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DEFENCE WHITE PAPER PROJECT

Kenya Defence White Paper 2017: An Analysis

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Serial No: **WD2207011**

Introduction

The Republic of Kenya published its Defence White Paper in May 2017. The document has analysed the various security threats which Kenya faces. Building upon the constitutional mandate of the military forces, the document offers military remedies for the threats Kenya is facing. This essay aims to understand the underlying principles and objectives laid out by Kenya's Defence White Paper, evaluate the security environment of Kenya, and analyse the relevance and effectiveness of the document.

Summary of Defence White Paper

The principles underlying the formulation of Kenya's Defence White Paper are Kenya's national security interests, its constitution, and the principle of cooperation with other nations for regional and international peace and security. Other implicit principles include principles of good neighbourliness. The document is divided into four parts¹.

Part I elaborates on the founding principles and objectives of the document. According to the document, Kenya's national interests, which are also its national security objectives, are the preservation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity, maintenance of national security, enhancement of economic prosperity and socio-economic well-being of its citizens, and finally, the development of Kenya's national prestige. The instruments to attain Kenya's national security objectives are credible national defence, democratic civil institutions, a consistent foreign policy as well as active participation in regional and international peace and security activities. Kenya's foreign policy aims and objectives include attainment of Kenya's national security interests, enhancement of regional and global peace and security, promotion of international cooperation and multilateralism, protection of the interests of the Kenyan diaspora and enhancing the partnership with them and their descendants. The execution of Kenya's foreign policy and her

¹ (Defence White Paper 2017)

international relations is grounded on the principles of the sanctity of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kenya, peaceful co-existence, peaceful settlement of disputes, promotion of regional integration, respect for the equality, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of states, and respect for international norms, customs, and laws.

Kenya anticipates the deprivation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity along with its rights, freedoms, property, peace, stability, and prosperity as guaranteed in Article 238 of its constitution, in the event of it being a victim of potential aggression. In such a scenario, not only the military but also other national authorities and essence, the nation is expected to provide conscious and universal support as well as a comprehensive and decisive response. The government diligently propagates this awareness amongst its citizens. Certain civilian activities complement the Defense Forces towards the overall defence efforts through deliberate coordination, interoperability, and efficient communication between civil and military authorities. These include, among others, maintenance of law and order, protection of the civilians, continued functioning of civil authorities and essential national and devolved institutions and finally, the regular supplies of necessary amenities and services.

The aims and objectives of Kenya's defence policy are a quick response to threats without risking an escalation of conflict during wartimes, maintenance of a balance of power without instigating arms race and deterrent capabilities and securing response readiness during a crisis.

Part II deals with the threats and opportunities Kenya faces at the global environment (population explosion and increased conflict over resources, the declining global economic outlook, religious extremism and armed conflict in neighbouring countries, international terrorism, propagation of negative image of Kenya abroad thereby affecting Kenya's tourism sector, global warming and climate change); the regional security environment (the establishment of APSA, EASF, and signing of the Defence Pact between EAC Partner states and opportunities arising from them, terrorist groups such as Boko Haram and Al Shabaab), and the national security environment which combines geostrategic environment (internal political instability in neighbouring countries affecting bilateral relations with them and potential for conflict spill over into Kenya, international

terrorist threat posed by ISIL and its affiliates, modernization of military of countries in the region) and the national environment (ethnic and political tensions, level of national cohesion and economic development, collaboration between terrorist groups and local crime groups, equal development of all regions within Ethiopia, border disputes and other non-conventional internal security threats).

Part III elucidates how the Kenya Defense Forces (KDF) must deal with military threats and other issues like terrorism, maintenance of regional peace and security, cyber threats, national health security threats, exploitation of Kenya's Exclusive Economic Zone, environmental degradation, and national economic and infrastructural development activities, national and defence industrial capacity, space science and defence research and development. Due to scarcity, the available funds and resources of the Defence Forces should be used prudently, optimally, and efficiently.

