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INSIGHT

Evaluating the Alignment Between Budgetary Allocations and National Security Priorities

Exploratory Case Study: Kenya

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Acronyms & Abbreviations

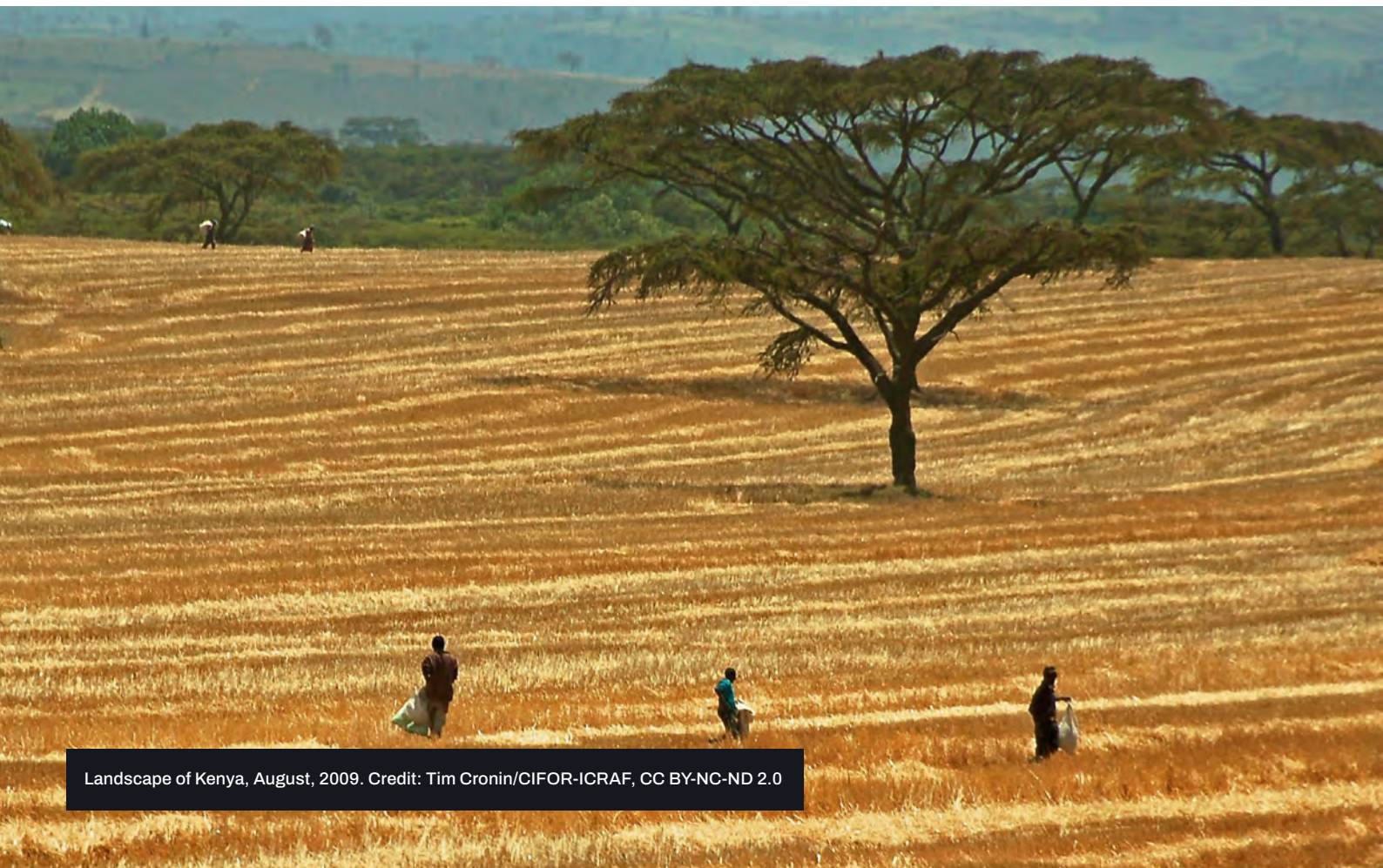
AP	Administration Police
ASAL	Arid and Semi-Arid Lands
BCOCC	Border Control and Operations Coordination Committee
BMS	Border Management Secretariat
CSO	Civil Society Organization
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
JOC	Joint Operation Centres
KSh	Kenyan Shilling
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NCPB	National Cereals and Produce Board
NSC	National Security Council
OSBP	One Stop Border Post
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
UTNWF	Upper Tana Nairobi Water Fund

Executive Summary

In 2025, the world faces deteriorating security conditions. While military threats continue to dominate global headlines, a far broader range of security risks – many of which surpass purely military concerns – pose significant challenges. These developments are illustrated by the national security strategies of many States, which securitize environmental, technological and societal challenges.

This research initiative proposes a framework for evaluating the coherence between the broader scope of national security priorities and budgetary allocations. By examining an exploratory case study – Kenya – it compares stated security priorities with actual expenditures to assess alignment and promote transparency. The analysis reveals inconsistencies and challenges, including irregular reporting practices, difficulties in tracking expenditures due to frequent institutional reorganization, and a lack of transparency in certain sectors.

The Kenya case study underscores the need for greater transparency, coordination and oversight in national security budgeting. Strengthening the link between stated priorities and actual expenditures is essential for effective governance, enhanced oversight and achieving long-term security outcomes.



Landscape of Kenya, August, 2009. Credit: Tim Cronin/CIFOR-ICRAF, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

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RAF Puma Helicopter on Exercise Askari Thunder in Kenya. Credit: Defence Imagery, CC BY-NC 2.0

1. Introduction

Security must be understood as a multidimensional, holistic concept, centred on people, not solely on States or military strength. While traditional security emphasizes territorial integrity and military capabilities, security also means ensuring dignity, protection from poverty and hunger, along with providing equal opportunities and freedom from fear. A holistic view of national security is already presented in the national security documents of many States, where, for example, border security, environmental stability, economic growth and food security are listed as crucial components of the overarching national security architecture.¹ Through national security strategies, governments explicitly articulate that military power alone is insufficient for ensuring both State and human well-being.²

At the same time, while intentionally securitizing multiple dimensions of national welfare, governments do not always appear to strategically centralize and balance competing national security objectives to guarantee the effective use of limited public resources. In the current context, where many States face the dual challenge of escalating security concerns and structural

1 Kuimova, A., Holtom, P. and Tian, N., 'Is it time to reassess national security spending', SIPRI WritePeace blog, November 2023, <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/blog/2023/time-reassess-national-security-spending>.

2 Kuol, L. and Amegboh, J., 'Rethinking National Security Strategies in Africa', *International Relations and Diplomacy*, January 2021, Vol. 9, No. 01, <https://www.davidpublisher.com/Public/uploads/Contribute/60a72058556ba.pdf>.

development gaps, coupled with financial pressures on public spending, it is of utmost importance to ensure oversight on how governments operationalize available resources to support national security priorities.

To date, efforts to monitor national financial resources available to address national defence and security concerns have concentrated on systematic data collection and analysis of national military budgets and expenditures.³ However, a significant knowledge gap remains in monitoring the coherence between a broader range of national security priorities – beyond traditional military concerns – and budget categories and allocations. Public oversight of security spending, as defined in Box 1, is essential to ensure that spending delivers real value for citizens, which is the responsibility of the State.

BOX 1

A working definition of security spending

In this Insight, the term “security spending” refers to the combination of expenditures aimed at holistically enhancing a State’s national security. Conceptually, these expenditures should align with the country’s national security priorities as articulated in official documents on the state of the national security landscape. These could include spending on maintaining state-oriented security, such as territorial integrity and related security measures, as well as financial allocations to address human security concerns, such as poverty or climate-induced security risks.

“The initiative proposes concrete steps to assess the alignment between stated national security objectives and expenditures.”

This Insight is part of a joint UNIDIR-SIPRI initiative that proposes to expand the debate on the implications and effectiveness of military spending, which has predominantly focused on state-based military dimensions of security, and include human security aspects, such as spending on poverty reduction, economic resilience and food security.⁴ The initiative aims to offer new perspectives for more effective monitoring of security spending to support the oversight efforts of civil society organizations (CSOs) and parliamentarians. The initiative proposes concrete steps to assess the alignment between stated national security objectives and expenditures.⁵ This assessment is a recommended starting point towards promoting good governance and better oversight and accountability in security spending management.

