden a safe and navigable waterway for international commerce and security by working with allies worldwide and reacting to new threats.

### **2.1.5 Naval bilateral relations, impacts and roles on maritime security**

Naval mutual relationships are important for marine security because they promote cooperation, increase regional stability, and lower risks like piracy, illegal fishing and border conflicts. These links are made using defense deals, joint drills, and sharing information. They help keep the ocean safe and well-regulated. Because marine trade and local authority are becoming more important, two-way military partnerships are necessary to protect freedom of passage and follow international maritime rules.

Bilateral naval cooperation increases maritime security and enables joint patrols, information exchange, and capacity-building initiatives. For instance, the United States and Japan have built a strong naval alliance that allows synchronized maritime domain awareness operations (PCN 50100770000, 2013), helping avoid any dangers in the Indo-Pacific region. These alliances help to maintain marine routes vital for energy supply and international trade. Moreover, by promoting interoperability among naval forces, these partnerships help them to handle regional and humanitarian emergencies effectively.

Another notable impact is the importance of bilateral naval relations in fighting transnational maritime crimes and piracy. The remarkable drop in pirate incidents brought on by the French Navy and Indian Navy collaboration in patrolling the Indian Ocean has shown the effectiveness of coordinated naval operations (Danzell et al., 2021). Navies can guarantee sea safety by exchanging information, conducting joint exercises, monitoring suspicious behavior, and discouraging unlawful activities. These alliances also help implement the UNCLOS by strengthening the maritime security legal system.

The management of territorial disputes and the development of diplomatic connections are two additional ways in which bilateral naval engagements contribute to the stability of the area. A good example of how naval diplomacy may be used as a deterrent mechanism against aggressive maritime claims is the collaboration between the United States Navy and the Philippine Navy in the South China Sea (Beebe, 2024). At the same time, as these collaborations enforce international legal standards via naval drills and presence operations, they also discourage unilateral acts that may aggravate tensions. Additionally, this participation improves the level of confidence between states, reducing the possibility of misunderstandings and disagreements about maritime borders, hence contributing to global stability.

Additionally, navy relationships between bilateral enhance combat power and lead to significant technological advances. For instance, Australia and the UK are working together to make cutting-edge marine security systems (Christianson et al., 2023) as an example of how sharing technology and studying together could help update navy forces. In addition to improving each country's military power, these partnerships help make joint security plans that keep the balance of power in key ports. When working together on research and development projects, countries can improve their ships and prepare for new security risks.

Bilateral naval partnerships are crucial to enhancing maritime security through cooperative patrols, counter-piracy initiatives, territorial conflict resolution, and technological advancements. These partnerships promote a stable and safe marine environment by enabling information sharing, interoperability, and capacity building. As long as maritime threats around the world continue to evolve, building and maintaining strong naval alliances will remain vital.

### **2.1.6 The bilateral challenges and opportunities arising from naval diplomacy**

Naval diplomacy is an important part of international relations because it helps people work together while also creating strategic problems. Naval troops protect national interests, participate in diplomacy and keep the peace in foreign waters. Countries use port visits, relief missions, freedom of passage activities and joint drills as forms of military diplomacy to influence relations between two countries. This discussion could strengthen economic and ally ties, cause chaos in the world's politics and put strategy planners in a tough spot. The fact that military diplomacy is so complicated, there needs to be a careful balance between working together and competing with each other.

One of the best things about navy diplomacy is that it helps countries work together on security issues. Through deals to share information and joint military training, states can work together to fight illegal fishing, drug trafficking, and piracy. Working together helps stabilize the region by

building trust and strengthening relationships (Islam, 2024). The United States, India, Japan and Australia participated in the Malabar navy drill, making it easier for armies to work together and keep regional risks at bay (Haldar, 2024). These exchanges have benefits, such as strategic teamwork and sharing technology, necessary to keep the peace in the seas being fought over. Furthermore, sea strategy is important for achieving business goals. Safe sea paths ensure that goods and energy resources, which are important to the world economy, can keep moving. Bilateral military deals, such as the 2016 Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement between the U.S.A and India, improve trade by making it easier for naval ships to reach key ports (Muneer, n.d.). Countries that engage in marine diplomacy also often contribute to joint building projects, like port development programs, that help the area grow and connect economically. Countries may become more economically dependent on each other and build strong supply networks through these deals.

Even with these benefits, sea diplomacy encounters jurisdictional and legal issues from ambiguities or disputes over the application of international maritime law, primarily UNCLOS. On the high seas, no single nation has sovereignty, but issues arise over who has jurisdiction to interdict ships suspected of piracy, terrorism and trafficking. In the Gulf of Aden, naval forces from multiple countries like NATO, EU and USA patrol for Somali pirates. However, capturing and prosecuting pirates is difficult due to questions of legal authority and which state will take custody. Once pirates are captured, legal questions arise about where and under whose law they will be tried (Rahman & Al Amin, 2024).

Another problem arises when dealing with land issues. Countries that use military diplomacy sometimes face problems when they have different sea rights, like in the South China Sea. According to the Council on Foreign Relations (2024), joint military searches may be seen as actions that make things worse between big countries, even though their real goal may be to protect

freedom of passage. For example, U.S. freedom of passage efforts around islands that China claims have led to political problems and a more substantial military presence by Beijing. These events show that if marine diplomacy is not done right, it can make things worse instead of better. Coordination and communication challenges are significant obstacles in naval diplomacy, particularly during multinational operations or bilateral engagements. Navies often use different communication systems, data-sharing protocols and operational procedures. These technical incompatibilities hinder effective coordination during joint missions. The Kenya Navy may lack secure, real-time communication systems compatible with USA Navy platforms in their role of enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden. This problem limits the effectiveness of joint patrols or intelligence sharing. Language and cultural barrier are other problems creating misunderstandings and misinterpretations during operations thus affecting mission execution (Liu, 2023).

Maritime diplomacy is still a double-edged sword that offers possibilities for cooperation and challenges that might strain two-way relations. While it increases the likelihood of unanticipated conflicts and territorial disputes, it also promotes strategic involvement, economic cooperation, and security alliances. Navigating these challenges requires diplomatic judgment, honest communication, and a commitment to peaceful involvement. In a time of shifting geopolitical dynamics, the efficacy of naval diplomacy will depend on countries' ability to combine strategic objectives with cooperative maritime administration.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

The study utilizes the Regional Security Complex theory, liberalism theory, constructivism, realism and deterrence theory to evaluate the Kenya -USA Naval diplomatic relationship in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden.

### **2.2.1 Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT)**

RSCT was postulated by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever in 2003 in their book on ‘Regions and Power’ focusing on ‘The Structure of Global Security’. The theory offers a valuable analytical framework for understanding the patterns of security interdependence among geographically proximate states. RSCT asserts that security dynamics are most intense at the regional level, where states are closely linked by shared threats, interests and historical ties (Farzayee, 2023). The Gulf of Aden forms a distinct regional security complex whereby the maritime threats in the area directly affects East Africa littoral states. Kenya being one of such states in the region is also a key player in maritime security. Although USA is a global power, her engagement in the region through RSCT is explained by the theory’s notion of penetration, where an external nation becomes involved due to complexities in a region.

The theory directly aligns with the study as it helps to explain the nature of the bilateral naval diplomacy as a regional response against maritime security threats. Strategies such as joint operations, capacity building and intelligence cooperation are regionally embedded. RSCT highlights the opportunities for Kenya to assume leadership roles in regional maritime security while contributing to a stable regional order. Therefore, RSCT provides a regionally grounded framework for understanding the Kenya – USA naval diplomacy in enhancing maritime stability in the Gulf of Aden.

### **2.2.2 Liberalism Theory**

Liberalism was coined by thinkers such as John Locke, Immanuel Kant, Woodrow Wilson and Adam Smith. Liberal thoughts emphasize on the importance of international cooperation, institutions, democracy and interdependence to achieve foreign policy goals such as economic prosperity, world peace, security and stability (Kwarteng & Frimpong, 2018). Liberalism theory provides a valuable lens for analyzing the bilateral naval diplomacy between Kenya and USA. This

theory is applicable to the naval collaboration between Kenya and USA in the Gulf of Aden as both countries engage in joint maritime exercises, anti-piracy operations and intelligence sharing to safeguard the area. This partnership is not based on coercion but on interdependence and mutual benefit.

Liberalism in this naval diplomacy promotes the use of international and regional institutions such as AU, IGAD, UN and IMO to facilitate joint operations, information sharing and adherence to international maritime law, all aimed at enhancing maritime security and safety in the Gulf of Aden. Kenya's participation in this partnership enhances her regional influence while USA benefits from regional stability and power projection.

Furthermore, the partnership illustrates that the liberal idea that long-term stability is best achieved not through unilateral power, but through sustained dialogue, trust-building and shared commitment to international stability. By working together through mutual interests and shared objectives, Kenya and USA exemplify how liberalism facilitate the achievement of stability and security and shaping of modern naval diplomacy.

### **2.2.3 Constructivism theory**

Constructivism theory of international relations as pointed out by Wendt in 1999 and argues that international interactions are influenced by social constructs such as ideas, identities, norms and shared understandings rather than just military power and economic prosperity. This emphasizes on the role of states' identity, perceptions and diplomatic interactions in shaping foreign policy (Peltonen, 2017). In the framework of this study, the theory allows for a rich understanding of how shared values, identities and perceptions shape diplomatic practices and cooperation strategies.

Constructivism emphasizes that the nature of naval diplomacy between Kenya and USA is not fixed but evolves through social interactions, shared norms and mutual understanding. The naval

diplomacy is a product of shared security concerns between Kenya and USA. Each country is interested in stability and order. Strategies used in the diplomacy such as Joint naval exercises, patrols, port calls, training programs and intelligence sharing can be understood as strategic moves that strengthens norms of cooperation, legitimacy and commitment between the two navies, fostering a sense of belonging within a security community.

The theory allows for interpretation of how divergent norms, identities or perceptions can create friction in diplomatic relations. Misalignments in threat perception may hinder the effectiveness of the naval diplomacy, hence maritime threats persist. Constructivism identifies how shifts in norms and identity construction can open up new possibilities for cooperation. Increased convergence on maritime issues between Kenya and USA creates a platform for socializing new security norms. Such norms include MOUs, agreements and partnerships- all aimed at strengthening a collective identity for securing the region and maritime area around the Gulf of

Aden.

#### **2.2.4 Realism theory**

Realism theory in international relations can be traced back to classical thinkers like Thucydides, Niccolo Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes who emphasized on power, self-interest, survival and the anarchic nature of international politics and relations (Rosenberg, 2024). This theory provides a pragmatic lens through which Kenya- USA naval diplomacy can be analyzed. The diplomacy reflects a strategic partnership in which both states seek to enhance their security and influence. Kenya aims at securing the Gulf of Aden as a regional key player in maritime security. USA as a global naval power engages in diplomacy with Kenya to protect her maritime interest and maintain influence in East Africa. The nature of this diplomacy is state- centric and transactional, emphasizing mutual benefits over shared values.

Strategies such as joint naval exercises and training, patrols and information sharing align with realist principles of hard power projection and self-help. Such initiatives serve the dual purpose of deterring regional threat like piracy and terrorism while reinforcing each state's position in the regional power structure. The challenges in this relationship are validated by realist assumptions, whereby national interests and priorities may divert over time leading to friction within the partnership. Despite challenges, realism also accounts for opportunities presented by such diplomacy. Kenya gains access to naval resources, training and international recognition, enhancing her ability to contribute to regional security. The USA secures a foothold in a strategic maritime corridor, enhancing her global reach and power projection.

### **2.2.5 Deterrence theory**

Deterrence theory was developed during the cold war era by thinkers like Bernard Brodie and Thomas Schelling assuming that states can prevent hostile actions by threatening credible and significant retaliation. This theory is rooted in security studies and explains how states and military actors use threats of retaliation of defensive postures to deter adversaries from engaging in hostile actions (Bengio, 2020). The Kenya Navy and USA Navy joint operations in the Gulf of Aden serve as a deterrent against piracy, illegal fishing, smuggling, human and drug trafficking and terrorist activities. The efforts by these two navies to demonstrate capability in the maritime corridor, conduct of joint patrols and exercises and intelligence sharing has acted as a deterrent to any potential threats. Through joint naval exercises, patrols and deployment of advanced surveillance technology, the two navies send a signal to aggressors that the maritime area is monitored and protected. The USA's Navy presence in the Gulf of Aden backed by superior naval technology has enhanced deterrence credibility. The visible presence of naval forces can deter criminal activities from taking place. The presence of both navies serves to project strength and commitment in the

region, showing that any violation of maritime security by pirates and terrorists would be met with coordinated and powerful response.

USA as a major security partner has provided Kenya with naval capacity through training, equipping and modernizing the fleet, enabling Kenya to respond quickly to threats and maintain a credible defense posture. USA efforts lead to Kenya Navy's growth and become more capable of independent deterrence. The bilateral naval engagements have been influential in sending military signal of commitment towards regional security thus deterring aggressors both state and non-state (Kraska, 2009). Therefore, this theory aligns well with the area of study as it expounds on how Kenya and USA Navies collaboration has deterred maritime security threats and hostilities in the Gulf of Aden.

### **2.3 Conceptual Framework**

The study's independent variable will be naval diplomatic cooperation between Kenya Navy and USA Navy whose attribute variables include nature of the naval diplomatic relationship and maritime security threats that necessitates the move, strategies used in bilateral diplomatic relationship, opportunities and challenges arising from the Kenya and USA Navies bilateral relationship in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden. Dependent variable will be Maritime Security in Gulf of Aden characterized by reduced piracy, maritime terrorism, trafficking and illegal fishing.

The bilateral naval diplomacy between Kenya and USA was as result of increased maritime threats including piracy, terrorism smuggling, trafficking and illegal fishing in the Gulf of Aden, aiming at reducing them. Therefore, the connection between bilateral naval diplomacy and maritime security in the Gulf of Aden is based on the premise that increased and well- structured diplomatic engagement between navies leads to improved security outcomes at sea. Bilateral naval diplomacy involves joint naval exercise, intelligence sharing, technical support and training programs between

Kenya Navy and USA Navy. These cooperative activities aim to enhance mutual understanding, build trust and improve operational readiness of both navies.

As these diplomatic interactions grow stronger, they directly contribute to enhanced capabilities in surveillance, patrolling and response to maritime threats. For instance, joint training exercise improves tactical coordination, while intelligence sharing allows for timely responses to piracy and illegal maritime activities. As a result, the coastal waters around the Gulf of Aden become more secure, characterized by reduction in maritime crimes (terrorism, piracy, trafficking, smuggling and illegal fishing), safer shipping routes and increased confidence among regional and international maritime stakeholders.

Challenges such as resource limitations, coordination and communication challenges, political and diplomatic constraints, differences in strategic priorities between both navies, legal and jurisdictional gaps between Kenya and USA can weaken the scope and intensity of naval diplomacy. These challenges reduce the effectiveness of diplomacy by affecting the frequency of joint exercises, limit intelligence sharing or slow down the implementation of agreements hence, maritime crimes will persist.

Opportunities such as increased international funding, access to modern naval equipment, training and technical expertise and regional security frameworks can strengthen diplomatic ties resulting in more sustainable maritime peace and stability.

An intervening variable is a factor that helps explain the process or mechanism through which an independent variable influences a dependent variable. It helps to clarify the nature of the relationship by revealing the underlying process through which the independent variable brings about changes in the dependent variable. These variables are essential in analyzing why naval diplomacy sometimes leads to strong results and other times does not. Operational readiness and capacity of the Kenya Navy is one such variable. This variable refers to the Kenya Navy's ability

to absorb, internalize and implement the outcomes of bilateral cooperation. It includes highly skilled personnel, modern naval assets and logistical support. Even when the USA provides advanced training, equipment and joint operational planning, the effectiveness of these initiatives depends heavily on Kenya's readiness to utilize them. Therefore, operational capacity is the bridge through which diplomacy is converted into actual maritime security outcomes.

The other intervening variable is institutional and legal framework for maritime security. This variable encompasses the laws, policies and institutional structures that govern maritime security in Kenya. Bilateral naval diplomacy may result in collaborative efforts but if domestic institutions are weak, the implementation of joint strategies may falter. For example, without legislation allowing for joint patrols or real-time intelligence sharing, even the most advanced naval cooperation will experience difficulties. Therefore, robust institutions and legal frameworks bring to successful application of diplomacy. Conceptual framework will be as presented in figure 2.1 below.