Part IV of the document elaborates on the roles and structures of the Defence Forces. The KDF constitutes the Kenyan Army, the Kenyan Air Force, and the Kenyan Navy. They maintain a defensive posture. The document has emphasized the need to direct and controlled application of forces. In addition to the Constitutional mandate of all the forces such as defence and protection of the sovereignty of Kenya from land-based, air-based, and maritime-based aggression, assisting and cooperating with other authorities in situations of emergency or disaster and aiding the restoration of peace in any part of Kenya affected by unrest or instability but only with the approval of the National Assembly, the forces are also assigned specific roles. They may discharge these roles independently, jointly, or in support of others as determined by the appropriate authority. The KDF must adhere to the International Law of Armed Conflict and must always maintain a credible, balanced, modern, and technologically advanced military force. The White Paper then goes on to talk about the structure and functions of the Reserve Forces and the national security agencies in Kenya.

Conceptualization of Grand Strategy and Military Doctrine

“A grand strategy is a political-military, means-ends chain, a state’s theory about how it can best cause security for itself.” One of the subcomponents of grand strategy is the military doctrine which explicates the military means used to achieve security. The grand strategy must identify the likely threats and devise political, economic, military, and other remedies for those threats and prioritize them due to the scarcity of resources. The military doctrine should specify how military means should be structured and employed to respond to recognized threats and opportunities and also in what ways the different types of forces should cooperate. Thus, to achieve political ends, the most appropriate military means should be selected. Force posture and the inventory of weapons they control should help identify the military ends of the forces – whether they are offensive, defensive, or deterrent doctrines.

In the context of anarchy, a security dilemma is a very likely consequence. If a state perceives another power to be engaging in coalition building, arms build-up, or any such behaviour, the former is highly likely to react in the form of coalition building or arms build-up, resulting in an arms race.

A military doctrine must be integrated with the political objectives of the state. In peacetime, a military doctrine must aid the statesman to achieve their goal of ensuring the state’s political, economic, and human security. It must be responsive to the changes in the political and technological environment and make innovations accordingly. However, innovation of the military doctrine or its stagnation can affect political-military integration as well as the likelihood of victory or defeat. Then, the entire plan for the operation of their forces must undergo an overhaul. Political-military disintegration and failure to innovate or insufficient innovation may threaten the security interests of the state.²

² (Posen 1984)

Kenya's security situation

The following are some of the non-conventional security issues in which the KDF was mandated by the White Paper to assist the civilian authorities. The document was released in 2017. An examination of the national security issues faced by Kenya and how the KDF has dealt with this since 2017 will enable one to analyse how well Kenya has actualized its White Paper.

Terrorism

According to the Global Terrorism Index, Kenya's rank in terms of its susceptibility to a terrorist attack in the years between 2016 and 2022 has ranged from 19 to 23. During these years, Kenya's rank has jumped both forward as well as backward. The countries are graded out of 10, with higher scores indicating high susceptibility to terrorist attacks. Kenya has consistently maintained scores approximately between 5 and 7.³ Thus, Kenya faces a significantly high threat of terrorism from al-Shabaab and Islamic revolutionary Guards Corps/QoDs Force.⁴

³ (Global Terrorism Index 2017: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism 2017) (Global Terrorism Index 2018: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism 2018) (Global Terrorism Index 2019: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism 2019) (Global Terrorism Index 2020: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism 2020) (Global Terrorism Index 2022: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism 2022)

⁴ (CIA, Kenya - The World Factbook n.d.)