3 SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>.

4 Tian, N., Kuimova, A., Holtom, P. and Beraud-Sudreau, L., ‘Towards a Comprehensive Security Approach to Military Spending’, UNIDIR Commentary, 1 November 2023, <https://unidir.org/towards-a-comprehensive-security-approach-to-military-spending/>.

5 Kuimova, A., Holtom, P. and Tian, N., ‘Is it time to reassess national security spending’, SIPRI WritePeace blog; Tian, N., Kuimova, A., Holtom, P. and Beraud-Sudreau, L., ‘Towards a Comprehensive Security Approach to Military Spending’, UNIDIR Commentary.

The Insight adopts a case study method to test the framework and unveils the initial results and challenges. It reviews the main security threat areas identified in Kenyan national security documents and compares them with budgeting categories and expenditures. It shows the difficulty of systematically matching national security priorities to expenditure decisions. However, it also demonstrates that such assessments are possible and can serve as a starting point to promote the efficient use of resources to achieve security outcomes.

2. Methodology overview

States articulate their national security priorities through official government documents such as national security strategies, defence white papers and medium-term expenditure frameworks. The degree of transparency and availability of documents, however, is uneven. For some countries, these documents are publicly available, while for others they are classified or only partly disclosed. At the same time, the diverse national security priorities emerging from the rapidly evolving security landscape has made tracking security spending, as defined in Box 1, a particularly challenging enterprise. Security spending now cuts across numerous government ministries, including not only the Ministry of Defence, but also the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Justice and other agencies. With the aim of contributing to effective oversight of security spending relative to announced national security priorities, this research initiative proposes a framework for examining the alignment between budgetary categories and national security priorities.⁶

“The proposed steps seek to prompt discussions on whether budgetary allocations match declared national security priorities.”

2.1 General methodological considerations and evaluation framework

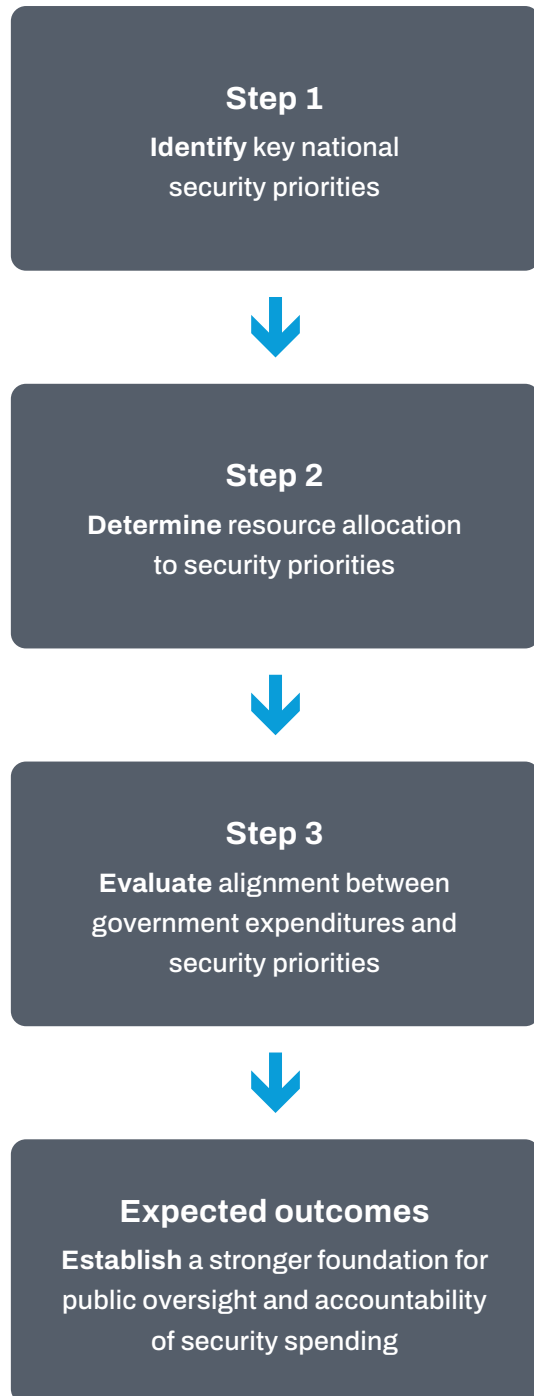
The three-step framework, as shown in Figure 1, seeks to strengthen security spending oversight and facilitate the credible evaluation of governmental security commitments from a budgetary perspective.

- ▶ **The first step** involves a thorough examination of national security documents to identify key security areas and priorities.
- ▶ **The second step** focuses on a detailed review of the budget categories presented in public spending reports to determine the resources allocated by the government to each of the selected security priorities.
- ▶ **The third step** seeks to evaluate the alignment between government expenditures and the identified priorities.

6 Kuimova, A., Holtom, P. and Tian, N., ‘Is it time to reassess national security spending’, SIPRI WritePeace blog, 1 November 2023, <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/blog/2023/time-reassess-national-security-spending>.

FIGURE 1

The proposed framework for comparing security priorities and actual public spending



The proposed steps seek to prompt discussions on whether budgetary allocations match declared national security priorities, thus enabling greater accountability in government security spending decisions and contributing to establishing a stronger foundation for civilian oversight.

Overall, the framework seeks to address the following four key questions:

1. Which areas of national security have been prioritized by governments?
2. Which principal national security policies are in place?
3. Which governmental entities are responsible for safeguarding the diverse areas of national security?
4. To what extent do budgetary allocations reflect key security priorities?

To examine how States conceptualize and rank their security threats, this research initiative first conducted a preliminary review of national security documents from a representative sample of 12 States. The selection considered a diverse set of criteria, including a range of geographic characteristics and income levels, involvement in active conflict, possession of nuclear weapons, availability and accessibility of public finance statistics, and the existence of national security policies. The research team conducted preliminary tests using the framework described in Figure 1 on some of these selected exploratory country case studies. Kenya met the conditions most fully to examine the alignment between public spending allocations and national security priorities articulated by governments. Therefore, Kenya was chosen as the pilot exploratory case for an in-depth comparison of stated security priorities with actual public spending.



African view. Credit: Davida De La Harpe, CC BY-ND 2.0

3. Kenya case study

Kenya's security architecture is multifaceted. The country faces diverse domestic security challenges, including persistent terrorist threats, organized crime and environmental risks.⁷ It also plays an important role in regional stability efforts, serving as a major contributor to regional counterterrorism initiatives, peacekeeping and mediation efforts. All these elements are reflected in Kenya's security documents outlining the measures taken by the Kenyan Government to address both traditional and human-centred security challenges.

3.1 Step one: Identifying Kenya's national security priorities

The Kenyan Constitution defines *national security* as “the protection against internal and external threats to Kenya's territorial integrity and sovereignty, its people, their rights, freedoms, property, peace, stability and prosperity, and other national interests”.⁸ According to the Constitution,

7 Odongo, M. and Jost, L., ‘Kenya's national security landscape. A case study of Kenya's domestic and foreign political security actions’, *Voices from Kenya*, No. 1/2024, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2024, [55350315-8c7e-1c04-7c40-fac5ce594344](https://www.konrad-stiftung.org/en/publications/voices-from-kenya/kenya-national-security-landscape).

8 The Republic of Kenya, The National Council for Law Reporting, Constitution of Kenya, 2010, <https://new.kenyalaw.org/akn/ke/act/2010/constitution/eng@2010-09-03>.