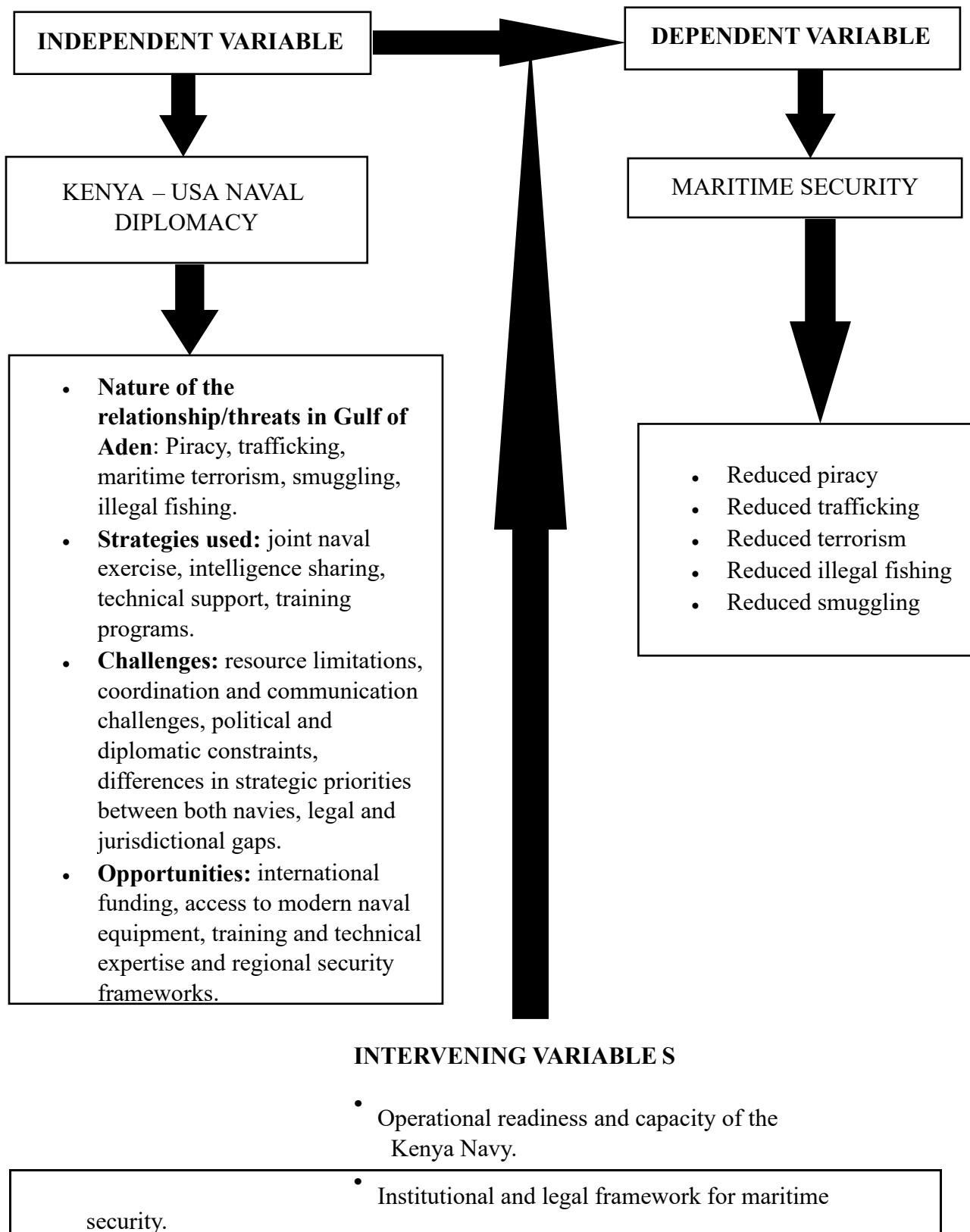


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework model

Source: Researcher (2025)

## **2.4 Recap of literature review**

The Gulf of Aden is a strategic trade route joining the Arabian sea to the Red sea through Suez Canal. It is bordered by Yemen to the North and Somalia to the South. The region has been unstable due to maritime terrorism caused by Al Shabaab terrorists of Somalia and Houthi rebels of Yemen. The region is also vulnerable to other security threats such as piracy, drug and human trafficking, illegal fishing and smuggling. Somali pirates increased in 2010 targeting commercial ships along the route and demanding ransom amounts of money. Illegal arms, drugs, contrabands and human trafficking has also been taking place in the waterway while foreign fleets conduct illegal and unregulated fishing.

Naval operations such as patrols in the waters have been conducted by Kenya Navy to reduce the threat. International actors such as USA Navy have been present in the Horn of Africa with a Naval Base in Djibouti in efforts to enhance maritime security in the region. Naval diplomacy through bilateral engagements have also been helpful in stabilizing the region. When the piracy and terrorism activities peaked in 2010, the two navies initiated bilateral relations on how to improve the areas security. The diplomatic bilateral relationship between Kenya Navy and USA Navy has conducted joint training and exercises, counter-piracy efforts, intelligence sharing and capacity building all aimed at creating regional order.

The Kenya- USA Navies bilateral diplomacy has been influential in the region towards achieving maritime stability, economic prosperity, technological advancement, diplomatic gains and has attracted more multilateral cooperations. It has been faced by several challenges including differences in technologies, different strategic priorities and competition from international actors. The challenge of maritime insecurity in the region still exists and the Kenya Navy-USA Navy bilateral diplomatic relationship in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden has not been fully researched and explored.

## **2.5 Research gap**

The maritime domain in the Gulf of Aden continues to face evolving security threats including piracy, illegal fishing, smuggling and trafficking. These challenges have prompted regional and international actors to enhance maritime security cooperation. While existing literature offers substantial analysis on USA Naval operations in the Gulf of Aden and multilateral initiatives such as those led by CMF, NATO or AU, there is lack of focused research on bilateral naval cooperations, particularly between Kenya Navy and USA Navy. Existing scholarly works examine Kenya's Naval role in her own coastal waters and leave out her role in regional maritime security operations such as joint patrols and exercises in the Gulf of Aden. Most researches have put little focus on the challenges experienced during naval diplomatic relationships.

This study will address this gap by exploring how the bilateral naval relationship between Kenya and USA serves as a tool of diplomacy and force multiplier in maritime security efforts. It will also examine how naval diplomacy contributes to improving Kenya's maritime security posture and operational effectiveness in the Gulf of Aden. The study will provide a nuanced understanding of the structure, tone and scope of the naval relationship between Kenya and USA. It will explore on the characteristics, evolution of the partnership and collaborations. The study will investigate and uncover the strategies, tools and methods used by both navies to improve maritime security. It will examine mechanisms such as joint naval exercises, training, intelligence sharing, capacity building and patrols. This will help to understand the practical implementation of the naval diplomacy to enhance maritime security in the Gulf of Aden.

The research will identify challenges that hinder the effectiveness of this partnership and critically evaluate them to offer recommendations on areas of policy and operational improvement and give proposals on how to strengthen the cooperation. Opportunities arising from this naval diplomacy will also be acknowledged to help policymakers and military strategists leverage the relationship

more effectively, identify areas for growth and expansion and encourage deeper maritime diplomacy for sustainable maritime stability. In doing so, the study not only fulfills its stated objectives but also adds to the broader discourse on the role of bilateral military partnerships in international relations, particularly in securing the maritime corridor in the Gulf of Aden.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This section in a nutshell will discuss the methods and procedure that will be used for data collection, analysis, interpretation and presentation. It will describe the research methods, research design, study population, sample size determination and sampling techniques. It will further discuss piloting, test of validity and reliability, data collection techniques, methods of data analysis and finally highlight ethical consideration during the study. This pattern of handling the research will be vital in achieving the findings while evaluating the Kenya - USA Naval bilateral diplomatic relationship in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden.

### **3.1 Research Methodology**

The research will utilize a mixed method approach that targets to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. The mixed-method approach is appropriate in this study because naval diplomacy and maritime security entails complex issues that involve both measurable and unmeasurable outcomes. Measurable outcomes involve piracy and terrorism rates, number of joint operations and number of port visits. These numbers help the researcher to draw conclusions on the effectiveness of the cooperation. Qualitative data outcomes such as interview findings helps to explain and give in-depth understanding of the strategies, challenges and opportunities arising from the diplomacy. Using both methods will also allow simultaneous triangulation for cross-validation, enhancing the credibility and validity of the findings.

Therefore, quantitative data will be acquired by use of structured set of questions while semistructured set of questions will help to gather qualitative data. In-depth interviews will be done on key informants and assist in collection of qualitative data. Document analysis will be used to acquire secondary data. The collected quantitative data will be cleaned and analyzed through statistical tools of SPSS Version 30 and Excel while qualitative data will be analyzed thematically by use of NVivo 15 software. The mixed method of data analysis for integration and interpretation

of qualitative and quantitative findings will be applied to allow the researcher interpret them together, hence drawing strong and comprehensive conclusions about the study. The mixed-method is preferable because it will give an opportunity to compare both the quantitative and qualitative findings and further explore them based on the research questions thus making it possible for the researcher to have a fuller and richer understanding of the Kenya - USA naval cooperation in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden.

### **3.2 Research Design**

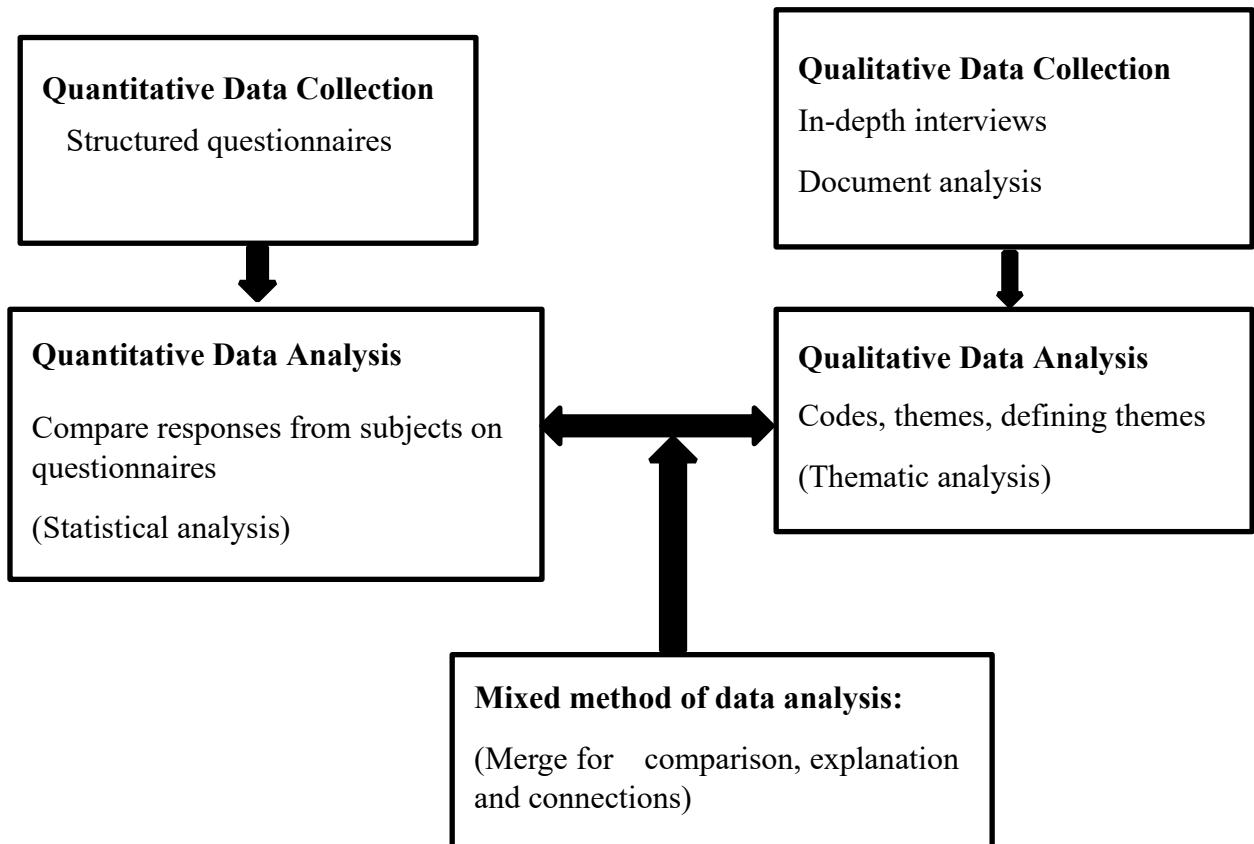
The study will integrate both descriptive and survey designs to facilitate the researcher to be able to achieve a comprehensive understanding of Kenya-USA Naval diplomacy in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden. Descriptive design explores information that describes perceptions of events in a phenomenon which has already occurred (Pawar, 2020). This study adopts a descriptive research design to analyze, because the study seeks to systematically document and explain the nature of diplomatic engagements, strategies used in the naval cooperation, challenges faced and contributions of the diplomacy to maritime security without altering the existing conditions. To support this, the survey design will be employed to gather first-hand information from key stakeholders involved in the naval diplomacy and maritime security initiatives in the Gulf of Aden. By designing questionnaires and interviews, the study will collect perceptions, experiences and assessments from naval officers, diplomats, security experts and maritime officials. The survey approach will allow the researcher to systematically capture diverse viewpoints regarding the effectiveness of bilateral naval cooperation, challenges faced and opportunities for strengthening maritime security. The survey will use both close-ended and open-ended questions to ensure a balance between quantifiable data and qualitative insights while face-to-face interviews with key informants will allow in-depth responses. Telephone surveys will also apply where physical access is difficult, thus saving time and cost.

Convenience and purposive sampling techniques will be used for the study. Purposive sampling will be used to select samples according to their experience and expertise in order to collect focused information. Purposive sampling will be most effective to Kenya Navy (operational level), KCGS (operational level) and US Navy personnel (operational level) since they are maritime security experts. Members from Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs, USA Embassy, USA Military and Defense Attachés will be sampled through purposive sampling because they are experts in their professions. Convenience sampling technique will select samples that are easy to access and in this case the researcher will target the naval personnel from local bases in Mombasa and Lamu Counties. Diplomats stationed in Kenya, officials from Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs are also accessible for this study. Convenience sampling is appropriate since it collects data at the moment you meet the respondents with limited procedures. The sampling technique is most appropriate in this study because it is effective and efficient in giving samples' statistics and provides fine data for analyzing the various sub groups of population.

Simultaneous triangulation design is a mixed- methods research strategy where both quantitative and qualitative data are collected concurrently but analyzed separately and the results are compared, contrasted or combined during interpretation. The results are merged during interpretation to see whether the findings confirm each other (convergence), expand on each other (complementarity) or diverge (discrepancy), providing a comprehensive view of the phenomenon under study. The purpose of this design is to cross- validate and corroborate findings from both types of data to achieve a deeper and more credible understanding of research problem. In simultaneous triangulation, both quantitative and qualitative methods are given equal importance (Kelle et al., 2019).

In this study, the simultaneous triangulation design will be applied whereby both qualitative and quantitative data will be collected concurrently. Structured questionnaires will be issued to naval

officers and maritime security agencies to provide quantitative data. Semi- structured interviews and documents analysis will give qualitative data. Quantitative data will be evaluated, statistically analyzed and represented via graphs and charts, whilst qualitative data will be subjected to sentiment analysis, coding, and thematic analysis to identify major themes and patterns. Mixed method of data analysis for integration and interpretation of qualitative and quantitative findings will be used by merging the two types of results for comparison, explanation and creating connections. The researcher will be able to interpret them together to draw a strong and complete conclusion about the study. This method is preferred because it allows the gathering and presentation of both quantitative and qualitative data in one analysis and saves on time since the data are collected simultaneously. It also increases validity by using multiple sources to confirm findings. The researcher will be able to obtain a comprehensive, cross validated and balanced understanding of diplomacy and security. Figure 3.1 below illustrates diagrammatic representation of simultaneous triangulation design.



**Figure 3.1: Simultaneous Triangulation Design (Researcher, 2025)**

### 3.3 Location of the study

Location of the study is a geographical place or region where research is being conducted. This study will be conducted in Kenya and targeting Kenyan Maritime area of Indian Ocean, specifically Gulf of Aden. The Gulf of Aden is a strategic waterway connecting the Arabian sea to the Red sea through the Suez Canal. It is bordered by Yemen state to the North and Somalia state to the South. The study will be carried out in Nairobi County because the city is both a diplomatic and military center. Nairobi hosts key government institutions such as the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United States Embassy, which are directly involved in Kenya – USA naval diplomacy. Nairobi provides access to key informants such as defense policy makers, naval officials, diplomats and security experts who have firsthand knowledge and experience in Kenya – USA maritime cooperation. Nairobi city is relevant as a centralized data and documents center.