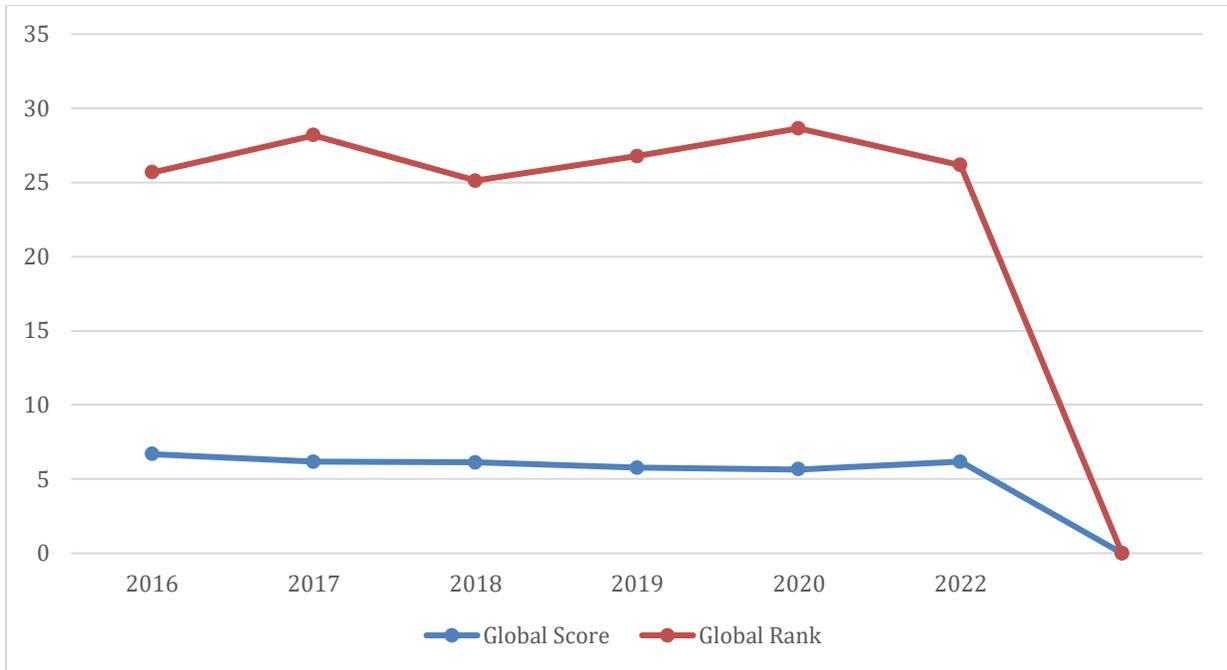


Figure 1: Global Terrorism Index: Comparison of ranks and scores 2016-2022

Cyber threats

Global Cybersecurity Index ranks countries based on the efforts taken to tackle the issue. The higher the rank, the better the measures taken to combat cyber threats. On the three versions of the report released in 2017, 2018, and 2020, Kenya fell by 6 ranks between 2017 and 2022, despite a slight improvement in 2018.⁵

⁵ (Global Cybersecurity Index 2017 2017) (Global Cybersecurity Index 2018 2019) (Global Cybersecurity Index 2020 2022)

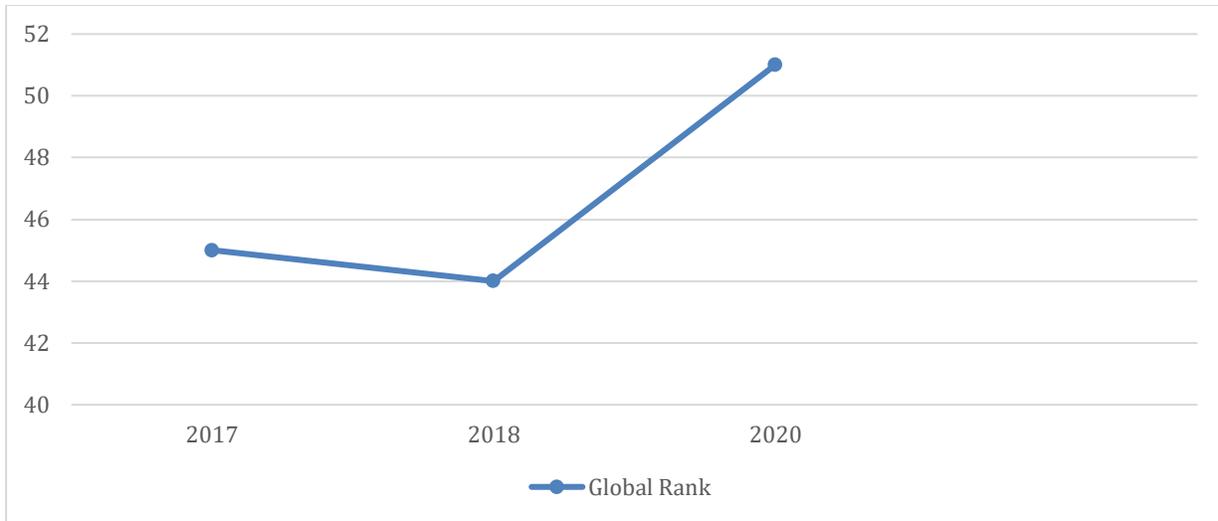


Figure 2: Global Cybersecurity Index - Ranks

Economic Security

Year	GDP	Per Capita	Growth
2020	\$98.84B	\$1,838	-0.31%
2019	\$95.50B	\$1,817	5.37%
2018	\$87.78B	\$1,708	6.32%
2017	\$78.97B	\$1,572	4.81%
2016	\$69.19B	\$1,411	5.88%