Kenya's national security framework is structured around several key governmental entities: the Kenyan Defence Forces, National Intelligence Service and National Police Service, operating under the supervision of the National Security Council (NSC). The main tasks of the NSC include: to "integrate the domestic, foreign and military policies relating to national security in order to enable the national security organs to cooperate and function effectively" and to "assess and appraise the objectives, commitments and risks to the Republic in respect of actual and potential national security capabilities".⁹ An initial review of Kenya's publicly available security-related documents revealed a wide range of national security policies that address specific security areas (e.g. cybersecurity, food security), including Kenya's Defence White Paper, however an overarching National Security Strategy is not publicly available.¹⁰

Kenya's Annual Reports on the State of National Security (hereafter referred to as "Annual Reports") indicate the different types of threats and security challenges faced by Kenya over time, along with the corresponding mitigation measures. These reports are submitted to Parliament by the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces.¹¹ The Annual Reports published between 2014 and 2024 were selected as the primary guiding documents for this research, enabling a comprehensive examination of national security-related projects with public spending allocations across a ten-year period.¹²

To comprehensively identify Kenya's national security priorities, this Insight followed the methodology of thoroughly examining, reviewing and utilizing Kenya's publicly available Annual Reports published between 2014 and 2024, except for 2017 and 2022 for which no Annual Reports were available. The analysis of these publicly available reports enabled the identification of four main categories of national threats, as shown in Figure 2, to inform the examination of public spending.

Two main categories, *general security* and *environmental security*, were chosen for further exploratory analysis for this Insight. Within these two categories, *border security* and *food security* were selected for in-depth examination to test the methodology for assessing the alignment of government spending allocations over time. The selection of these priority areas was informed by the following contextual considerations:

- ▶ Their pivotal role in maintaining Kenya's territorial integrity and the safety and well-being of its citizens.
- ▶ Their multidimensional nature and explicit interconnections with other categories of security threats.

9 The Republic of Kenya, The National Council for Law Reporting, Constitution of Kenya, 2010, <https://new.kenyalaw.org/akn/ke/act/2010/constitution/eng@2010-09-03>.

10 For example, Kenya's Ministry of Defence, Defence White Paper, 2017, <https://www.mod.go.ke/download/national-defence-policy/>; National Food and Nutrition Security Policy, 2011, https://nutritionhealth.or.ke/wp-content/uploads/Downloads/National_Food_and_Nutrition_Security_Policy.pdf; Kenya's National Computer and Cybercrime Coordination Committee, National Cybersecurity Strategy, 2022-2027, 2022, <https://nc4.go.ke/national-cybersecurity-strategy-2022-2027/>.

11 For example, Republic of Kenya, Annual Report to Parliament on the State of National Security by H.E. Hon. William Samoei Ruto, PhD., C.G.H., President of the Republic of Kenya and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces, 2023, <http://parliament.go.ke/sites/default/files/2024-02/2023%20REPORT%20ON%20STATE%20OF%20NATIONAL%20SECURITY.pdf>.

12 This initiative conducted an analysis of Kenya's Annual Reports (to Parliament) on the State of National Security for 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023, 2024. The reports are publicly available and can be found in the Digital Library of the Parliament of Kenya at <http://libraryir.parliament.go.ke/>.

FIGURE 2

The main categories of threats to Kenya's national security



Notes:

¹ The categorization of security threats is derived from a comprehensive analysis of Kenya's Annual Reports between 2014 and 2024. Security threats highlighted in bold were referenced more frequently in Kenya's Annual Reports.

² SALW: Small arms and light weapons

Border security and food security are both important components of Kenya's national security architecture, as described below, yet they address distinct facets (state-based and human-centred security) of its broader security landscape.



Border post. Credit: Rod Waddington, CC BY-SA 2.0

3.1.1 Border security priorities

The Kenyan Government recognizes that “porous land borders [. . .] pose a security challenge to [Kenya’s] territorial integrity”.¹³ Border security, or lack thereof, has been consistently mentioned across all parliamentary Annual Reports selected for analysis, not just as a security priority but as a major enabler of other related security issues.

Two key factors make border security particularly relevant to Kenya’s national security. First, due to its geographical location, Kenya faces a high risk of conflict spillovers and associated security challenges from its neighbours. The neighbouring countries of South Sudan¹⁴, Somalia¹⁵ and Ethiopia¹⁶ have all grappled with armed conflicts and highly volatile security situations within their territories, many of which have escalated in recent times.¹⁷ Strengthening border security is a crucial objective in itself, but also plays a key role in mitigating a considerable number of

13 Republic of Kenya, Annual Report to Parliament on the State of National Security by H.E. Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, C.G.H, 2018, p. 7.

14 Center for Preventive Action, ‘Instability in South Sudan’, Global Conflict Tracker, Council of Foreign Relations, 21 March 2025, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/civil-war-south-sudan>.

15 Center for Preventive Action. ‘Conflict With Al-Shabaab in Somalia’, Global Conflict Tracker, Council of Foreign Relations, 15 October 2024, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/al-shabab-somalia>.

16 Center for Preventive Action, ‘Conflict in Ethiopia’, Global Conflict Tracker, Council of Foreign Relations, 20 March 2025, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-ethiopia>.

17 International Crisis Group, ‘Global Overview’, CrisisWatch Tracking Conflicts Worldwide, March 2025, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch>.

related security challenges that affect Kenya's national security well beyond its border regions. For instance, the presence of the terrorist group Al-Shabaab in Somalia poses a major security threat for Kenya, since this group exploits economic instability to recruit members and carry out illegal activities across Kenya.¹⁸

Second, Kenya has long struggled with low-level armed conflict among pastoralist border communities. These conflicts are compounded by porous borders, leading to hostilities, cattle rustling and armed violence, all of which are exacerbated by the cross-border proliferation of small arms and light weapons.¹⁹ These incidents are especially prevalent in Turkana County, which borders Uganda to the west, South Sudan to the northwest, and Ethiopia to the northeast,²⁰ as well as in Marsabit County, which borders Ethiopia.

An analysis of Kenya's Annual Reports reveals that the Government has made sustained efforts to establish an effective border management system to address diverse sets of closely interrelated security challenges and cross-border threats such as terrorism, organized crime, illegal immigration and the smuggling and trafficking of contraband goods – issues that have been major concerns for the Kenyan Government. This priority was reflected in the establishment of the Border Management Secretariat (BMS) following the Security Laws Act of 2014.²¹ The BMS currently operates within a coordinated framework led by the Border Control and Operations Coordination Committee (BCOCC) of the National Security Council (NSC). The BMS oversees the Joint Operation Centres (JOC), which manage points of entry and exit by land, water and air. It is responsible for regulating the movement of individuals, overseeing border trends and promoting inter-agency collaboration. The BMC works with various departments such as the Immigration Department, National Police Service, Kenya Port Authority and National Intelligence Service, among others. Together these agencies aim to ensure the security and integrity of national borders, combat illegal activities and strengthen national security.

Kenya's efforts to mitigate security risks by enhancing border security mirror many of the recommendations made by the international community, as described in Box 2, which often focus on strengthening inter-agency, intra-agency and international cooperation, as well as

18 Republic of Kenya, Annual Report on the State of National Security, 2015; Annual Report on the State of National Security, 2023.

19 Republic of Kenya, Annual Report to Parliament on the State of National Security by H.E. Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, C.G.H., 2016; Republic of Kenya, Annual Report to Parliament on the State of National Security H.E. Hon. William Samoei Ruto, PhD., C.G.H., 2023.

20 Turkana County is part of the so-called "Karamoja Cluster", referring to the region where Uganda, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya meet. It is home to an estimated 4.5 million people and approximately 13 pastoralist communities, whose social and economic systems primarily rely on livestock keeping. The arid conditions of the Karamoja Cluster make the area particularly prone to intercommunal conflict over scarce resources, especially during droughts (FAO, IGAD & Interpeace, 'Conflict, climate change, food security, and mobility in the Karamoja Cluster – A study to analyse interactions among conflict, food security, climate change, migration and displacement factors', 2023).

21 Kenya's Ministry of Interior and National Administration (MINA), Border Management Secretariat, <https://interior.go.ke/border-management-secretariat>; Kenya's State Department for Internal Security and National Administration, Border Management Secretariat, <https://www.bordersecretariat.go.ke/33/about-bms/>.