Important reports, policy documents, agreements and security assessments related to maritime security and naval diplomacy are available through government offices, research institutes and libraries based in the city. Nairobi is a strategic decision-making center where many decisions regarding Kenya's participation in naval operations and international security partnerships are made in Nairobi, making it a suitable location to study the naval diplomacy and maritime security. The city also hosts the International Peace Support Training Center (IPSTC) which provides training on maintenance of regional peace and stability. Students from IPSTC will be used as key respondents of the study due to their expertise in regional security. In the city the researcher will put special focus to IPSTC scholars, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense, USA military and defense attachés and USA Embassy which will be characterized by high profile engagements.

Part of the study will be done in Mombasa County since it is an operational base hosting Kenya Navy headquarters in Mtongwe and other key maritime security installations, hence making it central to naval operations. Mombasa's proximity to the coastline makes it an appropriate study area because it is directly affected by maritime security threats like piracy, terrorism, smuggling and illegal fishing. Mombasa provides access to naval personnel, KCGS personnel, security experts, maritime law enforcement officials and port authorities who are involved in daily maritime security operations. The area makes it possible for the researcher to practically observe naval exercises and maritime patrols more easily in Mombasa than in Nairobi. Mombasa is also relevant due to her economic importance. The Port of Mombasa is vital for national and regional trade and is vulnerable to maritime threats. Mombasa is where naval diplomacy translates into actual operations, hence a suitable area of conducting the study.

The other part of study will be done in Lamu County. Lamu is located along Kenya's northern coast and the region is close to areas with high piracy activity such as Somalia's coastline. The region

has historically been vulnerable to attacks and Lamu's position offers a vantage point for studying counter-piracy and counter-terrorism operations. Lamu hosts Kenya Naval Base Manda Bay and USA Military Base, Camp Simba. The two bases will enable the researcher to reach both Kenya and USA navies personnel. Camp Simba serves as a base for the US AFRICOM surveillance and intelligence and the USA Navy provides crucial support to Kenya in monitoring and responding to threats in the regional waters. The area is crucial for regional stability because Kenya and USA navies personnel at Lamu area able to launch joint operations aimed at countering threats from Al-Shabaab and other extremist groups operating along the Horn of Africa's coastline. Lamu's strategic location and role in regional security makes it crucial for studying the Kenya – USA naval cooperation on maritime security.

### **3.4 Target Population**

Ahmad et al. (2023) defines population as the whole group of individuals, events or objects that a study aims to investigate. The target population is made up of groups of individuals to whom the findings and results of the study are relevant. It is mandatory for the study population to comprise the individuals, events or objects that align with the parameters set for investigation thus, the researcher should be keen on determining his research population. This study will target 300 respondents from security personnel and agencies deployed to KCGS (operational level), 500 respondents of Kenya Navy (operational level), 50 respondents comprising of senior Kenya Navy officers (strategic level), 50 officers from International Peace Support Training Centre (IPSTC), 50 officials from Ministry of Defense and 50 officials from Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From the USA side, the research targeted 200 personnel of USA Navy (operational level), 20 officers from USA Military Attaché, 10 officers from USA Defense Attaché and 40 officials from the USA Embassy in Kenya.

The Navy personnel from Kenya, USA and KCGSs are considered for their direct involvement in conducting maritime security operations and joint training hence can elaborate very well on the nature of maritime threats experienced and challenges they encounter. The personnel are grouped into operational and strategic levels because such classification helps to capture different perspectives, roles and responsibilities that affect how individuals interact with and perceive policies, operations and international cooperation. Strategic level consists of senior officers and commanders who are responsible for long-term planning, formulating policies and making decisions on naval operations and partnerships. Thus, these personnel have a direct experience with the naval cooperation and her role in maritime security in the Gulf of Aden. Operational level consists of mid- level personnel focused on tactical execution of strategies and policies. These personnel have a firsthand experience with the aspects of patrols, surveillance, exercises and all maritime security efforts in the Gulf of Aden.

Officials from the Ministry of Defense and Foreign Affairs, including the Permanent Secretaries are key decision and policy makers on matters leading to security bilateral relations, thus playing a significant role in this study. The USA Military and Defense Attachés and USA Embassy to Kenya are instrumental in executing USA Naval diplomacy with Kenya Navy. Officials from the IPSTC are senior officers representing security agencies and militaries across the region in the college situated in Kenya and they have a broader understanding and experience of international peace support operations and will give relevant information about the maritime diplomacy between Kenya and USA in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden. Table 3.1 below shows the population that will be targeted in the study.

**Table 3.1: Target Population**

Description	Number
Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials	50

Ministry of Defense officials	50
Security agencies and KCGS	300
Kenya Navy Personnel (operational level)	500
Senior Kenya Navy officers (strategic level)	50
Officers from IPSTC	50
USA Navy Personnel (operational level)	200
USA Military Attaché	20
USA Defense Attaché	10
USA Embassy officials	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>1270</b>

---

**Sources:** **(Kenya Navy Service Establishment, 2024), (Kenya Coast Guard Establishment, 2024), (Ministry of Defense Staff Establishment Report, 2024), (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Establishment Report, 2024), (U.S. Embassy in Kenya, 2025)**

### **3.5 Sampling Procedure, Sampling Size Determination and Sampling Frame**

The study will use various approaches for sample size determination and sampling techniques to construct a sampling frame.

#### **3.5.1 Sampling Procedure**

Van Haute (2021) defines sampling procedure as the process of choosing a subset from a totality to draw conclusions or make inferences on the entire population. The study's population is

heterogeneous with individuals having diverse characteristics, experiences and expertise which include: military profession roles, diplomatic roles, institutional affiliations, geographical representation and areas of expertise. The military personnel and security agencies are targeted to give insights on naval and security operations while diplomatic officials will expound on the aspects of naval collaboration. The senior military officials and members from Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs are targeted to provide information on policies and strategies governing the naval diplomacy. Therefore, convenience, purposive and document sampling techniques are convenient for this study.

Purposive sampling (also called judgmental or selective sampling) is a non-probability sampling method where participants are intentionally selected based on specific characteristics, knowledge or experiences that are important to research (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). Purposive sampling in this study will be used by the researcher to select samples according to their experience and expertise and institutional representation in order to collect focused information. Purposive sampling will be most effective to Kenya Navy, KCGS and USA Navy personnel who are directly involved in naval operations between Kenya and USA. The diplomatic officials are professional in their roles related to defense and maritime cooperation and will be sampled purposively for this study. Expert sampling is a type of purposive sampling that the researcher will employ during interviews to select participants who are subject matter experts in naval diplomacy and maritime security. They will include senior maritime strategists and policy advisors.

Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where participants are selected based on their availability and willingness to participate (Stratton, 2021). Convenience sampling technique in this study will select samples that are easy to access and in this case the researcher will target the naval personnel from local bases in Mombasa and Lamu Counties. Diplomats stationed in Kenya, officials from Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs are also accessible for

this study. The researcher will consider the principle of first come first served and willingness to take part, thus those who happen to be available at the moment of data collection automatically become the respondents. Convenience sampling is appropriate since it collects data at the moment you meet the respondents with limited procedures. The above sampling technique is most appropriate in this study because it is time and efficient and it complements purposive sampling when ideal participants are not available.

Document sampling is a qualitative sampling technique where official texts, reports, agreements or archival records are selected for analysis based on their relevance to the research objectives (Morgan, 2022). In this study the researcher will be able to group the documents of analysis into categories like official agreements, policy documents, naval reports, media reports, publications, journal articles or theses reports based on time period or thematic focus. Document sampling will enhance access to reliable data, enhance data triangulation and contribute to knowledge and literature.

### **3.5.2 Sample Size Determination**

Sample size refers to the number of observations, individuals or units derived from larger population for a study (Andrade, 2020). Following Creswell and Creswell (2017) guidelines for non- probability sampling, this study adopts a 30% sampling formula. The formula evolved as practical rule of thumb and is widely used in social sciences because it is effective in balancing accessibility with data quality. A sample of at least 30% of a population can provide adequate diversity and representation without being overly time- consuming or expensive. The formula has been previously used in various studies including educational research, medical research and business studies while maintaining practicality in data collection.

Below is the formula:

$$n = 0.3 \times N$$

Where: n= Sample size

N= Total population

The study will apply the 30% rule of sampling where 30% of each category of respondents will be selected and sampled to participate in the study. Using the 30% formula in each category ensures that the sample is a proportional representative of the entire population because each category is represented according to its relative size in the population. The formula will help the researcher to maintain consistent samples across different categories within the study, reflecting a similar level of importance between the documents and participants. By applying the formula, the researcher simplifies data collection and the strategy is uniform. The categories will neither be over-represented nor under-represented. Applying the formula to all categories, data triangulation and comparison is made possible. This consistency will allow the researcher to draw valid conclusions hence quality research.

### **3.5.3 Sample Frame**

The sampling frame for this study consists of individuals and documents involved in the Kenya-USA naval diplomacy and maritime security in the Gulf of Aden. Participants will include personnel from Kenya Navy, USA Navy, officials from Kenya Ministry of Defense and diplomats from USA Embassy in Nairobi and Kenya's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These individuals will be selected based on their knowledge, roles or professional experience related to bilateral maritime cooperation. The documents sampling frame includes official agreements, policy documents, naval operations reports, media reports, publications, journal articles or theses reports. Convenience sampling will then be conducted to participants based on their accessibility, availability and willingness to take part. Both participants and documents will be selected using purposive and

convenience sampling techniques to ensure relevance, accessibility and diversity of perspectives. A 30 % formula sampling approach will be applied to each category to ensure manageable and representative subset for analysis.

The researcher will apply the 30% formula to calculate the sample size for each category by multiplying the total number of respondents by 30%. This study will have a sample of 381 respondents and after calculations it will target 90 respondents from security personnel and agencies deployed to Kenya Coast Guard Service (operational level), 150 samples of Kenya Navy (operational level), 15 samples comprising of senior Kenya Navy officers (strategic level), 15 officers from International Peace Support Training Centre (IPSTC), 15 officials from Ministry of Defense and 15 officials from Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From the USA side, the research targeted 60 samples of USA Navy (operational level), 06 officers from USA Military Attaché, 03 officers from USA Defense Attaché and 12 officials from the USA Embassy in Kenya. The formula is simple and easy to apply, reduces bias and works well in dealing with small populations hence suitable for the study. The study sampling frame is outlined in table 3.2 below.

**Table 3.2 Sampling Frame**

Description	Number (N)	n (30% of N)	Sampling method
Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials	50	15	Purposive & convenience
Ministry of Defense officials	50	15	Purposive & convenience

Security agencies and KCGS	300	90	Purposive & convenience
Kenya Navy (operational level)	500	150	Purposive & convenience
Kenya Navy officers (strategic level)	50	15	Purposive & convenience
Officers from IPSTC	50	15	Purposive & convenience
USA Navy Personnel (operational level)	200	60	Purposive & convenience
USA Military Attaché	20	06	Purposive & convenience
USA Defense Attaché	10	03	Purposive & convenience
USA Embassy officials	40	12	Purposive & convenience
<b>Total</b>	<b>1270</b>	<b>381</b>	

**Source: Researcher, 2025**

### **3.6 Data collection Instruments**

This study relied on both primary and secondary data sources during data collection process.

Primary sources were used to gather data from the targeted respondents through interviews and questionnaires, whereas secondary data was obtained through document analysis. The study used both qualitative and quantitative approaches concurrently as it is advocated by Ahmadin (2022) as the most effective method for obtaining adequate results in fundamental research.

#### **3.6.1 Questionnaires**

A questionnaire is a research tool consisting of a set of written or printed questions used to gather information from respondents (Gulnoza & Niginabonu, 2022). The researcher will utilize

questionnaires in order to collect quantitative data from military personnel and security agencies. The questions of the questionnaire will comprise of multiple choices for ease of administration, efficient data collection and analysis, high reliability, minimized ambiguity and reduced researcher bias. The questions will be tailored to address the specific objectives of the study while being clear, unbiased and relevant to the target respondents. The questionnaires will be distributed to the selected participants and allow them sufficient time to respond. The respondents will be allowed to do consultations so as to enhance accurate responses.

Questionnaires are relatively cheap to administer and saves on time as they make it possible for the researcher to collect data from a large sample in short time. The instrument will allow flexibility as it can be administered through various formats including online and via telephone. All respondents will receive the same set of questions hence ensuring consistency and the instrument is easy to analyze statistically especially for close-ended questions. However, the instrument may be associated with limited depth of responses and misinterpretation of questions. Section A of questionnaire will cover general and demographic information of the respondents while section B will cover questions on study objectives as shown in Appendix III.

### **3.6.2 Interviews**

Interview in research is a method of data collection in which the researcher asks questions to a respondent to obtain information, opinions or insights on a particular topic. It involves fact- to-face, telephone or online interaction (Brinkmann, 2022). According to Alamri (2019), interviews allow for in-depth information, clarifications and follow-up questions about the subject matter, providing deeper insights into the topic. This method gives the interviewer freedom to clarify and probe for responses, ensuring that responses given are clear for accuracy and reliability. Interviews also allow the researcher to assess the honesty of the respondents' answers through direct interaction and can capture non-verbal cues by observing the body language of respondents, tone

and emotions. Unlike questionnaires, interviews will have a high response rate because they are more engaging. However, conducting interviews is time consuming and costly as compared to questionnaires. Some respondents may withhold honesty responses due to the presence of researcher especially on sensitive data thus limiting accuracy in data collection.

The use of interviews in this study serves as an alternative for data collection since it has several advantages over other research methods. This study considered application of semi-structured interviews by use of an interview guide as shown in Appendix IV. The guide is based on research objectives and aims to analyze the nature of the diplomacy, strategies used, challenges and opportunities arising from the naval diplomacy between Kenya and USA. It allows for flexibility to probe deeper where necessary to engage key informants in the field, including officials from the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the USA Embassy in Kenya. The interviews will be conducted face- to- face and virtually in some instances, with a duration of 10 to 20 minutes depending on the respondent's availability. With permission, interviews will be audio recorded so that the recordings can be transcribed for thematic analysis later. These interviews are structured to gather detailed insights about Kenya-USA Naval diplomacy in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden, with due regard to the experience and expertise of individuals directly involved in or knowledgeable about the bilateral naval relationship. This approach will complement the questionnaire findings allowing for mixed- method approach. Summary of research instruments is illustrated in table 3.3 below.

**Table 3.3 Summary of Research instruments**

<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Data collected</b>	<b>Target respondents</b>
Questionnaire	Quantitative	Kenya Navy, KCGS and USA Navy personnel (All in operational level)

In-depth interviews	Qualitative	Senior military officers (strategic level), IPSTC, Ministry of Defense officials, Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials, USA diplomatic officials
---------------------	-------------	---

**Source: Researcher, 2025**

### **3.6.3 Document analysis**

Document analysis is a qualitative research method that involves systematic reviewing and interpreting of existing data to gain detailed information about a certain area of study (Morgan, 2022). Document analysis in this study will constitute secondary data. Documents will be selected based on their relevance to study objectives and must relate to Kenya- USA naval cooperation and maritime security in the Gulf of Aden. Authentic, credible and verifiable official documents will be prioritized. The researcher will prioritize documents published in the last 10-15 years, to reflect the current diplomatic and security dynamics. The selected documents will undergo content analysis whereby they will be systematically examined to identify key themes, concepts and patterns related to Kenya- USA naval diplomacy. Thematic coding will be applied to extract relevant information, organize it, find patterns and do comparisons that are aligned with the research questions and objectives. To enhance reliability and validity, data from documents will be triangulated with findings from questionnaires and interviews. Critical assessment will be the final step to connect the documents findings with the practical implications on the naval diplomacy in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden.

During this study, the researcher will review government and military reports such as: Kenya

Ministry of Defense Reports to give insights on Kenya's Naval operations, USA Department of Defense Reports that covers USA Naval activities and Kenya Navy Strategic plans that highlights on Kenya's maritime security goals and objectives together with collaborations. Other documents to be considered are Memorandums of Understanding between Kenya and USA Naval cooperation. The International Maritime Security Reports will be reviewed to provide information on the nature of maritime security threats. News articles and media reports of KDF Press Releases, BBC and Al Jazeera will be useful for this study. The researcher will also utilize academic journal articles, theses and dissertations on maritime security to be able to evaluate the Kenya-USA Naval diplomacy in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden.