Table 1: <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/KEN/kenya/gdp-gross-domestic-product>

Between 2016 and 2019, the average annual GDP growth was 5.595%. In 2014, Kenya cut the mark as a lower middle-income country. However, in 2020, Kenya witnessed negative economic growth due to the exceptional circumstance of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶ Unfortunately, the last known poverty rate in Kenya (as per World Bank data) was in 2015. The poverty headcount ratio at \$1.90 a day (2011 PPP) was 37.1% of the total population.⁷

⁶ (Macrotrends n.d.).

⁷ (The World Bank Data n.d.).

National health security

To assess the betterment of health facilities in Kenya, life expectancy between 2016 and 2019 as well as death rates between 2016 and 2022 are analysed as proxy variables. In the case of life expectancy, the average annual growth rate decreased from 1.020% in 2016 to 0.390% in 2019. Though the average change in death rate between 2016 and 2018 was -3.7367, it decreased significantly to -0.6367 between 2019 and 2021.

The KDF acted in the forefront to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. In general, though the cases did seem to blow out of proportion, the KDF quickly responded by establishing quarantine sites⁸.

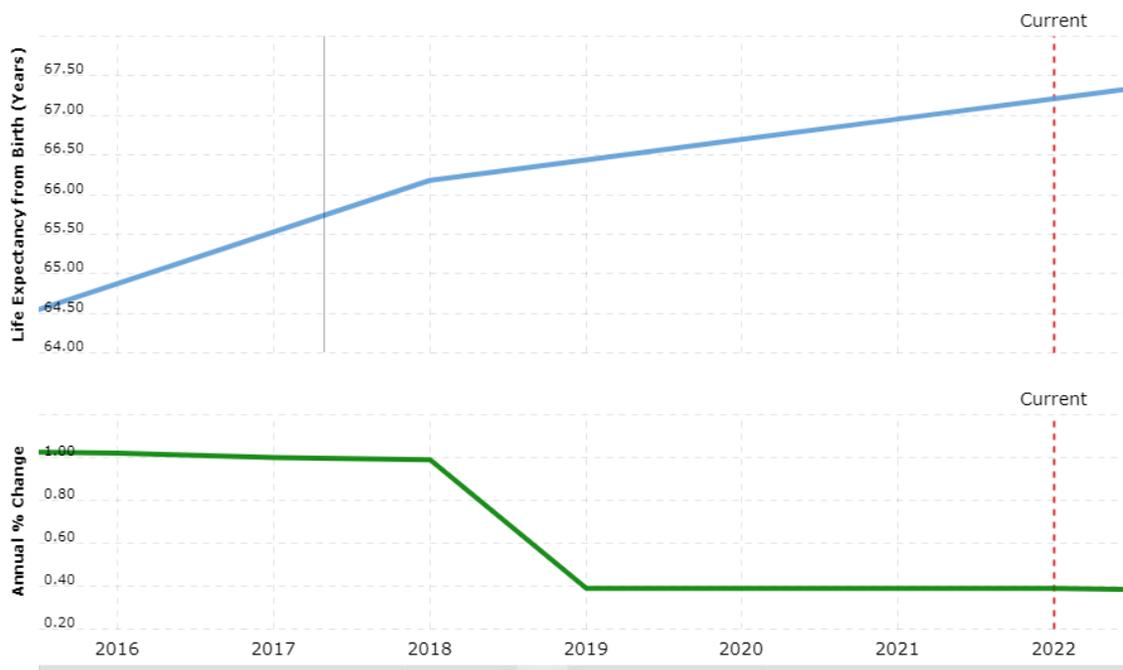


Figure 3: <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/KEN/kenya/life-expectancy>

⁸ (Ruto 2020)