The role of border security in the global context

At the international level, border security – its implementation and its implications – is a widely debated topic and constitutes a key component of broader national security discourse.²² Border security remains a complex issue, as its definition and a State's approach to securing its borders have far-reaching economic, safety and social implications for both national and international actors. In particular, border security plays a crucial role in migration-related matters, intersecting with issues concerning displaced populations and human rights.²³ This remains at the core of many debates, especially for States whose geopolitical context is characterized by insecurity and instability, and which perceive potential conflict spillover and illegal migration as a threat to their national security.²⁴

Thus, border security represents a state-centred approach to national security, focused on ensuring territorial integrity and state sovereignty to safeguard those living within these defined borders. Depending on a State's specific context, border security has significant implications for other security threats, including but not limited to organized and transnational crimes such as human trafficking and drug smuggling.²⁵

The United Nations, along with other international bodies, has developed guidelines and best practices for border security, many of which emphasize cooperation and joint security efforts between neighbouring countries. In this way, the international community seeks to promote an understanding of border security as a collaborative effort aimed at strengthening national integrity and sovereignty while ensuring effective management of cross-border challenges.

establishing JOCs at major border crossing points. Border security has therefore been identified as a consistent and long-standing component of Kenya's national security efforts within the framework of this analysis, as evidenced by the Government's Annual Reports and various initiatives throughout the period under review to implement border security measures and reduce border porosity.

22 Manjarrez, V. M., 'Border Security: Defining It Is the Real Challenge', *Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management*, 12 (4), October 2015 pp. 793 - 800, <https://doi.org/10.1515/jhsem-2015-0052>; Alden, E., 'Is Border Enforcement Effective? What We Know and What It Means', *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 5 (2), 2018, pp. 481–90, <https://doi.org/10.1177/233150241700500213>.

23 Martin, S. and Ferris, E., 'Border Security, Migration Governance and Sovereignty', in *Ideas to Inform International Cooperation on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration*, McAuliffe, M. and M. Klein Solomon, Conveners (IOM: Geneva, 2017), <https://publications.iom.int/books/border-security-migration-governance-and-sovereignty>.

24 Kerwin, D. and Martínez, D.E., 'Forced Migration, Deterrence, and Solutions to the Non-Natural Disaster of Migrant Deaths Along the US-Mexico Border and Beyond', *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 12 (3), 2024, pp. 127–59, <https://doi.org/10.1177/23315024241277532>.

25 Minnaar, A., 'Border Security: An Essential but Effective Tool in Combatting Cross-Border Crime', in *The Handbook of Security*, Gill, M., eds. (Palgrave Macmillan, Cham., 2022), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-91735-7_17.

3.1.2 Food security priorities

The Kenyan National Food and Nutrition Security Policy defines *food security* as “a situation where all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”.²⁶ Food insecurity has been consistently identified as one of the main threats to Kenya’s national security in all publicly available Annual Reports since 2014, albeit under varying terms and headlines (e.g. food security, food safety and security, food and nutrition security). The reports emphasize the multifaceted nature of food insecurity in Kenya by providing examples of its linkages with the country’s environmental vulnerabilities and economic fluctuations, as well as corroborating the evidence of the causal relationship between food security and various dimensions of human development and security, as briefly outlined in Box 3.²⁷ At the same time, Kenya’s Annual Reports underscore the critical role of food security, along with related sectors such as the Kenyan agricultural sector, in driving national development and fostering economic growth.²⁸

Food insecurity in Kenya has primarily been driven by several key factors, with the foremost being extreme weather events and heavy reliance on rain-fed agriculture.²⁹ Kenya is impacted by recurrent climate-related emergencies such as droughts and disruptions in rainfall patterns, which have negatively affected national crop and livestock production.³⁰ Furthermore, over the past decade, limited investments in the agricultural sector, coupled with food shortages exacerbated by climate vulnerabilities and poor storage management, have negatively impacted Kenya’s food production capabilities and overall access to food. This has resulted in increased incidents of intercommunal conflict, particularly over crop destruction and competition for resources, as well as social unrest in relation to the lack of support from the Government and other responsible institutions.³¹

To address a wide range of issues, the Kenyan Government launched a series of interventions and projects to enhance food security at the national and community levels. These projects aimed to address climate variability, minimize national post-harvest losses and support the livelihoods of farming populations. The main measures implemented by the Government included revitalizing the agricultural sector to increase food production (e.g. the National Post Harvest Management Loss Strategy), promoting resilience in food systems, and providing subsidies for fertilizers and seeds (e.g. the Fertilizer Subsidy Programme) to the country’s farming

26 Government of Kenya, Agricultural Sector Coordination Unit (ASCU), National Food and Nutrition Security Policy, 2011, <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/ken140936.pdf>.

27 Republic of Kenya, Annual Report to Parliament on the State of National Security by H. E. Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, C.G.H, 2016, pp.21-22; Annual Report on the State of National Security by H.E. Hon. William Samoei Ruto, PhD., C.G.H., 2024, pp. 50-51, p. 58.

28 Republic of Kenya, Annual Report to Parliament on the State of National Security by H.E. Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, C.G.H, 2019, p. 19.

29 Food Security Information Network and Global Network Against Food Crises, ‘2024 Global Report on Food Crises. Joint analysis for better decisions’, 2024, p. 58, <https://www.fsplatform.org/grfc2024>; Republic of Kenya, Annual Report to Parliament on the State of National Security by H. E. Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, C.G.H, 2018, p. XIII.

30 Republic of Kenya, Annual Report to Parliament on the State of National Security by H. E. Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, C.G.H, 2018, pp. 9-10; Republic of Kenya, Annual Report to Parliament on the State of National Security by H.E. Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, C.G.H, 2019, p. 19; Annual Report to Parliament on the State of National Security 2023 by H.E. Hon. William Samoei Ruto, PhD., C.G.H., 2023, p. 44.

31 Republic of Kenya, Annual Report to Parliament on the State of National Security by H.E. Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, C.G.H, 2016, p. 21; Annual Report to Parliament on the State of National Security 2023 by H.E. Hon. William Samoei Ruto, PhD., C.G.H., 2023, p. 44.

Food insecurity as a cross-cutting global security challenge

The relationship between food insecurity, human development and other dimensions of security has been extensively explored in both academic and policy literature over several decades.³² Evidence shows that food insecurity undermines livelihoods, threatens lives and well-being, and contributes to rising levels of hunger and malnutrition.³³ Influenced by a complex interplay of development-related factors such as poverty and weak governance, food insecurity is closely linked to a broader range of security challenges, including social unrest, displacement, and conflict.³⁴ Recognizing the urgent need to address the root causes of food insecurity to foster sustainable peace, security, and development, the international community, along with other stakeholders, advocate for a comprehensive, multisectoral approach to the issue.³⁵ This includes the strategic allocation of targeted funding to effectively tackle the issue at the local, national, and global levels.³⁶

population.³⁷ Other efforts include the formation of the Intergovernmental Committee on Drought and Food Security, the launch of irrigation projects such as the Galana-Kulalu project, the construction of dams like Thiba Dam in Kirinyaga County, and investment in aquaculture and marine fisheries (e.g. Kenya Marine Fisheries Socio-economic Development Project in Mombasa).³⁸

3.2 Step two: Tracking and aligning Kenyan budget documents

Step two of the framework seeks to determine the resources allocated by the Kenyan Government to border and food security. The information used to assess resource allocations are primary open sources published by the Kenyan National Treasury. Specifically, the annual “Programme

32 Righettini, M.S. and Bordin, E., ‘Exploring food security as a multidimensional topic: twenty years of scientific publications and recent developments’, *Quality & Quantity* (2023) 57:2739–2758, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-022-01452-3>; ‘Food security and conflict: Empirical challenges and future opportunities for research and policy making on food security and conflict’, *World Development*, Vol. 119, pp. 150-164, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0305750X18302407>.

33 Food Security Information Network and Global Network Against Food Crises, ‘2025 Global Report on Food Crises. Joint analysis for better decisions’, 2025, <https://www.fsinplatform.org/report/global-report-food-crises-2025/>.

34 World Food Security, ‘At the root of exodus: food security, conflict and international migration’, May 2017, https://climate-diplomacy.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/WFP_At%20the%20root%20of%20Exodus.pdf.

35 World Health Organization, Nutrition and Food Safety, Multisectoral Actions in Food Systems (AFS), <https://www.who.int/teams/nutrition-and-food-safety/multisectoral-actions-in-food-systems>.