Document analysis is advantageous because it has historical context and will aid the researcher to track the evolution of Kenya-USA Naval cooperation. It is also cost effective because it makes use of the publicly available sources. However, the government and military documents may be biased to favor the origin country hence multiple sources will be used for comparison.

### **3.7 Piloting of the Research instruments**

Piloting is the process of conducting a small-scale initial study to test and refine a research instrument such as questionnaire and interview guide. Sundram and Romli (2023) argues that piloting a research instrument is a crucial step that enables the researcher to try the instrument before administering it to the selected sample to identify flaws, test validity and reliability, check technical functionality and ensure that it adheres to ethical considerations of research. Piloting of the study instruments will be done in Kisumu and Nanyuki.

Kisumu was selected for piloting the research instruments because it hosts a significant Kenya Navy and KCGS operational presence who oversee security operations in Lake Victoria. Although the region differs geographically from the coastal regions of Mombasa and Lamu, the personnel present in Kisumu are trained under similar Kenya Navy doctrines, operational procedures and

bilateral cooperation frameworks with the United States. Additionally, Kisumu is accessible, has reduced security restrictions and avoids overexposing the final respondents at the main study sites. Hence Kisumu is a practical and efficient choice for the piloting process.

Nanyuki was selected for piloting the research instruments because it hosts the British Army Training Unit Kenya (BATUK). BATUK is a critical facility for both KDF and British Army with a special focus on operational readiness, strategic military exercises and multinational collaboration. Given that this research focuses on Kenya Navy cooperation with the USA, BATUK offers a parallel context where personnel are trained in interoperability, operational coordination and defense diplomacy. Feedback from BATUK will be valuable, as their insights reflect similar dynamics of international defense cooperation. Nanyuki is stable and accessible thus a convenient area of conducting the study without compromising the study's respondents in the main study sites of Nairobi, Mombasa and Lamu.

The respondents to participate in the piloting of the instruments will constitute 10% of the sample size adding up to 39 participants. Respondents from Kenya Navy and KCGS will be 30 personnel while 09 personnel from BATUK will be used in the piloting process. The participants will be subjected to the questionnaires twice at a break of two weeks using the test-retest method. The respondents' feedback will inform the identification and correction of errors, rephrase the questions and create sufficient spaces to fill the data. Piloting will also assist in assessing clarity, test validity and reliability, evaluate time taken to answer the questions and align them closely with the research objectives. The researcher will appeal to the participants to provide suggestions and comments to better the instruments.

### **3.8 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments**

The researcher will utilize various methods to ensure the validity and reliability of research instruments as discussed below:

### **3.8.1 Validity of Research Instruments**

According to Rahardja et al. (2019, December) validity is the degree in which the test instruments best measures what is intended to measure. According to Baharuddin et al. (2020) content validity refers to the extent in which a test, survey or measurement tool accurately represents the entire range of content it is intended to assess. Content validity in this study will be maintained by coming up with instruments that align with the study variables and covers all aspects of the study and concepts being measured. The instruments will be aligned with the research objectives to give an understanding on the nature of Kenya- USA Navies bilateral diplomatic relationship, the approach and strategies it uses, the opportunities and challenges arising from the relationship in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden. Pilot testing will follow to refine the instrument.

Construct validity refers to how well a test or instrument measures the theoretical concepts it is intended to measure (Clark & Watson, 2019). Construct validity will be maintained by ensuring that the instruments clearly relate to the concepts and theories relating to bilateral cooperation, naval diplomatic relationships and maritime security between Kenya and USA. To maintain construct validity, the research instruments will be designed based on clear definition of the key constructs followed by pilot testing to refine the instrument.

Criterion validity refers to how well the research instrument's results correlate with an external standard or benchmark, that is known to be a valid measure of the same concept (Raykov & Marcoulides (2017). To ensure criterion validity, the researcher will choose a quantifiable, real-world measure such as official military reports and historical records of Kenya- USA naval cooperation. Then pilot testing will be done with the research instruments. The findings from the pilot study will be compared with real- world data to assess any significant correlation. Correlation between the two scores proves validity of the research instruments in data collection. However, if correlations are weak and inconsistent, the researcher will refine the instruments.

### **3.8.2 Reliability of Research Instruments**

Reliability refers to the ability of a research instrument to get similar results when used to measure something more than once. Ganesha and Aithal (2022) assert that a specific instrument is considered to be reliable if its application on the same object of study a number of times produces the same results. In order to ensure that the instruments of this research are reliable, the Cronbach Alpha will be used. Cronbach Alpha is a measure of internal consistency or reliability of a research instrument such as questionnaire (Taber, 2018). The alpha value ranges between 0 and 1 and as the value increases towards 1 the reliability of the instrument also increases. An alpha coefficient of 0.70 will be set and the coefficient which is equal or higher than 0.7 will indicate that the gathered data has a relatively high internal consistency, reliability and could be generalized to reflect opinions of all respondents in the target population. Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) will be computed as follows:

$$\alpha = \frac{N \cdot \bar{c}}{\bar{v} + (N - 1) \cdot \bar{c}}$$

Where:

N is equal to the number of items.

c-bar is the average inter-item covariance among the items. v-bar equals the average variance.

Inter-rater reliability is the level of agreement or consistency between two or more people (raters/coders) when they are independently judging, coding or categorizing the same thing (Belur et al., 2021). To ensure credibility and reliability of the thematic analysis of interviews, an inter-rater reliability test will be conducted. Pilot interviews will be transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically. A pilot thematic coding will be done incorporating key categories such as joint naval

operations, intelligence sharing and capacity building and two independent coders who are trained will apply this framework consistently across the transcripts. Inter- rater reliability will be assessed using Cohen's Kappa coefficient (k), which accounts for the level of agreement between coders beyond what would be expected by chance. Below is the Cohen's Kappa formula:

$$\kappa = \frac{P_o - P_e}{1 - P_e},$$

Where:

Po = Observed Agreement (the number of times the two raters agreed).

Pe =Expected Agreement by Chance (the number of times you would expect randomly).

The kappa value ranges between 0 and 1 and as the value increases towards 1 the reliability of the coding also increases. A kappa coefficient of 0.70 will be set and the coefficient which is equal or higher than 0.7 will indicate a substantial agreement between the raters and the coding process will be considered reliable.

### **3.9 Data Collection Procedures**

After school proposal defense, the researcher will ascertain that all the sighted and highlighted corrections in the document are addressed. Thereafter, clearance certificate from the authorization of Mount Kenya University through the Ethical Review Committee (ERC) will be applied. The researcher will submit the research proposal to the ERC to be evaluated, ensuring that it meets the ethical aspects of research, including legal, moral and regulatory standards. Other documents evaluated are informed consent form, sample collection protocol and data protection plan. The final step of ERC is approval once satisfied with the submitted documents and the researcher will be issued with a clearance certificate.

After ERC approval, the researcher will seek a letter of introduction from the School of Postgraduate Studies which will pave way for an application of NACOSTI permit before heading for field work. The researcher will also endeavor to seek authorization from the County Government, County Commissioner's Office for endorsement as well as from County Director of Education for verification of research permit from NACOSTI and further action to be taken in order to verify and confirm authentication of available documents.

This permission will allow the researcher to start the journey of collecting data from the selected facilities promptly with efficiency and efficacy without documentary hitches. The information gathered will be recorded by the researcher to ensure accuracy and as a means of ascertaining that most of the data will be gathered primarily. The researcher will let the respondents know the relevance of the research prior to data collection.

The researcher will book appointments for in-depth interviews with key informants such as diplomats and senior officials from Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs a few days prior to the date of data collection. The researcher will also provide training to three research assistants two-weeks prior to the start of data collection. The participants will be apprised on the study's objectives, as well as the purpose and methodologies to be employed for data collection. The researcher will identify research assistants who reside near the areas of study to enhance their efficiency in data collection process. Data collection process will be conducted in four weeks as summarized in table 3.4 below.

**Table 3.4: Data collection plan**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Activity</b>

1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit participants (Kenya Navy, KCGS, USA Navy, MOD officials, diplomats)</li> <li>• Confirm interview schedules and locations (virtual/ in-person).</li> <li>• Gather academic papers, reports, official documents from both Kenyan and USA military and diplomacy.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administer surveys and conduct interviews with Kenya- based participants, both military and diplomats. Record the data and do follow-up on any missing or incomplete data.</li> <li>• Access official archives, data from Kenyan and USA government websites and naval databases.</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administer surveys and conduct interviews with USA- based participants, both military and diplomats. Record the data and do follow-up on any missing or incomplete data.</li> <li>• Continue extracting secondary data from the mentioned publications.</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct follow-ups to clarify ambiguities and ensure data accuracy.</li> <li>• Finalize data collection.</li> <li>• Organize collected data for analysis.</li> </ul>

**Source: Researcher, 2025**

### **3.10 Data Analysis Techniques**

Data collected from respondents will be first checked for completeness, coherence and comprehensiveness. The returned and duly filled questionnaires will be verified, coded and tallied.

The open-ended questions will contain qualitative data that will be analyzed through thematic analysis by use of NVivo 15 software to highlight the key themes. The data will be presented through narration and thematic presentations. The close-ended questions will consist of quantitative data. For quantitative data both descriptive and inferential statistics will be used to analyze the data. In the descriptive analysis, data collected will be coded and edited as required and thereafter processed by the Statistical Packages for Social scientists (SPSS Version 30) and Excel. Descriptive statistics such as mean, mode, percentages and frequency distributions will summarize the numerical data. Inferential statistics will give out correlation and regression analyses to assess the relationships between variables, while T-tests will help the researcher to compare the maritime security in the Gulf of Aden before and after the relationship. After separately analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data, the results will be merged through simultaneous triangulation technique for integration and interpretation of qualitative and quantitative findings to give in-depth insights about the study. This method is preferred because it allows the collection and presentation of both quantitative and qualitative data in one analysis, giving deeper conclusions of the study.

### **3.11 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations in research work ensure that a study is conducted responsibly while protecting participants' rights and maintaining integrity as it is clear that knowledge cannot be pursued while violating human dignity. In this study the researcher will consider the following major ethical issues to be upheld: informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, anonymity and researcher's responsibility.

#### **3.11.1. Informed consent**

Informed consent means respecting the person's right to know everything about the research before agreeing to take part (Caeymaex et al., 2023). The respondents in research must make their own

decisions to participate in the study based on adequate information of the study. This implies that research respondents will have been informed adequately about the procedures of the study in which they are being asked to participate in, prior to their commitment. The researcher will provide the respondents with information on: the purpose and objectives of the research, the expected duration of participation and what their participation involves, procedures to be followed, any unforeseen risks or discomfort to the participants, any benefits, how the information will be used, their rights and the extent of anonymity, privacy and confidentiality to be upheld. They are then allowed to sign an informed consent form to proof that they will willfully participate in the study

### **3.11.2. Privacy and confidentiality**

Privacy refers to persons' right and ability to keep their personal information or communications about themselves secret and protected from being seen, used or shared to others without their permission (Nunan, 2021). Therefore, privacy will be maintained by assigning pseudonyms immediately upon data collection to avoid recording of identifiable personal information. All digital files, including recordings and transcripts will be password-protected. Interviews will be designed to minimize collection of identifying details and remote interviews will be organized in secure communication platforms.

Confidentiality, on the other hand, refers to protecting participants' information and ensuring that it is not disclosed to another person (Hwang, 2023). Participants were assured that their information would be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes. All data will be stored in encrypted digital files and any potentially sensitive information de-identified during transcription. Access to raw data will be limited exclusively to the researcher. Participants will retain the right to review and withdraw their input at any point prior to final submission.

### **3.11.3 Anonymity**

Anonymity means that participants' identities are not known, even to the researcher (Hwang, 2023). The researcher will not require the respondents to write their details on the questionnaires and neither will the researcher capture personal details of respondents during the study. During data analysis and interpretation, the researcher will not use real names, ranks, positions or identifiable details of the respondents. Instead, codes like 'Respondent 1, 2...' will be used throughout the study.

### **3.11.4 Researcher's responsibility**

A researcher must observe human dignity and well-meaning throughout the study period. Therefore, the researcher will be ethical in this study and observe the privacy and confidentiality of the respondent's information about the data collected especially those touching on personal information. Obtaining a valid sample will entail gaining access to specific information leading to an infringement on the privacy and confidentiality of the respondent's information without their knowledge, but this is the only way to construct a sampling frame and generate a comprehensive sample. The researcher will also ensure that respondents are anonymous.

### **3.11.5 Ethical challenges**

Given the sensitivity surrounding military and diplomatic operations, some military and diplomatic personnel may demonstrate reluctance to share information during data collection process. To mitigate this, the study will adopt a participant- centered approach, emphasizing voluntary participation, informed consent and the right to withdraw or decline to answer any question without explanation. Interview questions will be carefully framed to focus on non- classified, general insights into Kenya-USA naval cooperation. Efforts will be made to build trust by assuring participants of strict confidentiality and anonymization of responses. This approach will uphold

ethical research standards while ensuring the protection of sensitive information and the well-being of participants.

Another challenge is the participants' safety and emotional wellbeing. Research on topics relating to military and diplomatic relations can cause distress or emotional discomfort to participants, especially when discussing traumatic experiences. Some respondents may feel uneasy when sharing such details. Some participants may feel unsecure when sharing such information. To mitigate that challenge, the researcher will ensure screening and sensitive questioning to avoid distressing topics. Voluntary participation and right to withdraw will be allowed. To enhance safety, the researcher will assure confidentiality and anonymity of responses. The researcher will also create a respectful and supportive environment for data collection for the participants to feel valued.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings, analysis, and interpretation of the study on Kenya-USA naval diplomacy and its role in promoting maritime security in the Gulf of Aden. The purpose of this chapter is to move beyond raw data and provide a structured, critical account of how the evidence collected supports the objectives of the study. The findings are not presented in isolation; they are integrated with the study's theoretical framework, the conceptual model developed in Chapter Two, and the methodological plan set out in Chapter Three. In doing so, the chapter ensures that the results are not only descriptive but also analytical, interpretive, and aligned with both academic and practical imperatives.

The Gulf of Aden, situated at the intersection of the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea, remains one of the most geopolitically significant yet insecure maritime corridors globally. Its importance stems from its proximity to the Suez Canal, which handles a substantial proportion of global trade. However, this significance is undermined by recurring maritime threats, including piracy, terrorism, arms and narcotics trafficking, smuggling, and illegal fishing. These threats have had not only economic consequences but also profound security implications for Kenya and the broader East African region. Against this backdrop, Kenya's naval cooperation with the United States has emerged as a critical instrument of maritime diplomacy and security engagement. This chapter therefore provides empirical evidence on how this partnership is structured, operationalized, and perceived, and how it translates into opportunities and challenges for both countries.

#### **4.0.1 Structure and Objectives of the Chapter**

The chapter is organized around the four specific objectives of the study:

1. To examine the nature of Kenya-USA naval diplomacy in promoting maritime security in the Gulf of Aden.
2. To analyze the strategies employed by Kenya and the USA navies in enhancing maritime security.
3. To identify the opportunities arising from Kenya-USA naval cooperation.
4. To explore the challenges encountered in the implementation of this naval partnership.

For each objective, findings are presented in two phases: first, the quantitative analysis of survey data (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations); and second, the qualitative analysis from interviews and documentary reviews, which provide depth, nuance, and explanatory power. The chapter concludes each section with an integrated interpretation that connects the findings to the theoretical lenses employed in this study - Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism, and the Theory of Deterrence.

This layered approach ensures that the findings are empirically valid, theoretically grounded, and practically significant.

Respondents Distribution by Institution

Institution	Frequency	Percentage
Kenya Navy (Operational)	150	39.4
Kenya Coast Guard Service (KCGS)	90	23.6

Kenya Navy (Strategic)	15	3.9
IPSTC (Strategic/Training)	15	3.9
Ministry of Defence (MoD)	15	3.9
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)	16	3.9
U.S. Navy (Operational)	60	15.7
U.S. Military Attaché's Office	3	1.6
U.S. Defence Attaché	2	0.8
U.S.Embassy (Defense/Diplomatic)	12	3.1

#### **4.0.2 Data Sources and Analytical Procedures**

The findings reported in this chapter are based on both primary and secondary data sources.

Primary data were obtained from:

- **Questionnaires** administered to operational-level officers in the Kenya Navy (KN), Kenya Coast Guard Service (KCGS), and U.S. Navy.
- **Semi-structured interviews** with senior Kenyan and U.S. naval officers, policymakers from the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs, and experts from the International Peace Support Training Centre (IPSTC).
- **Document analysis** of memoranda of understanding (MoUs), policy frameworks, international maritime agreements, and operational reports.

Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v30), producing descriptive statistics presented in the form of tables, bar charts, and pie charts.

Qualitative data were analyzed using NVivo v15, where interview transcripts and documents were coded into themes aligned with the study objectives. To enhance validity and reliability, multiple strategies were employed: Cronbach's alpha was used to test the internal consistency of survey items, while Cohen's kappa was employed to assess inter-coder reliability in qualitative coding. Both strands of data were integrated through simultaneous triangulation, ensuring that interpretations were not only consistent across sources but also mutually reinforcing.

#### **4.0.3 Theoretical and Conceptual Anchors**

The analysis in this chapter is explicitly tied to the conceptual framework presented in Chapter Two, which positions Kenya-USA naval diplomacy as the independent variable and maritime security in the Gulf of Aden as the dependent variable. The dependent variable is operationalized through observable indicators such as reductions in piracy, trafficking, maritime terrorism, illegal fishing, and smuggling. The independent variable is operationalized through the nature, strategies, opportunities, and challenges of the naval partnership. Intervening variables include Kenya's naval capabilities, legal frameworks, and institutional arrangements.

Each set of findings is also interpreted through relevant theories of international relations:

- **RSCT** explains the external penetration of the USA into the Horn of Africa security complex and the regional consequences of this engagement.
- **Realism** frames the partnership in terms of power, interest, and military capability.
- **Liberalism** emphasizes cooperation, institutions, and shared security benefits.

- **Constructivism** sheds light on how norms, trust, and identities are constructed through repeated naval engagements.
- **Deterrence Theory** explains how joint patrols, exercises, and presence at sea discourage piracy and other maritime crimes.

#### **4.0.4 Demographic and Institutional Profile of Respondents**

Before addressing the four objectives, the chapter provides a demographic profile of respondents to contextualize the findings. The study engaged a target of **381 participants**, distributed as follows: 150 officers from the Kenya Navy (operational), 90 from the Kenya Coast Guard and other security agencies, 15 from the Kenya Navy (strategic level), 15 from IPSTC, 15 from the Ministry of Defence, 15 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 60 from the U.S. Navy (operational), 6 from the U.S. Military Attaché's Office, 3 from the U.S. Defence Attaché, and 12 from the U.S. Embassy. This distribution ensured coverage of both operational and strategic perspectives, as well as diplomatic and policy-level insights.

The demographic analysis also considered gender, years of service, and professional role, enabling the study to capture diversity in perceptions. For example, junior operational officers often provided insights into the practical effectiveness of joint patrols and exercises, while senior officers and policymakers shed light on strategic decision-making, resource allocation, and diplomatic negotiations. Such demographic granularity enhances the interpretive depth of the findings.

#### **4.1 Nature of Kenya–USA Naval Diplomacy**

The first objective of the study was to examine the nature of Kenya–USA naval diplomacy in promoting maritime security in the Gulf of Aden. This objective sought to establish the institutional

arrangements, forms of engagement, and underlying diplomatic frameworks that define the bilateral naval relationship. Understanding the nature of this partnership is essential because it provides the foundation upon which strategies, opportunities, and challenges can be meaningfully analyzed.

#### **4.1.1 Quantitative Findings**

Survey data revealed that respondents overwhelmingly recognized Kenya-USA naval diplomacy as a structured and institutionalized engagement, rather than an ad hoc arrangement. As shown in *Table 4.7*, 72% of respondents agreed that the partnership is anchored in formal agreements such as Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), joint training arrangements, and regional security frameworks. Only 11% viewed the partnership as informal or opportunistic.

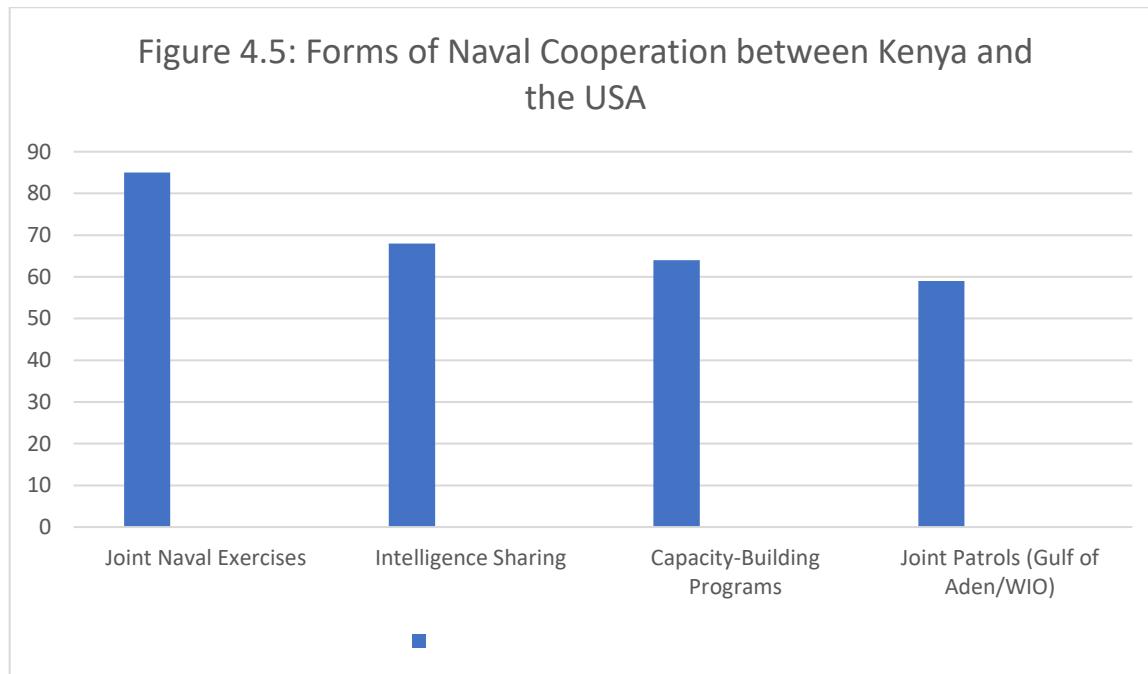
*Table 4.7: Respondent Perceptions on the Formality of Kenya-USA Naval Diplomacy*

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	170	44.6
Agree	105	27.6
Neutral	65	17.1
Disagree	30	7.9
Strongly Disagree	11	2.9

The findings further indicated that joint naval exercises are the most visible form of cooperation, cited by 85% of respondents as the hallmark of the partnership. Other forms include intelligence

sharing (68%), capacity-building programs such as training and scholarships (64%), and joint patrols in the Gulf of Aden and Western Indian Ocean (59%). Figure 4.5 illustrates these modalities.

*Figure 4.5: Forms of Naval Cooperation between Kenya and the USA - Bar Chart*



Additionally, 71% of respondents indicated that the nature of the partnership is asymmetrical, with the USA contributing advanced technology, financial resources, and strategic expertise, while Kenya contributes geographical proximity, regional legitimacy, and operational knowledge of local maritime conditions. This asymmetry reflects both the strengths and vulnerabilities of the relationship.

#### **4.1.2 Qualitative Findings**

Interviewees emphasized that the Kenya-USA naval relationship is built on a dual foundation of strategic necessity and diplomatic trust. A senior Kenyan naval officer noted:

“Our cooperation with the United States Navy is not only about ships at sea. It is about building confidence that Kenya can be trusted as a maritime security partner in this region. The nature of our diplomacy is both operational and symbolic.”

U.S. defense attachés highlighted the strategic location of Kenya as a gateway to East Africa, noting that Kenya’s naval bases at Mombasa and Lamu are essential logistical nodes for counter-piracy and counter-terrorism operations. An American liaison officer explained:

“Kenya offers us the proximity we need to act swiftly in the Gulf of Aden. Without this partnership, our operational reach would be limited, and our legitimacy questioned.”

The qualitative data also revealed that Kenya-USA naval diplomacy is characterized by multi-level interactions:

1. **Bilateral Level** -MoUs, defense cooperation agreements, training exchanges.
2. **Regional Level** -participation in Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) and the Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC).
3. **Global Level** - alignment with U.S. maritime strategies in the Indo-Pacific and global war on terror.

This layered nature underscores the complexity of the relationship: it is simultaneously bilateral, regional, and global.

#### **4.1.3 Integrated Interpretation**

The findings suggest that Kenya-USA naval diplomacy is formal, multi-dimensional, and asymmetrical. Its nature can be characterized along three axes:

1. **Institutional Axis:** Formal agreements, capacity-building programs, and consistent naval exercises ensure predictability and sustainability of cooperation.
2. **Operational Axis:** Joint patrols, intelligence sharing, and training exchanges provide the practical mechanisms through which the partnership materializes at sea.
3. **Strategic Axis:** The relationship reflects asymmetry in power and resources, with Kenya offering strategic geography and legitimacy while the USA contributes technology, finance, and expertise.

These findings resonate with the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), which views Kenya as a regional security actor whose maritime challenges invite external penetration by global powers like the USA. The Realist lens explains the asymmetry of the relationship: the USA seeks to project power and safeguard its interests, while Kenya leverages the partnership to augment its naval capacity. Liberalism is reflected in the institutionalization of cooperation through agreements and shared norms, while Constructivism underscores the building of trust and shared identity as maritime partners.

In practical terms, the nature of the partnership demonstrates a balance between mutual benefit and dependence. While Kenya gains critical naval capacity and international legitimacy, the USA secures access to a pivotal maritime hub in East Africa. The empirical evidence therefore confirms that Kenya-USA naval diplomacy is not merely symbolic but a tangible, operational, and strategic partnership that underpins maritime security in the Gulf of Aden.

## 4.2 Strategies of Kenya-USA Naval Diplomacy

The second objective of the study was to examine the strategies employed in Kenya-USA naval diplomacy to promote maritime security in the Gulf of Aden. While 4.1 established the *nature* of cooperation, this section identifies the concrete strategies operationalized to achieve shared security goals.

#### **4.2.1 Quantitative Findings**

Survey responses highlighted four dominant strategies:

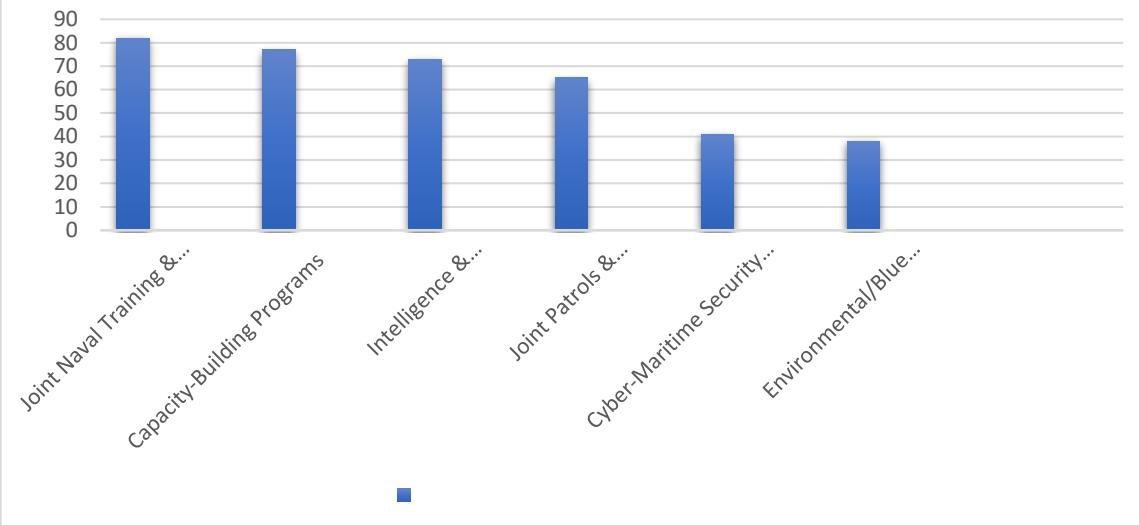
1. **Joint Naval Training & Exercises** (endorsed by 82% of respondents).
2. **Capacity-Building Programs** (technology transfer, scholarships, and training exchanges) (77%).
3. **Intelligence and Information Sharing** (73%).
4. **Joint Patrols and Operational Coordination** (65%).

*Table 4.10* summarizes these strategies, while *Figure 4.8* illustrates their relative prominence.

Strategy	Respondent Endorsement (%)
Joint Naval Training & Exercises	82
Capacity-Building Programs	77
Intelligence & Information Sharing	73
Joint Patrols & Operational Coordination	65
Cyber-Maritime Security Cooperation	41
Environmental/Blue Economy Diplomacy	38

*Figure 4.8*

**Figure 4.8 :Endorsements of Kenya-USA Naval Diplomacy Strategies**



Respondents also noted emerging strategies such as cyber-maritime security cooperation (41%) and environmental diplomacy around blue economy initiatives (38%), signaling a broadening scope of naval diplomacy beyond traditional military cooperation.

When asked about effectiveness of strategies, 69% of respondents rated joint training and capacity building as “highly effective,” while only 29% rated intelligence sharing as “highly effective,” citing trust and information-sensitivity challenges.

*Table 4.11: Respondent Ratings on Effectiveness of Naval Diplomacy Strategies*

Strategy	Highly Effective (%)	Moderately Effective (%)	Least Effective %
Joint Training/Exercises	69	<b>25</b>	<b>6</b>
Capacity Building	65	<b>28</b>	<b>7</b>
Intelligence Sharing	29	<b>48</b>	<b>23</b>
Joint Patrols	51	<b>38</b>	<b>11</b>

#### 4.2.2 Qualitative Findings

Interviews reinforced the quantitative evidence, emphasizing the centrality of training and joint exercises. A Kenyan naval officer explained:

“Exercises like Cutlass Express are not just drills; they are trust-building strategies. They enable us to learn U.S. tactics, while they also adapt to our realities. That is strategy in action.”

U.S. officers highlighted capacity building as a deliberate long-term strategy:

“Every officer we train is a force multiplier. They don’t just acquire skills; they carry forward a culture of professionalism that sustains this partnership.”

Several interviewees flagged intelligence sharing as the weakest strategy. While mechanisms exist, such as the Maritime Operations Center (MOC) in Mombasa, mutual suspicion sometimes limits the flow of sensitive data.

Moreover, respondents emphasized that Kenya-USA naval diplomacy adopts a multilayered strategic approach:

- **Operational Strategies:** patrols, intelligence sharing, joint drills.
- **Capacity Strategies:** training, scholarships, equipment support.
- **Symbolic Strategies:** high-level naval visits, flag-showing operations, port calls.
- **Emerging Strategies:** cyber-maritime security and blue economy cooperation.

#### **4.2.3 Integrated Interpretation**

The findings suggest that Kenya-USA naval diplomacy employs a hybrid strategy that balances short-term operational needs with long-term capacity goals.

- **From a Realist perspective**, strategies like joint patrols and intelligence sharing reflect the pursuit of security in an anarchic maritime space, with the USA leveraging its superior capacity.
- **From a Liberal perspective**, institutionalized training programs and agreements illustrate cooperation built on norms and mutual benefit.
- **Constructivism** helps explain symbolic strategies such as naval visits, which shape identity, trust, and perceptions of legitimacy.

The relative weakness of intelligence-sharing strategies reveals the trust deficit that often constrains asymmetric partnerships. Conversely, the overwhelming endorsement of training and capacity-building underscores a recognition that Kenya's naval diplomacy is ultimately sustainable only if local capacity is enhanced.

In sum, the strategies of Kenya-USA naval diplomacy can be described as:

1. Operationally Immediate (joint patrols, exercises).

2. Capacity-Oriented (training, scholarships, technology transfer).
3. Symbolically Strategic (naval visits, diplomacy at sea).
4. Evolving/Adaptive (cyber-security, blue economy).

Together, these strategies ensure that the partnership remains practical, future-oriented, and diplomatically resonant, reinforcing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden.

### **4.3 Challenges of Kenya-USA Naval Diplomacy**

The third objective of the study was to examine the challenges faced in Kenya-USA naval diplomacy in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden. Findings revealed that while the partnership is robust, it encounters a range of structural, operational, and political barriers.

#### **4.3.1 Quantitative Findings**

Survey results highlighted five main categories of challenges:

1. **Resource and Capacity Gaps** - 78% of respondents cited inadequate naval assets on the Kenyan side, such as limited warships, surveillance aircraft, and logistical support systems.
2. **Asymmetry and Dependency** - 72% viewed the relationship as heavily skewed in favor of the USA, creating dependency that limits Kenya's autonomy.
3. **Intelligence Sharing Constraints** - 64% reported challenges due to mistrust and selective disclosure of sensitive maritime intelligence.