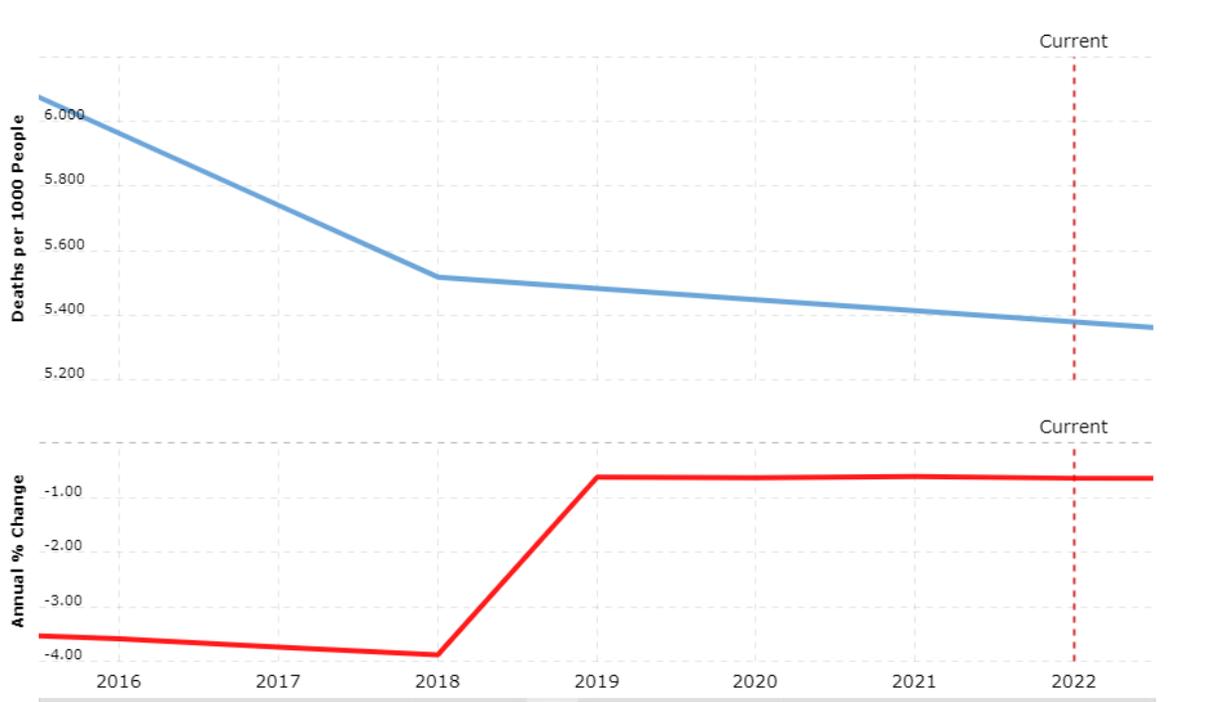


Figure 4: <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/KEN/kenya/death-rate>

Kenya's Military Expenditure

Year	Billions of US\$	% of GDP
2020	\$1.20B	1.2%
2019	\$1.21B	1.2%
2018	\$1.24B	1.3%
2017	\$1.19B	1.4%
2016	\$1.16B	1.4%

Table 2: <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/KEN/kenya/military-spending-defense-budget>

Though Kenya's military spending as a percentage of the GDP had been decreasing since the year 2016, it has increased in absolute terms by a few million every year since 2016.⁹ As of 2021, it maintains a military of approximately 24,000 personnel (20,000 Army; 1,500 Navy; 2,500 Air

⁹ (Macrotrends n.d.).

Force)¹⁰. One must also look at the defence spending of Kenya’s neighbouring countries to assess Kenya’s military security.¹¹

Rank	Country	% of GDP	Date of Information
7	Somalia	5.60	2019 est.
43	Uganda	2.50	2020 est.
48	South Sudan	2.30	2020 est.
112	Tanzania	1.30	2020 est.
117	Kenya	1.20	2020
156	Ethiopia	0.50	2020 est.

Table 3: Military expenditures: The World Factbook

Somalia has the largest defence spending among Kenya’s neighbours. Kenya only spends nearly 1/5th of Somalia’s defence budget. Yet, amongst its neighbours, Kenya has the highest tensions with Somalia. Their mistrust and tensions arise from disputes over maritime boundaries in the oil-rich Indian Ocean, the presence of Kenya forces in Somalia as part of its peacekeeping operations, May 2020 diplomatic standoff between them. Kenya’s forces are also deployed in Sudan.¹²

Other Security Concerns Not Mentioned in the White Paper

Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons

As of 2022, Kenya is a shelter for nearly 490,000 refugees from Somalia, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Burundi. As of 2020, there are around 190,000 IDPs

¹⁰ (CIA n.d.).