36 FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, ‘The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024 – Financing to end hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms’, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd1254en>.

37 Republic of Kenya, Annual Report on the State of National Security by H.E. Hon. William Samoei Ruto, PhD., C.G.H., 2024, pp. 51–52; Annual Report to Parliament on the State of National Security by H. E. Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, C.G.H., 2016, p. 22.

38 Republic of Kenya, Annual Report to Parliament on the State of National Security by H. E. Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, C.G.H., 2018, p. 9.

Based Budget of the National Government of Kenya”.³⁹ The information is divided into recurrent expenses (i.e. spending on personnel or operations and maintenance) and development expenditure (i.e. construction projects or procurement projects), with possible additional supplementary budgets on an ad hoc basis. These documents provide financial information on budgetary allocations and actual expenditure. The reviewed expenditure documents match the period covered by the Annual Reports (see above), since they also cover the financial years from 2014 to 2024. The only year for which information was not available was 2017, thus analysis for that year was not conducted for this Insight.

“To align budget expenditure with stated priorities in border and food security, a dual analytical approach was adopted.”

To align budget expenditure with stated priorities in border and food security, a dual analytical approach was adopted, which examined both the specific allocations for border and food security-related projects and the broader departmental budgets from which these initiatives are drawn. Taking a bottom-up perspective, budget allocation starts with individual projects or expenditure line items relating to border and food security, as outlined in the various Annual Reports. While this approach is time-intensive, it provides an exhaustive overview of all possible resources allocated to activities that the Kenyan Government deems to be linked to border and food security. This approach is helpful to identify possible discrepancies in funding, as well as any mismatches between policies and spending. A possible mismatch can hinder the effective implementation of defined priorities and undermine the Kenyan Government’s ability to achieve its strategic objectives.

Furthermore, by tracking the programme-based budgets back to 2014, a longitudinal dataset from these annual budget reports was created, incorporating both budgets and actual expenditures for these periods, to track changes in resource allocations over the years. A distinction was also made between recurrent and development expenditures to assess trends in resource allocation between operational spending and capital spending on border and food security-related matters. Where actual expenditure data were available, these figures were prioritized. If actual figures were not accessible, budgets were used to ensure continuity for this evaluation. Where necessary, allocations from supplementary budgets were also incorporated. Moreover, the difference between actual expenditures and estimated allocations also provides insight on shifting expenditure priorities and budget planning within a given year. Large differences between budgets and actuals are a sign of poor planning or financial management. While the data collection process was consistent across both border security and food security sectors, the analytical focus diverged due to the distinct nature of the projects within each area (see below).

3.3 Step three: Matching priorities to public expenditure in Kenya

This section clarifies the significance of the selected areas – border security and food security – for Kenya’s national security architecture. It examines the similarities and differences in the financing of these national security areas, which appear to be equally important for Kenya.

39 For example, ‘2021/2022 Programme Based Budget of the National Government of Kenya for the year ending 30th June 2021’, Parliament of Kenya Digital Library, <http://libraryir.parliament.go.ke/items/2aebefa6-2099-4c55-94c7-ed522b9d7cc1>.

3.3.1 Matching border security priorities to resource allocation

Upon reviewing the various Kenyan programme-based budgets, it is evident that, while the three-step process outlined in the methodology appears logically sound in theory, its practical application faces considerable constraints. While Kenya's Annual Reports frequently cite programmes, projects and initiatives by both name and location, the corresponding budget documents often lack such details.

For example, the 2018 Annual Report mentions operationalizing the "One Stop Border Post (OSBP)" programme and implementing it at various locations such as Taveta, Busia, and Malaba.⁴⁰ However, the corresponding budget documents show only partial alignment. Moreover, there was also supposed to be an expenditure of about KSh 60 million to build border points in Mt. Elgon and Turkana. Yet when these types of programmes or projects are matched to the publicly available programme-based budgets, no information can be found on these initiatives. Expenditure information for border-related activities is aggregated into the following four main categories, with no level of disaggregation within each spending category:

- ▶ AP (Administration Police) Border Patrol Units
- ▶ Immigration Border Points
- ▶ Immigration Border Control Points
- ▶ Establishment of Secure and Coordinated Border Control Points

Whereas the mandate for border-related security, based on the parliamentary reports, should primarily sit with the national police and the State Department of Immigration and Citizen Services, there is evidence of allocations for these categories to the Ministry of Defence and the National Treasury. Tracking these categories over time across both recurrent and development budgets was also challenging as the coding structure used in the budget documents is inconsistent over time and across ministries. This makes it difficult to track and identify activities within the budget item assigned to specific projects by code.

For example, under the spending category "Immigration Border Points", one code was used from 2014 to 2017, while another one was used from 2018 to 2019, before switching back to the original 2014 code. This seems to imply different activities or programmes, but because the name given is identical across the entire 2014 to 2024 period, it is not possible to disentangle shifts or changes in policy implementation.

Given the lack of disaggregated spending data relating to border security, the only possible way to assess alignment between policy and budget allocation is to focus on the four budget categories listed above, and to match the announced projects and plans that correspond to these expenditure groupings. For example, border security policies over the period 2014 to 2024 prioritized enhancing surveillance, inter-agency collaboration, deploying personnel to strengthen border patrol units, and maintaining border infrastructure to combat transnational crime, terrorism, drug trafficking and the illicit and small arms trade. These broad strategies were therefore grouped by type of activity into the four expenditure categories highlighted above.

40 Republic of Kenya, Annual Report to Parliament on the State of National Security by H.E. Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, C.G.H, 2018, p.7.

Announced border policies over the past decade were matched with total spending on all border-related activities aiming to strengthen and enforce national security laws, across various departments including the Ministry of Interior, Immigration and Citizen Services, the Ministry of Defence and the National Police Service. The State Department of Interior and Citizen Services consistently received funding allocations for projects such as AP Rural Border Patrol Units, Immigration Border Points, and Immigration Border Control. In 2014 and 2015, the State Department of Interior received KSh 666 million and KSh 617 million (in 2024 prices) for border security projects alone. In the specific case of border patrols, financial allocations were matched with the deployment of additional officers or personnel to secure and patrol the 'Panya' routes along Kenya's borders.⁴¹

Fluctuations in resource allocation are a common feature in the Kenyan budget. For example, the value of border security projects allocated to the State Department of Interior fell from KSh 617 million in 2015 to KSh 340 million in 2018 (in 2024 prices). However, this 45 per cent decrease was not a cut in spending or a shift in policy, instead the State Department of Interior was reorganized, leading to the creation of the State Department of Immigration and Citizen Services (Vote 1024). This suggests that the mandate on border-related activities was expanded. Adding the two departments together, total allocations to border-related spending amounted to KSh 643 million (in 2024 prices). A quite similar level to allocations from 2014 to 2016.

By 2020, all border-related projects were transferred to the State Department of Interior and Citizen Services, a merger of the previous two departments. This new shift lasted until 2022, when resource allocations appeared again under the State Department of Immigration and Citizen Services and the National Police Service. By 2024, the National Police Service accounted for half (KSh 575 million) of all resource allocations to border security-related activities.

Border security: review of selected projects

Despite the lack of disaggregation in the programme-based budget documents to easily link spending to policy objectives, several insights can still be gleaned.

1. The Kenya–Somalia Border Securitization Project

This project, approved by the National Security Advisory Committee, consisted of building a wall along approximately 700 km of the borderline with Somalia, to protect Kenya from frequent attacks by militants.⁴² Launched in 2015 under the Ministry of Interior (MoI), responsibility later shifted to the Ministry of Defence (MoD).⁴³ Throughout the 10 years of budget documents, budget lines referencing border securitization appeared a total of nine times, twice under the MoI in

41 Republic of Kenya, Annual Report to Parliament on the State of National Security by H.E. Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, C.G.H, 2014, p. 65.

42 Republic of Kenya, Report on the inquiry into the status, viability and efficacy in the implementation of the Kenya-Somalia border securitization project, <http://libraryir.parliament.go.ke/handle/123456789/3621>; K'Akumu, O.A., 'The rise of the militarized state? African developmental militarism, public works projects, and praetorian politics in Kenya', *Armed Forces and Society*, 51(1), 2023, pp. 123–145, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0095327X231169013>.