- 4. Bureaucratic and Legal Hurdles** -58% identified delays in formal agreements, policy misalignments, and overlapping institutional mandates.
- 5. Geopolitical Interference** -46% pointed to competition from other powers (e.g., China, EU states) complicating Kenya's diplomatic balancing.

*Table 4.12* summarizes these findings, while *Figure 4.10* visually illustrates the distribution.

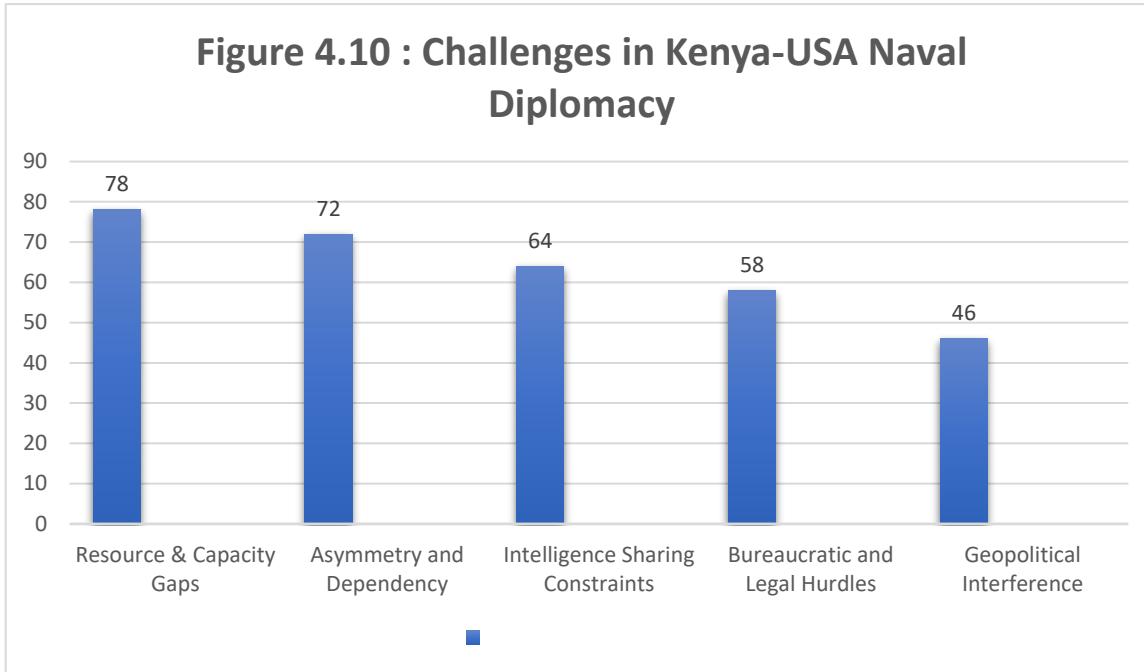
Challenge	Respondent Endorsement (%)
Resource and Capacity Gaps	78
Asymmetry and Dependency	72
Intelligence Sharing Constraints	64
Bureaucratic and Legal Hurdles	58
Geopolitical Interference	46

Respondents were further asked to rank which challenges were most severe. *Table 4.13* shows the ranking of challenges, with resource gaps and asymmetry topping the list.

*Table 4.13*

Rank	Challenge
1	Resource and Capacity Gaps
2	Asymmetry and Dependency
3	Intelligence Sharing Constraints
4	Bureaucratic and Legal Hurdles
5	Geopolitical Interference

Fig 4.10



### 4.3.2 Qualitative Findings

Interviews enriched the quantitative data by highlighting the structural dependency of Kenya on U.S. naval resources. A Kenyan defense analyst observed:

“We are perpetually in a catch-up game. While the U.S. brings warships and satellite intelligence, we provide access and legitimacy. This imbalance is not sustainable in the long run.”

Several officers emphasized the trust deficit in intelligence sharing. One Kenyan naval officer remarked:

“Information is often shared selectively. We don’t always get the full picture, which reduces our ability to act independently.”

Other challenges noted included:

- **Institutional Fragmentation:** overlaps between Kenya Navy, KCGS, and Ministry of Defence slow decision-making.
- **Political Sensitivities:** sections of Kenyan political elites perceive the U.S. presence as neocolonial.
- **Regional Dynamics:** rivalry with neighboring countries and competing interests of external actors (China, EU, Japan) complicate Kenya's position.

#### **4.3.3 Integrated Interpretation**

The findings suggest that challenges in Kenya-USA naval diplomacy are multi-layered:

1. **Operational Challenges** - resource gaps and weak capacity limit Kenya's ability to fully exploit the partnership.
2. **Strategic Challenges** - asymmetry entrenches dependency, limiting Kenya's autonomy and bargaining power.
3. **Institutional Challenges** - bureaucratic hurdles undermine the efficiency of agreements and policy implementation.
4. **Relational Challenges** - mistrust in intelligence sharing weakens the effectiveness of cooperation.
5. **Geopolitical Challenges** - Kenya must balance U.S. influence with other external powers to avoid over-dependence.

From a Realist perspective, these challenges reflect the inevitable power imbalance in asymmetric relationships. From a Liberal perspective, bureaucratic hurdles weaken the institutional frameworks meant to facilitate cooperation. From a Constructivist perspective, mistrust in intelligence sharing demonstrates the fragility of shared identity-building in Kenya–USA relations.

Ultimately, while the partnership remains vital, these challenges highlight the need for Kenya to strengthen its own naval and diplomatic capacity in order to negotiate more equitably and ensure long-term sustainability.

#### **4.4 Opportunities of Kenya-USA Naval Diplomacy**

The fourth objective of the study was to examine the opportunities presented by Kenya-USA naval diplomacy in promoting maritime security in the Gulf of Aden. While challenges remain, the findings reveal significant openings for strengthening cooperation, enhancing Kenya's naval capacity, and broadening the scope of diplomacy into non-traditional security domains. These opportunities not only promise immediate operational benefits but also hold the potential to transform Kenya's strategic, economic, and diplomatic positioning in the region.

##### **4.4.1 Quantitative Findings**

Survey responses revealed five dominant opportunities. First, capacity enhancement through training and technology transfer was recognized by an overwhelming majority of respondents (81%) as the single most valuable opening. Respondents emphasized that access to advanced U.S. training programs, provision of modern surveillance systems, and joint naval exercises provide Kenya with a foundation for professionalizing its naval forces for the long term.

Second, regional security leadership emerged as a strong opportunity (74%). Many respondents believed that Kenya could leverage its strategic partnership with the U.S. to establish itself as a

maritime security hub in East Africa, especially given the country's geopolitical position astride the Western Indian Ocean and its relatively stable political environment compared to its neighbors.

Third, economic and blue economy prospects were highlighted by 67% of respondents. Beyond narrow security concerns, naval cooperation is increasingly viewed as a means of safeguarding maritime trade routes, protecting offshore resources, and enabling Kenya to manage fisheries sustainably. These prospects position naval diplomacy as a facilitator of both economic growth and food security.

Fourth, multilateral integration was supported by 61% of respondents. U.S. partnership enhances Kenya's participation in multilateral frameworks such as the Combined Maritime Forces and the Djibouti Code of Conduct, allowing Kenya to amplify its diplomatic influence and align with broader international security regimes.

Finally, emerging domains such as cyber and climate security were acknowledged by 45% of respondents. These areas reflect a shift in the scope of naval diplomacy to address modern, non-traditional threats, including cyber-attacks on maritime infrastructure, environmental degradation, and the impacts of climate change on maritime security.

While the numerical results would traditionally be summarized in tables and charts, their distribution can be understood as a hierarchy of perceived opportunities, with training and technology transfer at the apex, followed by regional leadership, economic prospects, multilateral integration, and lastly, emerging domains.

#### **4.4.2 Qualitative Findings**

Interviews reinforced these findings with richer narratives. A Kenyan naval cadet underscored the transformative impact of U.S. training opportunities, noting that exposure to American programs reshaped the standards of professionalism within the Kenya Navy:

“Our exposure to U.S. training programs has shifted our standards. We think more globally now. This is an opportunity to professionalize the Kenya Navy for decades to come.”

Similarly, a senior U.S. naval officer emphasized Kenya’s **geostrategic advantage**, pointing out that the country’s position at the crossroads of East Africa and the Indian Ocean provides it with a unique chance to serve as the region’s anchor state in maritime security.

Additional interview insights revealed that the benefits of naval diplomacy extend beyond security. Port calls, naval visits, and Kenya’s participation in high-level joint exercises elevate its international profile, creating secondary dividends in attracting foreign investment, boosting tourism, and strengthening political goodwill.

Emerging opportunities identified in interviews included:

- **Cybersecurity cooperation**, focusing on the protection of naval communications and maritime infrastructure.
- **Climate-security integration**, particularly in addressing illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing, as well as combating marine pollution.
- **Disaster preparedness and humanitarian response (HADR)**, where joint naval assets could provide rapid assistance in regional crises such as cyclones, floods, or piracy-related humanitarian emergencies.

#### **4.4.3 Integrated Interpretation**

The findings collectively demonstrate that Kenya - USA naval diplomacy provides opportunities across multiple dimensions:

1. **Operational Opportunities** - Immediate improvements in training, patrols, and technology transfer strengthen Kenya's day-to-day naval capacity.
2. **Strategic Opportunities** - Through its partnership with the U.S., Kenya can position itself as a regional maritime hub, commanding both legitimacy and recognition in East Africa.
3. **Economic Opportunities** - The safeguarding of shipping lanes and offshore resources enables Kenya to tap into the blue economy, supporting national development.
4. **Normative Opportunities** - Greater involvement in multilateral forums enhances Kenya's diplomatic legitimacy, embedding it within international coalitions.
5. **Emerging Opportunities** - New avenues in cybersecurity, environmental diplomacy, and humanitarian operations expand the very definition of naval diplomacy to meet twenty-first century challenges.

From a Liberalist perspective, these opportunities reflect how institutionalized cooperation can generate absolute gains, allowing both partners to achieve shared benefits. From a Constructivist lens, Kenya's evolving identity as a maritime security leader demonstrates the symbolic and reputational dividends of naval diplomacy. From a Realist perspective, while opportunities exist, they must be weighed against the structural asymmetry of the partnership; Kenya must ensure that gains in capacity do not deepen dependency.

Overall, the opportunities identified demonstrate that despite existing challenges, Kenya–USA naval diplomacy is not only a defensive tool but also a forward-looking platform for transforming

Kenya's security architecture, bolstering its economic prospects, and elevating its stature in both regional and global arenas.

## **4.5 Summary of Findings**

This study set out to analyze the nature, strategies, challenges, and opportunities of Kenya–USA naval diplomacy in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden. Drawing on survey data, interviews, and document analysis, Chapter Four presented a comprehensive account of the empirical findings.

### **4.5.1 Nature of Kenya - USA Naval Diplomacy**

The findings revealed that Kenya-USA naval diplomacy is formalized, structured, and multi-dimensional.

- Quantitatively, 72% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the relationship is characterized by formal frameworks, including bilateral defense agreements and joint naval exercises.
- The most common forms of cooperation included joint training, intelligence sharing, and capacity-building programs.
- However, 51% of respondents perceived the relationship as asymmetrical, with Kenya contributing access, legitimacy, and location, while the USA contributes advanced resources and strategic direction.

This confirms that the nature of Kenya-USA naval diplomacy is both functional and asymmetrical, blending operational collaboration with structural imbalance.

#### **4.5.2 Strategies of Naval Diplomacy**

The findings demonstrated that the partnership employs a hybrid set of strategies, including:

- **Operational strategies** (joint patrols, intelligence sharing).
- **Capacity-building strategies** (training, technology transfer, scholarships).
- **Symbolic strategies** (naval visits, port calls, high-level meetings).
- **Emerging strategies** (cyber-maritime security and blue economy cooperation).

Quantitatively, joint training/exercises (82%) and capacity-building (77%) were ranked as the most widely endorsed strategies. Qualitative evidence reinforced this by framing U.S. training as a trust-building mechanism and a force multiplier for Kenya's future capacity. Intelligence-sharing, however, emerged as a weaker strategy due to persistent mistrust and selective disclosure.

#### **4.5.3 Challenges in Naval Diplomacy**

The partnership is significantly constrained by multi-layered challenges:

1. **Resource gaps** - Kenya's limited naval assets weaken operational parity (78%).
2. **Asymmetry and dependency** - respondents noted a structural imbalance that entrenches Kenya's reliance on U.S. support (72%).
3. **Intelligence-sharing mistrust** - constraints in information flow reduce Kenya's autonomy (64%).

4. **Bureaucratic hurdles** - overlapping institutional mandates and slow policy processes impede efficiency (58%).
5. **Geopolitical pressures** - competition from other actors (China, EU) complicates Kenya's balancing act (46%).

Qualitative findings illustrated these challenges as both structural and relational, with dependency emerging as the central theme.

#### **4.5.4 Opportunities of Naval Diplomacy**

Despite challenges, the study revealed transformative opportunities:

- **Capacity enhancement (81%)** through training, scholarships, and technology transfer.
- **Regional leadership (74%)**, positioning Kenya as a maritime hub in East Africa.
- **Economic/blue economy potential (67%)** via secure trade, resource protection, and fisheries management.
- **Multilateral integration (61%)**, expanding Kenya's role in international security regimes.
- **Emerging opportunities (45%)** in cyber-maritime security, climate security, and humanitarian response.

Interviews emphasized that opportunities extend beyond security to economic diplomacy and international prestige, with Kenya's geostrategic position offering leverage to strengthen its global profile.

#### **4.5.5 Integrated Synthesis**

Across the four objectives, the findings converge on three critical insights:

##### **1. Functional yet Asymmetrical Partnership**

Kenya-USA naval diplomacy is robust in operational cooperation but structurally unequal, with the USA contributing disproportionately more resources.

##### **2. Hybrid Strategic Approach**

The partnership is sustained by a mix of operational, capacity-building, symbolic, and emerging strategies, though effectiveness varies, with training rated higher than intelligence-sharing.

##### **3. Challenge-Opportunity Nexus**

The very challenges of asymmetry and dependency create space for opportunities in capacity enhancement and regional leadership, provided Kenya strengthens its bargaining capacity and diversifies partnerships.

#### **4.5.6 Link to Study Objectives**

- **Objective 1 (Nature):** Diplomacy is formalized but asymmetric.
- **Objective 2 (Strategies):** Strategies are hybrid, dominated by training and exercises.
- **Objective 3 (Challenges):** Key constraints include resource gaps, dependency, mistrust, and geopolitical pressures.

- **Objective 4 (Opportunities):** The partnership offers pathways for capacity growth, economic benefits, and regional leadership.

#### **4.5.7 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the findings portray Kenya-USA naval diplomacy as a strategic but imbalanced partnership, where Kenya leverages U.S. support to secure maritime stability, while the U.S. consolidates its geopolitical influence in East Africa. This duality underscores both the necessity of the partnership and the urgency for Kenya to capitalize on opportunities while addressing structural vulnerabilities.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the final synthesis of the study by summarizing the main findings, drawing conclusions in relation to the objectives and theoretical framework, and providing practical recommendations. It also highlights areas where future research is needed.

Beyond a simple summary, the chapter situates the results within broader debates on international relations and maritime security. It reflects on how Kenya-USA naval diplomacy contributes not only to immediate operational needs in the Gulf of Aden but also to Kenya's long-term strategic, economic, and diplomatic positioning. Finally, it points to the wider significance of the study, showing that the lessons drawn here extend to other asymmetric partnerships and regional maritime security initiatives.

## **5.1 Summary of the Study**

The study examined Kenya-USA naval diplomacy in promoting maritime security in the Gulf of Aden, guided by four objectives:

1. To examine the nature of Kenya-USA naval cooperation.
2. To analyze the strategies employed in this naval diplomacy.
3. To identify the challenges hindering effective cooperation.
4. To assess the opportunities arising from the partnership.

A mixed-methods design was used, combining survey data and key informant interviews with documentary review. Quantitative results were presented in percentages, while qualitative narratives provided contextual depth.

Key findings included:

- Kenya-USA naval cooperation is both operational and institutional, spanning training, intelligence sharing, joint patrols, and port visits.