43 K'Akumu, O.A., 'The rise of the militarized state? African developmental militarism, public works projects, and praetorian politics in Kenya', *Armed Forces and Society*, 51(1), 2023, pp. 123–145, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0095327X231169013>.

2016 and 2018 and seven times under the MoD from 2017 to 2023. According to budget documents, a total of KSh 15.2 billion was allocated to border securitization, the single largest project expenditure linked to Kenya's border security priority. This allocation was divided into two-fifths (KSh 5.9 billion) to the MoI and three-fifths (KSh 9.3 billion) to the MoD. In 2017 when border securitization first appeared under the MoD budget, it accounted for 2.1 per cent (KSh 2.0 billion) of the total MoD budget. By 2023, the last year for which information was found on border securitization, this project was allocated KSh 300 million and accounted for only 0.2 per cent of the MoD budget. It is particularly notable that despite the project's goal of building a 700 km wall between Kenya and Somalia, all nine budget lines that appeared in the programme-based budget for the MoI and MoD were recurrent expenditures. No information was found to document allocations for capital (i.e. infrastructure) expenditure.

“Budget documents from 2014 to 2024 reveal a persistent lack of transparency, disaggregation and consistency in reporting allocations for border security.”

2. Border patrol activities

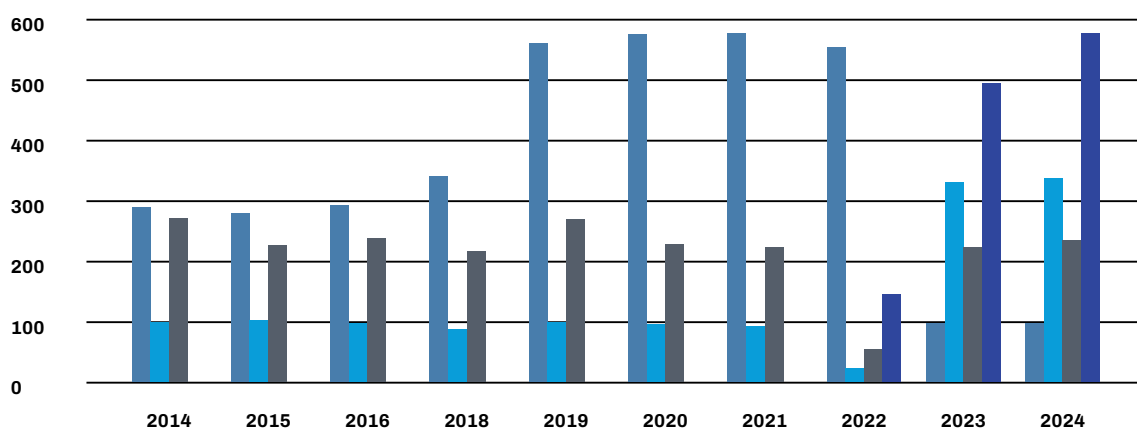
Another example relates to *border patrol activities*. Mentions of policies to strengthen border patrol units were found in the 2014, 2015 and 2024 Annual Reports. Figure 3 shows that following these mentions of the need to strengthen border patrol units, resources allocated to “AP Rural Border Patrol Units” began to increase from 2015. During this time, significant strides were made in border control, including the establishment of 12 new patrol bases along the borders to enhance security and monitoring. This included the installation of communication equipment to enhance crime detection and efforts to combat terrorism.⁴⁴ The most substantial increase happened in 2019, when spending on AP Rural Border Patrol Units reached KSh 559

FIGURE 3

Budget allocation to border related activities in Kenya, 2014–2024

● AP Rural Border Patrol Police Unit ● Immigration Border Points
● Immigration Border Control Points ● Border Patrol Police Unit

KSh millions (constant 2024 prices)



44 Republic of Kenya, Programme Based Budget of the National Government of Kenya for the Year 2015-16.

million (in 2024 prices), an increase of 93 per cent from 2014 and 64 per cent from 2018. By 2022, this spending amounted to KSh 553 million, an increase of 91 per cent since 2014. This expenditure line, however, completely disappeared from the budget in 2023 and was replaced with the Border Patrol Police Unit. These changes and fluctuations in funding also reflect shifts in priorities due to increased security concerns, such as border-related immigration control issues. Budget documents from 2014 to 2024 reveal a persistent lack of transparency, disaggregation and consistency in reporting allocations for border security. Projects were added and removed on an ad hoc basis, making it difficult to assess the extent to which Kenya follows a policy-based budgeting approach in this sector.

3.3.2 Matching food security priorities to resource allocation

Between 2014 and 2024, a substantial number of ministries and departments within the Kenyan Government were involved, according to their different mandates and capacities, in food security-related activities. Over the past decade, Kenya's food governance has undergone major organizational and structural changes such as the renaming of ministries or departments, the consolidation and division of departments, and the introduction of new departments. According to the analysis, a total of 19 different departments and ministries have received financial resources since 2014 to carry out activities linked to improving Kenya's food security.

For example, in 2014, food-related projects were primarily managed by the Ministries of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Environment and Natural Resources. However, with the emergence of inter-agency coordination, the scope expanded to incorporate other entities, such as the National Irrigation Authority. The Environment and Natural Resources Ministry was also split into two separate ministries, the Department for Environment and the Department for Natural Resources. In 2017, two new ministries, the State Department for Crop Development and the Ministry of Water and Sanitation, were established, focusing on policies such as the Fertilizer Subsidy Programme and the Big Four Agenda.⁴⁵ These programmes emphasize food security, sustainability, market access and infrastructure development.⁴⁶ In 2020, the State Department for Crop Development merged with the Agriculture Research Department, but it was restructured in 2022. By 2023, the Departments of Crop Development and Agriculture Research were separate entities.

“Expenditure linked to food security was detailed enough to track both the implementation of specific programmes and the geolocation of specific projects and programmes.”

When food security priorities were matched with budget expenditure, a standout feature compared to border security was the degree of disaggregation in expenditure line items in the programme-based budgets. Whereas border security offered almost no budget disaggregation, expenditure linked to food security was detailed enough to track both the implementation of

45 Republic of Kenya, Kenya Vision 2030 Flagship Programmes and Projects Progress Report (FY 2020/2021), 2022, p. 96, https://vision2030.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/FINAL-EDITED-VISION-2030-FLAGSHIP-PROJECT-PROGRESS-REPORT_170820221-1.pdf.

46 Republic of Kenya, Annual Report to Parliament on the State of National Security by H.E. Hon. William Samoei Ruto, PhD., C.G.H., 2023.



Tea farms in Kenya's Tana River watershed. Credit: 2016CIAT/Georgina Smith, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

specific programmes and the geolocation of specific projects and programmes. The contrast in expenditure information between the two security priorities is striking.

In each of the selected departments that underpin Kenya's food security framework – spanning agriculture, livestock, fisheries, water resources and environmental management – detailed project information is available. This includes budget allocations, estimated versus approved expenditures and timelines, providing a clear, structured overview of these initiatives. Budgets are also divided into recurrent and development expenditure, which is useful to understand when projects are capital or construction projects.

Due to the number of food security-related projects, only a selected sample was chosen to conduct the matching process. The selection of specific project cases was based on the analysis of policy developments documented in Annual Reports. From these reports, projects were identified and examined, which allowed a few representative examples to be selected, to assess how food security priorities aligned with funding allocations over time and evaluate their sustainability and long-term impact.

Food security: review of selected projects

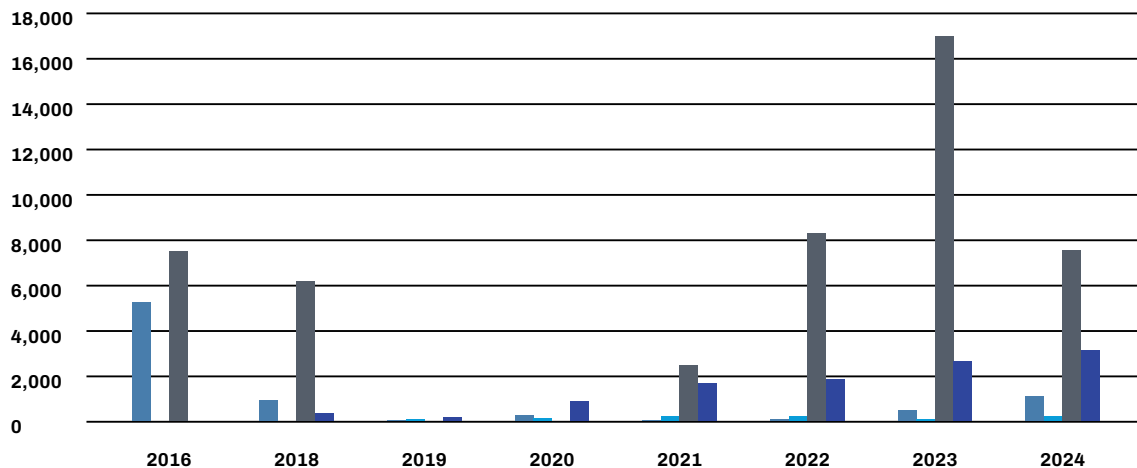
As demonstrated in the initial examination below, Kenya has effectively operationalized its security concerns regarding food security, as evidenced by the consistent investment and thorough documentation associated with its various initiatives (e.g. the Fertilizer Subsidy Programme) and projects (e.g. the Galana-Kulalu Irrigation Project), as presented in Figure 4. Although the financial structure has undergone a few changes and responsibilities have shifted between ministries, food security-related initiatives remained a prominent feature in the budget, underscoring the importance of this security area.

FIGURE 4

Budget allocation to selected food security-related activities in Kenya, 2016–2024

- Galana Kulalu Irrigation Development Project
- Resilience and Sustainable Food Systems Programme
- Fertilizer Subsidy Programme
- Kenya Marine Fisheries & Socio-Economic Development Project

KSh millions (constant 2024 prices)



1. The Galana-Kulalu Irrigation Project

The Galana-Kulalu Irrigation Project, launched in 2014, is a key initiative in Kenya's food security strategy under Vision 2030. This food security project is part of the “Big Four” agenda and addresses challenges such as low productivity, limited access to farming inputs and inadequate storage infrastructure.⁴⁷ The project aimed to cultivate one million acres of land and provide year-round farming while reducing dependency on rain-fed agriculture. Oversight for the project has shifted between ministries, from the State Department of Irrigation (2016–2019) to the Ministry of Water, Sanitation and Irrigation (2020–2022), and back to the State Department of Irrigation (2023–2024). Spending on the Galana-Kulalu project has fluctuated significantly over the years. In 2016, the Kenyan Government allocated KSh 5.2 billion (in 2024 prices), highlighting the need to address food insecurity as a pressing concern. Concurrent to the start of project implementation was one of the worst droughts to affect Kenya in the past decade. On 10 February 2017, the Government declared a national drought emergency with the number of food insecure people more than doubling from 1.3 million to 2.7 million.⁴⁸

The variation in budget expenditure on the Galana-Kulalu Irrigation Project closely matches the various stages of implementation. Following the project's initiation in 2016, it was widely reported that the project had stalled in 2019 after the Government terminated the contract due

47 Kenya, National Irrigation Authority, Galana Kulalu Irrigation Development, <https://www.irrigationauthority.go.ke/projects/galana-kulalu-irrigation-development/>.

48 The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Horn of Africa: A Call for Action', February 2017, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/horn-africa-call-action-february-2017-enar>.

to mismanagement, as well as technical and logistical difficulties.⁴⁹ This was reflected in a sharp drop in resource allocation, with only KSh 14 million (in 2024 prices) allocated to the project. The project picked up again in 2020, when 1,200 acres of model farm planting were completed, and subsequently, the budget allocation increased to KSh 262 million. In 2023, the Kenyan president issued a directive for the Galana Kulalu Project to continue under a Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) model.⁵⁰ By 2024, budget allocation to the project reached KSh 1.1 billion. In 2025, the project attracted private investors from the United Arab Emirates and the United States.⁵¹ Under the PPP model, government funding to the Galana Kulalu Project is likely to decrease as emphasis is placed on private investments.

2. Resilience and Sustainable Food System

Numerous projects have been implemented to promote resilience in food systems. Among them, the “Resilience and Sustainable Food System Programme” and “Sustainable Food Systems and Resilient Livelihood Activities”, under the State Department for Arid and Semi-Arid Lands and Regional Development, stand out as long-running and crucial initiatives aimed at strengthening food system resilience in vulnerable regions. Expenditure allocation for activities linked to the “Resilience and Sustainable Food System Programme” rose from KSh 142 million in 2020 to KSh 238 million in 2024 – an increase of approximately 68 per cent. This growth reflects the escalating food security challenges faced by Kenya and supports sustainable food practices, as highlighted in the Annual Reports from 2020 to 2024.

Compared to the Galana-Kulalu Irrigation Project, government funding for activities to strengthen resilience and sustainable food systems is substantially lower. However, this difference is perhaps less related to expenditure priorities than to the international partnerships that support resilient food systems in Kenya. International support can be seen to demonstrate the national priority attached to strengthening sustainable food systems while helping free up domestic resources to be reallocated towards other expenditure needs. The Upper Tana Nairobi Water Fund (UTNWF) is one example where joint financial assistance from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Nature Conservancy is working to promote resilience in food systems through water conservation.⁵² Another example of this, which has been identified in Kenya’s latest Annual Reports, is the Food Systems Resilience project. This project is co-funded by the World Bank and the Kenyan Government, and includes activities to build resilient

49 Anyango, J., ‘State to Expand Galana Kulalu Food Project After Successful Trial’, The Standard, July 2023, <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/farmkenya/crop/article/2001478062/state-to-expand-galana-kulalu-food-project-after-successful-trial>.

50 Republic of Kenya, National Irrigation Authority, Galana Kulalu Irrigation Development, <https://www.irrigation-authority.go.ke/projects/galana-kulalu-irrigation-development/>.

51 ‘Twiga Foods transfers Galana Kulalu Food to Selu Limited’, *Kenya Wall Street*, 2 June 2023, <https://kenyanwallstreet.com/twiga-foods-transfers-galana-kulalu-food-to-selu-limited/>; ‘Kenya’s Galana-Kulalu project secures US\$95M investment to boost food security’, *Milling Middle East and Africa*, 17 January 2025, <https://millingmea.com/kenyas-galana-kulalu-project-secures-us95m-investment-to-boost-food-security/>; Wanjala, E., ‘Kenya inks MoU with Abu Dhabi’s Al Dahra to expand Galana-Kulalu irrigation project’, *The Star*, 12 February 2025, <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/realtime/2025-02-12-kenya-inks-deal-to-expand-galana-kulalu-irrigation-project>.

52 ‘Source water protection: What it takes for nature to thrive in Upper Tana, Kenya’, Resilient Food Systems, 22 July 2022, <https://resilientfoodsystems.co/news/source-water-protection-what-it-takes-for-nature-to-thrive-in-upper-tana-kenya>.

agricultural production capacity and support the sustainable development of natural resources for resilient agriculture. The project is set to run for 6 years from 2023 to 2029.

3. The Fertilizer Subsidy Programme

Food insecurity is consistently mentioned among the main threats to Kenya's security, largely due to erratic rainfall, which leads to increased food prices and limited access to markets.⁵³ The Fertilizer Subsidy Programme continued to reduce the cost of production and boost yields – particularly at the onset of the rainy season – while enhancing the capacity of the National Cereals and Produce Board (NCPB) to address food security and alleviate poverty among small-holder farmers. In 2016, spending on the Fertilizer Subsidy Programme amounted to KSh 7.4 billion (2024 prices), in line with policies focused on lowering fertilizer costs and improving access to subsidized fertilizer for farmers to support their agricultural production. By 2018, the programme target was to distribute 245,000 metric tonnes (MT) of fertilizer to 250,000 farmers, but only 31,750 MT was distributed to 42,000 beneficiaries⁵⁴ within the corresponding budget – KSh 6.1 billion. Subsequently, no budget was allocated to the programme in 2019 and 2020, marking a significant deviation from previous years. This was due to the Government ending the national fertilizer programme – mainly because of implementation issues, such as commercial sales being crowded out, limited access to NCPB depots for smaller farmers and delayed deliveries.⁵⁵ Spending began to rise again from 2021 onwards when fertilizer prices started to increase due to supply chain constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the 2023 Annual Report, the cost of fertilizer was reduced through subsidies, with 1.34 million bags of fertilizer disbursed to 5 million registered farmers.⁵⁶ In contrast, the budgetary report indicated a target of 456,000 farmers, with 2,750 MT of agricultural lime and 200,500 MT of fertilizer distributed. This discrepancy between the number of registered farmers and the budget targets suggests a potential misalignment between the security report and actual budgetary allocations. In 2024, spending decreased by 56 per cent compared to 2023, amounting to KSh 7.5 billion, with the target of distributing around 70,000 MT of fertilizer to reach 152,265 farmers and cover 2,950 hectares⁵⁷ of various food and cash crops.