- Strategies emphasized joint training, capacity-building, and patrol coordination, though intelligence sharing remained weak due to trust deficits.
- Major challenges included resource gaps, asymmetry, mistrust in intelligence exchange, bureaucratic hurdles, and geopolitical interference.
- Opportunities ranged from capacity enhancement and regional leadership to blue economy prospects, multilateral integration, and emerging domains such as cyber and climate security.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

The study draws several conclusions aligned with the objectives:

### **5.2.1 Nature of Cooperation**

Kenya-USA naval cooperation can be described as broad, multi-layered, and evolving, encompassing operational, institutional, and symbolic dimensions. At the operational level, the cooperation manifests in joint patrols, port visits, and naval exercises that directly enhance maritime security in the Gulf of Aden. Institutionally, the partnership is formalized through frameworks such as the Djibouti Code of Conduct and bilateral agreements, which provide legitimacy and continuity. Symbolically, naval visits, high-level exchanges, and public demonstrations of partnership serve as tools of maritime diplomacy, projecting Kenya as a credible ally in regional security.

From a Realist perspective, the relationship reflects an asymmetrical distribution of power, with the USA leveraging superior naval assets while Kenya provides geostrategic positioning. However, from a Liberalist view, the existence of structured cooperation, shared exercises, and agreements

demonstrates the power of institutions in facilitating mutual gains. Finally, through a Constructivist lens, Kenya's participation fosters a new identity as a reliable regional partner and enhances its diplomatic capital internationally.

### **5.2.2 Strategies of Diplomacy**

The strategies adopted reveal a hybrid diplomatic model. On one hand, joint training, capacity-building programs, and naval exercises focus on developing Kenya's internal capacity for long-term sustainability. On the other hand, operational coordination through patrols and surveillance addresses immediate security threats. This dual-track approach demonstrates deliberate balancing between short-term pragmatism and long-term resilience.

Nevertheless, the strategy of intelligence sharing remains relatively weak. Trust deficits and sensitivity surrounding classified information limit the depth of collaboration, reducing Kenya's ability to act independently. This indicates that cooperation is strong in visible, low-risk areas, but less effective in domains requiring deep trust and sovereignty-sensitive information exchange. Strategically, this underscores the necessity of confidence-building mechanisms to bridge the intelligence-sharing gap.

### **5.2.3 Challenges of Diplomacy**

Despite its robustness, the partnership faces structural, operational, and geopolitical challenges. Resource and capacity gaps on the Kenyan side create dependency on U.S. support, undermining autonomy. Bureaucratic inefficiencies and overlapping mandates among Kenyan institutions slow down the pace of implementation. Political sensitivities - particularly perceptions of

neocolonialism-risk undermining public and elite support for the partnership. Furthermore, mistrust in intelligence-sharing remains a persistent relational challenge, reducing the overall effectiveness of operations.

At a geopolitical level, Kenya must navigate competition between major external actors such as China, the EU, and India. This adds pressure to maintain balance without compromising sovereignty. These findings affirm Realist assertions that asymmetry inevitably constrains weaker partners, but they also highlight the institutional weaknesses and trust deficits that limit the promise of Liberal and Constructivist cooperation.

#### **5.2.4 Opportunities of Diplomacy**

Despite these constraints, Kenya-USA naval diplomacy presents transformative opportunities that extend beyond traditional security. Capacity-building through advanced training and technology transfer strengthens the Kenya Navy's professionalism and operational readiness. Strategically, the partnership allows Kenya to position itself as a maritime security hub in East Africa, anchoring regional stability.

Economically, safeguarding shipping routes and offshore resources aligns naval diplomacy with Kenya's blue economy agenda, creating openings for trade expansion, investment, and sustainable fisheries management. Diplomatically, participation in multilateral initiatives enhances Kenya's legitimacy, credibility, and global visibility. Emerging domains - such as cybersecurity, environmental diplomacy, and humanitarian disaster response - expand the scope of naval diplomacy into areas of twenty-first-century relevance.

Taken together, these opportunities demonstrate that Kenya-USA naval diplomacy is not only a security tool but also a vehicle for economic growth, regional leadership, and global recognition, provided Kenya manages the risks of dependency and strategically leverages its geostrategic position.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The study findings reveal both the strengths and weaknesses of Kenya-USA naval diplomacy. To maximize its benefits while addressing gaps, the following recommendations are advanced at three levels: policy, strategy, and capacity-building.

#### **5.3.1 Policy Recommendations**

<b>Strengthen</b>	<b>Kenya's</b>	<b>Naval</b>	<b>Autonomy</b>
	Kenya must progressively reduce its over-reliance on U.S. naval assets by investing in indigenous capabilities. This includes procuring modern warships, surveillance drones, and logistical support systems. Strengthening naval autonomy would allow Kenya to take on a more proactive role in securing its maritime domain while ensuring that the partnership with the U.S. is one of complementarity rather than dependency.		
<b>Enhance</b>	<b>Intelligence-Sharing</b>		<b>Frameworks</b>
	Intelligence remains the weakest link in the partnership due to trust deficits. Both Kenya and the U.S. should move beyond ad hoc information exchanges and institutionalize joint intelligence-sharing protocols. These frameworks must include safeguards for sovereignty while also addressing the sensitivities of classified information. Confidence-building measures, such as joint analysis centers or shared technological platforms, could go a long way in deepening trust.		

<b>Streamline</b>	<b>Bureaucracy</b>
-------------------	--------------------

The overlapping roles of the Kenya Navy, the Kenya Coast Guard Service (KCGS), and the Ministry of Defence often create duplication and delays. Institutional reforms are required to clearly define mandates, reduce bureaucratic bottlenecks, and improve inter-agency coordination. Streamlining would not only improve efficiency but also demonstrate to partners such as the U.S. that Kenya has a coherent and unified maritime security framework.

### **5.3.2 Strategic Recommendations**

<b>Leverage</b>	<b>Multilateral</b>	<b>Platforms</b>
-----------------	---------------------	------------------

Kenya's partnership with the U.S. should be strategically used to strengthen its voice and influence within multilateral security frameworks such as the Combined Maritime Forces and the Djibouti Code of Conduct. By playing a more assertive role, Kenya could position itself as a regional hub for maritime diplomacy, increasing both its bargaining power and international recognition.

<b>Expand</b>	<b>Non-Traditional</b>	<b>Security</b>	<b>Cooperation</b>
---------------	------------------------	-----------------	--------------------

The future of maritime security extends beyond piracy and naval warfare. Kenya and the U.S. should broaden their cooperation to include cyber-maritime security, environmental protection, and humanitarian disaster response (HADR). This would not only enhance resilience against twenty-first-century threats but also reposition naval diplomacy as a tool for addressing wider human security concerns.

<b>Integrate</b>	<b>Naval</b>	<b>Diplomacy</b>	<b>with</b>	<b>the</b>	<b>Blue</b>	<b>Economy</b>
------------------	--------------	------------------	-------------	------------	-------------	----------------

Naval cooperation should not be viewed in isolation from Kenya's economic priorities. Linking maritime security to the blue economy-by protecting shipping routes, fisheries, and offshore

resources—ensures that naval diplomacy supports national development. This integration would turn Kenya’s maritime geography into an engine of both security and prosperity.

### **5.3.3 Capacity-Building Recommendations**

<b>Sustain</b>	<b>Long-Term</b>	<b>Training</b>	<b>Programs</b>
----------------	------------------	-----------------	-----------------

Short-term training is valuable, but transformative capacity comes from sustained programs. Kenya should expand scholarship schemes, officer exchange initiatives, and participation in U.S-led exercises. Such programs cultivate a new generation of officers with advanced technical expertise, cross-cultural understanding, and a global outlook, ensuring continuity of professionalism.

<b>Promote</b>	<b>Public-Private</b>	<b>Partnerships</b>	<b>(PPPs)</b>
----------------	-----------------------	---------------------	---------------

The private sector has an untapped role in strengthening maritime security. Partnerships could include investments in technological innovation, such as satellite tracking, artificial intelligence for surveillance, and maritime insurance schemes. By involving private actors, Kenya can build resilience in ways that complement state resources, reducing financial strain while increasing innovation.

### **5.4 Suggestions for Further Research**

While this study has provided valuable insights into Kenya–USA naval diplomacy in the Gulf of Aden, it also opens pathways for further academic inquiry:

- **Comparative Naval Diplomacy:** Future research could compare Kenya–USA relations with other naval powers such as China, the European Union, and India. Such comparative

studies would shed light on the dynamics of strategic competition in the Western Indian Ocean and Kenya's positioning within it.

- **Role of Regional Organizations:** More work is needed to examine how organizations such as the **African Union (AU)** and **IGAD** influence or constrain naval diplomacy outcomes. Understanding regional ownership would provide a more comprehensive picture of how external and internal actors interact.
- **Impact on the Blue Economy:** Another important avenue would be to assess how naval diplomacy contributes to Kenya's blue economy strategy. Specifically, studies could analyze its effect on maritime trade competitiveness, sustainable fisheries management, and offshore resource governance.
- **Emerging Domains:** Finally, future research should focus on how cyber threats, climate change, and environmental degradation reshape naval diplomacy. These areas remain underexplored but will be critical in determining the relevance and adaptability of naval partnerships in the coming decades.

## **REFERENCES**

- Abir, M. (2020). The Arab World, Oil and Terrorism. In *International Terrorism* (pp. 135-140). Routledge.
- African Union. (2012). *2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (AIMS)*.
- African Union. (2019). *Study on an African union government towards the United States of Africa*. <http://archives.au.int/handle/123456789/2656>

Aguilar, S. L. C. (2022). European Union military operations and global security: ambitions and reality. *Revista Brasileira de Estudos de Defesa*, 9(2).

<https://doi.org/10.26792/rbed.v9n2.2022.75266>

Ahmad, N., Alias, F. A., & Razak, N. A. A. (2023). Understanding population and sample in research: Key concepts for valid conclusions. *Sigcs: E-Learning*, 6, 19-24.

Ahmadin, M. (2022). Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches. *Journal Kajian Sosial Dan Budaya: Tebar Science*, 6(1), 104-113.

Ahorsu, K., Yaro, D. S., & Attachie, D. (2024). Maritime Piracy and its Implications on Security in the Gulf of Guinea. *Eastern African Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(2), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.58721/eajhss.v3i2.470>

Alamri, W. A. (2019). Effectiveness of qualitative research methods: Interviews and diaries. *International Journal of English and Cultural Studies*, 2(1), 65-70.

Aljazeera. (2024, December 11). *Yemen's Houthis clash with U.S. Navy ships in the Gulf of Aden*. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/11/houthis-clash-with-us-navyships-in-the-gulf-of-aden>

Andrade, C. (2020). Sample size and its importance in research. *Indian journal of psychological medicine*, 42(1), 102-103. [https://doi.org/10.4103/IJPSYM.IJPSYM\\_504\\_19](https://doi.org/10.4103/IJPSYM.IJPSYM_504_19)

Awino, J., 2017. *Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCOC) Information Sharing Network: Lessons Learned*, Africa Center for Strategic Studies. United States of America. <https://coilink.org/20.500.12592/d3m58j>

Baharuddin, M. F., Masrek, M. N., & Shuhidan, S. M. (2020). Content validity of assessment instrument for innovative work behaviour of Malaysian school teachers. *International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research*, 9(4), 1940-1946.

Beebe, G. (2024). *Right-Sizing the Russian Threat to Europe*. Quincy Institute for Responsible

Statecraft.

Belur, J., Tompson, L., Thornton, A., & Simon, M. (2021). Interrater reliability in systematic review methodology: exploring variation in coder decision-making. *Sociological methods & research*, 50(2), 837-865. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124118799372>

Bengio, Y. (2020). Assessing the Effectiveness of Deterrence Theory in Modern Warfare. *International Journal of Unique and New Updates*, ISSN: 3079-4722, 2(1), 35-42.

Brinkmann, S. (2022). *Qualitative interviewing: Conversational knowledge through research interviews*. Oxford University Press.

Caeymaex, F., Wenger, C., De Heusch, F., & Lafleur, J. M. (2023). “Ethics Ready”? Governing Research Through Informed Consent Procedures. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22, 16094069231165718. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231165718>

Chome, N. (2021). *Kenya's new violent extremism hotspots: An assessment of risk and vulnerability in Marsabit, the Rift Valley and Western Kenya*.

<https://cvekenya.org/media/library/Kenya's-New-Violent-Extremism-Hotspots.pdf>

Christianson, J., Monaghan, S., & Cooke, D. (2023). *AUKUS Pillar Two: Advancing the Capabilities of the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia*. [www.csis.org](http://www.csis.org).  
<https://www.csis.org/analysis/aukus-pillar-two-advancing-capabilities-united-statesunited-kingdom-and-australia>

Clark, L. A., & Watson, D. (2019). Constructing validity: New developments in creating objective measuring instruments. *Psychological assessment*, 31(12), 1412.

Council on Foreign Relations. (2024). *Timeline: China's Maritime Disputes*. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/chinas-maritime-disputes>

- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.
- Danzell, O. E., Mauslein, J. A., & Avelar, J. D. (2021). Managing Threats on the High Seas: The Role of Naval Bases on Reducing Maritime Piracy. *Armed Forces & Society*, 49(1), 0095327X2110494. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327x211049462>
- Dutton, P. A., Kardon, I. B., & Kennedy, C. M. (2020). *China Maritime Report No. 6: Djibouti: China's First Overseas Strategic Strongpoint*.
- Farzayee, S. (2023). From State-Centric to Security Complexes: A Review of Regional Security Complex Theory in International Relations. *Resolusi: Jurnal Sosial Politik*, 6(2), 163-179. <https://doi.org/10.32699/resolusi.v6i2.4560>
- Galgano, F. A. (2024). Hostis humani generis: Pirates and global maritime commerce. *Research in Globalization*, 8, 100188. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resglo.2023.100188>
- Gambrell, J. (2025, March 17). *What to know about Yemen's Houthi rebels after U.S. attacks*. AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/yemen-houthi-rebels-us-strikes-iran-447f4abb39cc12c7f2f5596f0e33407b>
- Ganesha, H. R., & Aithal, P. S. (2022). Choosing an appropriate data collection instrument and checking for the calibration, validity, and reliability of data collection instrument before collecting the data during Ph. D. program in India. *International Journal of Management Technology and Social Sciences*, 7(2), 497-513. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7310078>
- Gao, J., & Allen, K. W. (2024). *China Maritime Report No. 37: Re-Engaging With the World: China's Military Diplomacy in 2023*.
- Germond, B. (2015). The geopolitical dimension of maritime security. *Marine Policy*, 54, 137-142. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2014.12.013>

- Government of Kenya. (2016). *National Maritime Security Strategy*.
- Gulnoza, K., & Niginabonu, K. (2022). Questionnaire and Its Application. *Research Focus*, 1(3), 78-82.
- Haldar, S. (2024). Malabar Exercise: Strengthening synergy among Quad nations. *Orfonline.org*.  
<https://doi.org/1023160730.jpg?1736055485>
- Hwang, H. J. (2023). The importance of anonymity and confidentiality for conducting survey research. *Journal of Research and Publication Ethics*, 4(1), 1-7.  
<https://doi.org/10.15722/jrpe.4.1.202303.1>
- IMO. (2023). *Maritime Security*.
- International Crisis Group. (2018, September 21). *Al-Shabaab five years after Westgate: Still a menace in East Africa*. Crisis Group.  
<https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/hornofafrica/kenya/265-al-shabaab-five-years-after-westgate-still-menace-east-africa>
- International Maritime Bureau (IMB). (2011). *Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships Annual Report*.
- International Maritime Bureau (IMB). (2024). *Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in the Gulf of Aden Annual Report*.
- International Maritime Organization (IMO). (2017). *Jeddah Amendment to the Djibouti Code of Conduct* 2009.
- International Maritime Organization. (2009). *Djibouti Code of Conduct*.
- International Maritime Organization. (2020). *Progress in implementing the Djibouti Code of Conduct- Jeddah Amendment* (MSC 102/INF.5). IMO.
- International Maritime Organization. (IMO). (1974). *International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS)*, 1974, as amended. London: IMO.

Islam, M. S. (2024). Maritime Diplomacy and Regional Cooperation Mechanisms: Insights from the Black Sea and Bay of Bengal. *Millennial Asia*.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/09763996241256162>

Jureńczyk, Ł., & Szatlach, M. E. (2023). The US-Kenya free trade agreement: A gateway of closer commercial cooperation with Africa. *Humanities & Social Sciences*, 30(2).