4. Kenya Marine Fisheries & Socio-Economic Development Project

Another priority was to develop and strengthen access to livelihoods for coastal communities in Kenya, with the aim of improving fisheries and aquaculture resources. The project was implemented in coastal counties – mainly Mombasa, Kwale, Kilifi, Tana River and Lamu – in order to

53 Republic of Kenya, Annual Report to Parliament on the State of National Security by H.E. Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, C.G.H., 2016, p. 21.

54 Republic of Kenya, The national Treasury and Economic Planning, Agriculture Rural and Urban Development (ARUD) Sector Report: Medium Term Expenditure Framework 2021/22-2023/24, <https://www.treasury.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/AGRICULTURE-RURAL-AND-URBAN-DEVELOPMENT-SECTOR-REPORT.pdf>.

55 Ricker-Gilbert, J., Mather, D., and et al., 'Evaluating Kenya's National Fertilizer Subsidy Program: Implementation, Crowding-out, and Benefit-Cost Assessment', SARA-KEA Stakeholder Conference, 2024 https://tegemeo.egerton.ac.ke/images/Evaluating_Kenyas_National_Fertilizer_Subsidy_Program_ImplementationJ_Crowding-outJ_and_Benefit-Cost_Assessment.pdf.

56 Republic of Kenya, Annual Report to Parliament on the State of National Security by H.E. Hon. William Samoei Ruto, PhD., C.G.H., 2023, p. 45.

57 Republic of Kenya, Programme Based Budget of the National Government of Kenya for the year Ending 30th June, 2025, p. 660.

strengthen and secure stocks at sustainable levels of harvesting, while also improving and diversifying sources of household income to reduce people's sole reliance on capturing fish.⁵⁸ In 2018, spending on this project was KSh 329 million, followed by a significant decrease of 55 per cent to KSh 149 million in 2019 due to a lack of funding. However, expenditure increased by 469 per cent in 2020 and 92 per cent in 2021, reaching KSh 1.6 billion, with the aim of enhancing sustainable fisheries management through universal port inspections on semi-industrial and industrial fishing vessels and the development of three Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) protocols. This change is attributed to the fact that the State Department for Blue Economy and Fisheries signed a contract securing KSh 10 billion in funding for the period from 2020 to 2025.⁵⁹ This was explicitly stated in the 2021 Annual Report, where the project was identified as one of the primary government intervention strategies aimed at enhancing food security. Spending on marine fisheries and socio-economic development increased by 262 per cent (compared to 2020) to KSh 3.1 billion in 2024, to achieve 50 per cent of the construction targets, provide grants and offer technical assistance to beneficiaries by the end of the project.⁶⁰

58 State Department for Blue Economy and Fisheries, 'Kenya Marine Fisheries Socioeconomic Development (KEMFSED) Project', 2023, https://mibema.go.ke/sites/default/files/2.%20TOR%20Individual%20Consultant%20Blue_Economy_Strategy_0.pdf.

59 Republic of Kenya, Kenya Marine Fisheries and Socio-Economic Development (KEMFSED) Project Background, <https://kemfsed.org/project-background/>

60 Republic of Kenya, Programme Based Budget of the National Government of Kenya for the year Ending 30th June 2025. p. 643.



4. Conclusions

4.1 Synthesis of matching priorities with expenditure

Kenya's perception of national security exceeds the scope of traditional military threats and emphasizes the importance of various elements of human security. A wide range of issues central to Kenya's national welfare, ranging from border porosity to environmental degradation, are increasingly framed as threats to national security.

An initial assessment of the alignment between the selected national security priorities and budgetary categories demonstrated inconsistencies in reporting over time, which made the evaluation process challenging. While in some instances spending fluctuations were attributed to the lifecycle of specific projects, in other cases, the underlying cause of irregularities in expenditure patterns was difficult to determine within the scope of the research framework.

More specifically, the Kenya case study of matching policy priorities to resource allocations reveals significant contrasts between *border security* and *food security* measures.

4.1.1 Border security priorities and expenditure

On the one hand, the Government consistently identifies *border security* as a key pillar of national security, recognizing that porous borders enable threats such as terrorism, organized crime and small arms proliferation. However, the publicly available budget documents offer only broad

expenditure categories, obscuring the actual implementation and funding for specific border projects or patrol units. This gap complicates efforts to verify whether the announced policy objectives – like establishing “One Stop Border Posts” or deploying rural border patrol units – are effectively translated into actionable, adequately funded initiatives.

Moreover, the frequent reorganization of ministries and departments makes the task of tracking expenditure allocations over time almost impossible. This hinders any analysis that seeks to answer questions such as: i) to what extent do Kenya’s budgetary allocations reflect the priorities of border security? ii) Which government entities are responsible for border security?

4.1.2 Food security priorities and spending

In contrast, *food security* shows a more transparent linkage between policy objectives and detailed budget line items. Multiple ministries and departments – ranging from agriculture and fisheries to irrigation and crop development – receive and report funds for projects aimed at increasing food production, managing irrigation schemes and strengthening resilience in vulnerable regions.

“To achieve stated policy goals, there needs to be consistent coordination and transparent reporting between the various government departments that provide funding, implement projects and assess their impact.”

Initiatives such as the Galana-Kulalu Irrigation Project and the Fertilizer Subsidy Programme exhibit shifts in spending that generally mirror policy changes or project stages. This underscores a clear cause-and-effect relationship between declared policy goals and their financial backing. Nonetheless, the Government’s evolving institutional landscape and occasional discontinuities in funding, as seen by the sudden shifts or lapses in resource allocations to projects, demonstrate the challenges faced in the sector.

To achieve stated policy goals, there needs to be consistent coordination and transparent reporting between the various government departments that provide funding, implement projects and assess their impact.

4.2 Proposed steps forward

This research initiative explored the feasibility of conducting a comprehensive assessment of the alignment between a broader spectrum of national security objectives and public expenditures through an exploratory case study. The application of the proposed three-step framework revealed key challenges and identified strategic areas for enhancing the evaluation framework:

- ▶ A thorough examination of the publicly available national security reports, conducted during the first step of the evaluation framework, enabled the identification of predominant priority areas and emphasized the interconnections between various security dimensions within one national security framework. This formed the basis for determining certain critical areas that require appropriate and realistic financial allocations. Although Kenya’s Annual Reports offered a comprehensive overview of the national security landscape, the analysis would have been enhanced by the existence of an overarching National Security Strategy. This would

have provided a structured framework to identify and rank national security threats in order of priority, thereby guiding public spending evaluation for the most critical security areas.

- ▶ The research would also benefit from expanding the sample of assessed countries to enable comparative analysis and identify good practices for national security strategy implementation, and for transparency and accountability in security spending in relation to stated national security goals and priorities.
- ▶ The evaluation of future country case studies could also be enhanced by incorporating a fourth step into the framework, to assess the effectiveness of civilian budget oversight and accountability in ensuring alignment between national security priorities and budgetary allocations. This could subsequently lead to the development of a toolkit for scrutinizing security spending, allowing all interested stakeholders to monitor public spending allocations across priority areas of national security. As a rule, parliamentarians, civil society organizations and citizens should possess the capacity to critically evaluate whether national budgets effectively embody stated national security priorities in sectors that are critical to maintaining national security.



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