Kelle, U., Kühberger, C., & Bernhard, R. (2019). How to use mixed-methods and triangulation designs: An introduction to history education research. *History Education Research Journal*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.18546/HERJ.16.1.02>

Kitimo, A. (2021, September 14). *It is a big relief as Kenya's maritime waters are off the global high-risk list*. Business Daily.

<https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/bd/corporate/shipping-logistics/big-relief-as-kenyamaritime-waters-off-global-high-risk-list-3550148>

Kuo, R & Blankenship, B. D. (2022). Deterrence and Restraint: Do Joint Military Exercises Escalate Conflict? *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. Vol. 66(1) 3–31

Kwarteng, K. N., & Frimpong, A. A. (2018). Empirical Illustration of Major Theories of Realism and Liberalism in International Relations. *Journal of International Journal Affairs and Global Strategy*, 6, 49-52.

Larsson, O. L., & Widen, J. J. (2024). The European Union as a maritime security provider—the naval diplomacy perspective. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 47(12), 1724-1746.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2022.2058863>

Li, X. (2023). *China's New Navy: The Evolution of PLAN from the People's Revolution to a 21st Century Cold War*. Naval Institute Press.

Liu, C. (2023). The cooperation between China and the Gulf Arab states in the Horn of Africa: From the perspective of the Global South. *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic*

*Studies*, 17(4), 404-427. <https://doi.org/10.1080/25765949.2023.2295678>

Maina, J. (2025, March 20). *Illegal fishing endangers Kenya's economy and environment | D+C - Development + Cooperation*. Dandc.eu. <https://www.dandc.eu/en/article/illegal-fishingputting-kenyas-fishing-industry-risk-threatening-both-livelihoods-and>

Maritime Security Transit Corridor (MSTC). (n.d.). *Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)*.

<https://combinedmaritimeforces.com/maritime-security-transit-corridor-mstc/>

Mbugua, J. K., & Mwachinalo, S. (2017). *An Assessment of Maritime Insecurity In the Kenya Maritime Domain*. International Peace Support Training Centre (IPSTC).

Menzel, A. (2018). Institutional adoption and maritime crime governance: the Djibouti Code of Conduct. *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, 14(2), 152-169.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/19480881.2018.1467360>

Ministry of Defence - Kenya. (2025, February 21). *Kenya Navy Joins Exercise Komodo 2025 – Ministry of Defence – Kenya*. Mod.go.ke. <https://www.mod.go.ke/news/kenya-navy-joinsexercise-komodo-2025/>

Ministry of Defense Kenya. (2025). *Kenya Navy's role in Gulf of Aden security operations*.  
Ministry of Defense.

Ministry of Defense Kenya. (n.d.). *Kenya Navy*. Ministry of Defense.

Morgan, H. (2022). Conducting a qualitative document analysis. *The qualitative report*, 27(1), 64-77. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5044>

Muneer, Z. (n.d.). *CSCR: Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement*. Centre for Strategic and Contemporary Research. [https://cscr.pk/pdf/rb/RB%20\\_LEMOA.pdf](https://cscr.pk/pdf/rb/RB%20_LEMOA.pdf)

Njoya, E. T., Efthymiou, M., Nikitas, A., & O'Connell, J. F. (2022). The Effects of Diminished Tourism Arrivals and Expenditures Caused by Terrorism and Political Unrest on the Kenyan Economy. *Economies*, 10(8), 191. <https://doi.org/10.3390/economies10080191>

- NO, O. P. M. N. M. (2021). Seapower in the fight against Somali piracy. *Instituto universitário militar*, 143.
- Nunan, D. (2021). Collection: Privacy and research ethics. *International Journal of Market Research*, 63(3), 271-274. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14707853211015445>
- Nyimbili, F., & Nyimbili, L. (2024). Types of purposive sampling techniques with their examples and application in qualitative research studies. *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies*, 5(1), 90-99. <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjmas.2022.0419>
- Ocholla, V. (2025, April 18). *Tariffs are a poor policy choice for reduction of trade deficits - IEA Kenya*. IEA Kenya. <https://ieakenya.or.ke/blog/tariffs-are-a-poor-policy-choice-forreduction-of-trade-deficits/>
- Oloo, D. (2023). Digital Diplomacy in Kenya: A Study on X (Twitter) Analysis and Communication Strategies of A Few Selected Diplomatic Actors. *Society & Sustainability*, 5(2), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.38157/ss.v5i2.587>
- Pannier, A. (2020). Bilateral relations. *Global diplomacy: An introduction to theory and practice*, 19-33.
- Pawar, N. (2020). Type of research and type research design. *Social Research Methodology*, 8(1), 46-57.
- PCN 50100770000. (2013). <https://www.marines.mil/portals/1/Publications/Maritime%20Security%20Cooperation%20Policy.pdf>
- Peltonen, H. (2017). A tale of two cognitions: The Evolution of Social Constructivism in International Relations. *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, 60, e014. <https://doi.org/10.1590/0034-7329201700105>

Rahardja, U., Aini, Q., Graha, Y. I., & Lutfiani, N. (2019, December). Validity of test instruments. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series* (Vol. 1364, No. 1, p. 012050). IOP Publishing.

Rahman, S., & Al Amin, M. (2024). Maritime Security under the Lens: Evaluating its effectiveness in Deterring Piracy and Armed Robbery at Sea. *Legal Research & Analysis*, 2(1). <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9263-4745>

Raykov, T., & Marcoulides, G. A. (2017). Evaluation of true criterion validity for unidimensional multicomponent measuring instruments in longitudinal studies. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 24(4), 599-608.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10705511.2016.1172486>

Renovic, J.-M., & Hamilton, C. (2019, October 18). *Reporters - Kenya's second-largest city becomes the world's new drug trafficking hub*. France 24.  
<https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20191018-kenyan-port-of-mombasa-becomes-worlds-new-drug-trafficking-hub>

Roche, C. (2025, March 26). *U.S. Navy destroyer with guided missiles returns from Red Sea mission to protect U.S. southern border*. AS USA. [https://en.as.com/latest\\_news/us-navydestroyer-with-guided-missiles-returns-from-red-sea-mission-to-protect-us-southernborder-n/](https://en.as.com/latest_news/us-navydestroyer-with-guided-missiles-returns-from-red-sea-mission-to-protect-us-southernborder-n/)

Rosenberg, J. (2024). *The empire of civil society: a critique of the realist theory of international relations*. Verso Books.

Rowlands, K. (2018). *Naval diplomacy in 21st century: A model for the post-cold war global order*. Routledge.

Shinn, D. (2020). Competition and cooperation in the Red Sea region. *Great Decisions*, 31–40.

JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/27161565>

Siebels, D. (2020). Pirates, smugglers and corrupt officials—maritime security in East and West Africa. *International Journal of Maritime Crime and Security*, 1(01).

Stratton, S. J. (2021). Population research: convenience sampling strategies. *Prehospital and disaster Medicine*, 36(4), 373-374. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049023X21000649>

Sundram, S., & Romli, N. (2023). A pilot study to test the reliability and validity of the research instrument. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)*, 8(3), e002149-e002149.

Taber, K. S. (2018). The use of Cronbach's alpha when developing and reporting research instruments in science education. *Research in science education*, 48, 1273-1296.

Tadesse, G. A., & Tafesse, T. (2024). Exploring Drivers of Trafficking in Persons in the Horn of Africa with Emphasis on the Eastern Route to the Gulf States through Djibouti. *Journal homepage: www. ajids. com. et*, 8, 2.

The Gard. (2025, February 12). *Piracy: A persistent threat to seafarers*. Gard; Gard AS. <https://gard.no/insights/piracy-a-persistent-threat-to-seafarers/>

United Nations. (1982). *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)*.

United States Africa Command (AFRICOM). (2020). *Cutlass Express: Enhancing Maritime Security through Partnership*.

United States Africa Command (AFRICOM). (2024). *Enhancing Maritime Security through Partnership*.

United States Africa Command. (2023, September 13). *AFRICOM Commander visits Kenya*.

US Department of Defense. (2015). *A Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Seapower*.

Van Haute, E. (2021). *Sampling techniques. Research Methods in the Social Sciences: An AZ of Key Concepts*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 247.

## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX I: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION**

Dear Respondent,

I am a student at Mount Kenya University pursuing a Master's Degree in International relations and diplomacy undertaking a research project to analyze the Kenya- USA Naval diplomatic cooperation in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden. You are requested to participate in this survey. A questionnaire will be issued to you upon which you will read it through and provide

the information being requested as each holds significance in the study. Your participation entails no risks, and information collected will only be used for the purposes of research.

Kind Regards,

KARIUKI FREDRICK MWANGI

Reg No: MIRD/2024/44067

Phone: 0704683042

Email: kariukifredrick254@gmail.com

## **APPENDIX II: INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

**Name of study:** Analysis of Kenya-USA Naval diplomatic cooperation in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden.

**Name of Researcher:** KARIUKI FREDRICK MWANGI

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_ understand the objectives upon which this study is being carried out on and I understand its details. I agree to participate, knowing it may involve oral and written responses. My personal information will remain confidential and not be shared without my consent. My responses may be used in publications, websites, and reports. I

accept to transfer the copyrights of my contributions to Mr. KARIUKI FREDRICK MWANGI. I understand that I can refrain to respond to any questions put across to me and that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

Signature of the participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature for the Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **APPENDIX III: STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE**

#### **ANALYSIS OF KENYA - USA NAVAL DIPLOMATIC COOPERATION IN ENHANCING MARITIME SECURITY IN THE GULF OF ADEN**

Dear participant, this study aims to analyze the Kenya-USA Naval diplomacy on maritime security in the Gulf of Aden. This questionnaire has two sections; Section A requiring you to give personal information, while section B will require you to give information about specific objectives of the research topic. Your responses will maintain confidentiality and will be used for academic purposes only.

**Instructions:** Kindly answer the questions as honestly as possible, tick on boxes where necessary and give explanation if more clarification if required.

## **SECTION A: PERSONAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

1. What is your current affiliation?

Security agencies and KCGS [ ] Kenya Navy Personnel [ ] USA Naval Personnel [ ]

Any other, state \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your rank/ position? (Optional)

\_\_\_\_\_

3. How many years of experience have you been in maritime operations?

1-5 years [ ] 6-10 years [ ] 11-15 years [ ] over 15 years [ ]

4. What is your area of specialization? Naval operations [ ]

Logistics [ ]

Intelligence [ ]

Training [ ]

Others, specify \_\_\_\_\_

## **SECTION B: QUESTIONS BASED ON OBJECTIVES**

**Nature of Kenya Navy-US Navy bilateral diplomatic relationships in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden.**

5. a) Was bilateral diplomatic relationship between USA Navy and Kenya Navy in enhancing maritime security in Gulf of Aden necessitated by certain maritime threats?

Yes [ ]

No [ ]

b) If Yes in 5(a) above what are some of the maritime security threats in the Gulf of Aden that were deemed to have necessitated bilateral diplomatic relationship? (Select all that apply).

Terrorism [ ] Piracy [ ] Trafficking [ ]

Illegal fishing [ ] Illegal migration [ ] Smuggling [ ]

Any other, State \_\_\_\_\_

c) On a scale of 1-5, how severe do you perceive these threats?

(1=Not severe, 5=Extremely severe)

Piracy: [ 1] [ 2] [ 3] [ 4] [ 5]

Terrorism: [ 1] [ 2] [ 3] [ 4] [ 5]

Trafficking: [ 1] [ 2] [ 3] [ 4] [ 5]

Illegal fishing: [ 1] [ 2] [ 3] [ 4] [ 5]

Illegal migration: [ 1] [ 2] [ 3] [ 4] [ 5]

Smuggling: [ 1] [ 2] [ 3] [ 4] [ 5]

d) What are the main drivers of maritime security threats in the Gulf of Aden? (Select all that apply).

Political instability in the region [ ]

Economic challenges [ ]

Lack of law enforcement mechanisms [ ]

Corruption [ ]

Foreign interference [ ]

Others specify \_\_\_\_\_

**Strategies used by both Kenya Navy and USA Navy in their bilateral diplomatic relationship in enhancing their role in maritime security in the Gulf of Aden.**

6. a) Are there specific strategies adopted by Kenya Navy and USA Navy in order to affect their bilateral diplomatic relationship in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden?

Yes [ ]

No [ ]

b) If yes in 6(a) above, what are some of the strategies adopted for this bilateral diplomatic relationship? (Select all that apply).

Joint naval patrols [ ]

Joint training [ ]

Capacity building [ ]

Intelligence sharing [ ]

Military aid and funding [ ]

Others, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

c) How can you rate the effectiveness of these strategies?

Very effective [ ]

Effective [ ]

Neutral [ ]

Ineffective [ ]

Very ineffective [ ]

**Opportunities and challenges arising from the Kenya Navy-USA Navy diplomatic relationships in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden.**

7. What are the most significant opportunities created by naval diplomacy in the region? (select all that apply).

Strengthening international alliances [ ]

Capacity building for local navies [ ]

Increased intelligence- sharing [ ]

Boosting trade and economic stability [ ]

Enhancing humanitarian aid delivery [ ]

Others (specify)\_\_\_\_\_

8. a) Are there challenges facing the Kenya Navy-USA Navy bilateral diplomatic relationship in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden?

Yes [ ]      No [ ]

b) If yes in 8(a) above, what are some of the major operational challenges experienced? (Select all that apply).

Resource limitations [ ]

Coordination and communication challenges [ ]

Political and diplomatic constraints [ ]

Differences in strategic priorities between both navies [ ]

Legal and jurisdictional gaps [ ]

Others, please specify

---

c) How do differences in technology, training and operational procedures between Kenya and USA affect the cooperation?

Hinder operations significantly [ ]

Hinder operations to some extent [ ]

Have very minimal impact [ ]

No effect on the cooperation [ ]

d) What geopolitical challenges affect the naval cooperation between Kenya and USA Navies in the Gulf of Aden? (Select all that apply).

Presence of other navies [ ]

National interests [ ]

Regional conflicts and instability [ ]

Geopolitical shifts and strategic competition [ ]

- e) In your own view, what are the key areas of improvement and measures that can be put in place to strengthen the Kenya-USA Navy bilateral diplomatic relationship?
- 
- 
- 

## **THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION**

.....END.....

### **APPENDIX IV: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE WITH KEY INFORMANTS**

1. Can you briefly explain your role in maritime security operations and how can you define the current maritime security situation in the Gulf of Aden?
2. What are some of the threats that were deemed to have necessitated Kenya-USA Naval bilateral diplomatic relationship?
3. Which strategies are adopted by Kenya Navy and USA Navy in order to affect their bilateral diplomatic relationship in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden?
4. How can you rate the effectiveness of these strategies and mention any successful missions from this collaboration?
5. What opportunities arise from the Kenya- USA naval diplomacy in the region?
6. Are there operational, training and geopolitical challenges facing the Kenya Navy-US Navy bilateral diplomatic relationship in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden?

7. What are the key areas of improvement and consideration in the Kenya-USA Navy bilateral diplomatic relationship and how can Kenya and USA align themselves with emerging technology to improve the efficiency of their Naval cooperation?
8. In your opinion, are there measures ranging from military, economic, legal, policy and diplomatic strategies that can be applied in order to strengthen US-Kenya bilateral diplomatic relationship in its role in enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Aden?

#### **APPENDIX V: RESEARCH PROJECT BUDGET**

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>COST (KSHS.)</b>
<b>1. Data collection</b>	
Printing questionnaires	30,000
Internet and mobile phone costs	50,000
Travelling and accommodation costs	300,000
Soft drinks (sodas) for respondents	50,000
<b>2. Research assistance</b>	
Research assistant's allowances (3 persons)	100,000
Expert consultation fees	50,000

<b>3. Document analysis and data processing</b>	
Access to reports and databases (subscription fees)	40,000
Software for data analysis (NVivo 15 and SPSS 30)	20 ,000
<b>4. Report writing and publishing</b>	
Editing and proofreading services	20, 000
Printing and binding	20, 000
<b>5. Miscellaneous costs</b>	
10% total budget	68, 000
<b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>748,000</b>

## APPENDIX VI: WORK PLAN

ACTIVITY \ TIME	Dec 2024	Jan 2025	Jun 2025 -Apr 2025	Jun (1 day)	Jul 2025 2025 (3 days)	Jul- Au 202 wks)	Aug 2025 5	Sep 2025
Developing Research Topic								
Developing Research Proposal								
Proposal Defense								
Completing the Proposal and corrections								
Ethical review application								
Collecting Data								
Analyzing Data and project presentation								
Project examination and publication								

## APPENDIX VII: MAP OF KENYA AND MAP OF INDIAN OCEAN



Source: World Atlas