¹¹ (CIA, Military expenditures - The World Factbook n.d.).

¹² (HRW n.d.)

from election-related violence, inter-communal violence, resource conflicts, and al-Shabaab attacks in 2017 and 2018.¹³

Transnational crimes

Kenya is a transit country for illicit drugs like heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, and other drugs. They enter from Southwest Asia and South America en route to international markets like Europe. Kenya cultivates cannabis and miraa (khat) for local use and exports.¹⁴

Violence by civilian security personnel

There are allegations of human rights violence through extra-judicial killings and other forms of violence like excessive use of force, detention of activists, and eviction perpetrated by security personnel. Their lack of accountability remains a major security concern.¹⁵

Military deployment in civilian zones

The KDF is seen as taking on civilian responsibilities such as taking over public entities like the Gardens Monument compound and the Kenya Meat Commission. The Nairobi county is under the charge of a soldier. The President invited the military to renovate the Nanvuki railway efficiently. The KDF may assist in civilian functions but only during emergencies and under the oversight of the National Assembly. Here, neither is the case¹⁶.

Analysis and Conclusion

The Kenya Defence White Paper 2017 offers a window into the grand strategy and the military doctrine of Kenya. Sticking to Posen's attributes of grand strategy, Kenya has identified the potential threats to its national security and focuses on the military remedies to these threats. It recommends the various ways through which the KDF can work to secure the state. In case of

¹³ (CIA, Kenya - The World Factbook n.d.)

¹⁴ (CIA, Kenya - The World Factbook n.d.)

¹⁵ (HRW n.d.)

¹⁶ (Standard n.d.)

military threats, the document says that the KDF maintains a purely defensive strategy. Staying true to that claim, Kenya's defence budget is the second lowest compared to that of its neighbours. The highest defence spending in the region is by Somalia which is nearly five times that of Kenya. Given that Kenya's biggest source of military threat is Somalia as a consequence of their recent tensions, one cannot help but wonder whether Kenya's defence can perform its functions as effectively and decisively as it claims it can.

In the document, Kenya has expressed overtly how it does not want the region to get embroiled in an arms race. However, later in the text, one can observe that Kenya itself is a victim of a security dilemma. This is expressed indirectly as a justification for maintaining a sophisticated force.

A key security issue Kenya has identified is the conflicts arising from the scarcity of resources. This is also an issue when it comes to the efficient allocation of funds and resources to the KDF. Posen proposes that the grand strategy should prioritize its threats and remedies as well as force posture in such a scenario. However, in this document, apart from a general exhortation that there should be an efficient and optimal allocation of resources, they have not given any roadmap regarding the prioritization of forces and strategies that could help in an effective allocation of funds and resources.

The White Paper is successful in making a list of conventional and non-conventional military security threats Kenya is likely to face. But even here, they have not prioritized their threats nor have they identified their remedies. The list of security threats to Kenya is not comprehensive. Refugees and IDPs, transnational crimes such as drug trafficking, and violence perpetrated by civilian security personnel have been left out. Given that the document was released in 2017, one is currently in a good position to analyse how effectively the White Paper has been realized. The document has emphasized how national security is important for the national economy by creating an enabling environment upon which all economic activities take place and that the KDF must help in securing that. However, after an improvement in the GDP per capita growth rate in 2018, the growth rate has been in a free fall. The failure of the military in securing a safe environment

for economic activities to take place was most glaring during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic when the GDP growth rate fell to a negative.

As per the document, the military is also expected to work with civilian authorities to combat other non-conventional threats to Kenya. However, since 2017, an improvement in any of the non-conventional security threats mentioned in the document has been elusive. Just like how it was in 2017, Kenya is still highly susceptible to terrorist attacks. Besides, cyber safety and the rate of change in annual death rate, has declined. This shows that the White Paper has remained a dead letter.

Lately, the KDF has been chastised for its increasing but unauthorized role in civilian activities during normal times. This violates its constitutional mandate where the KDF can engage in civilian activities only during emergencies and that too, under the oversight of the National Assembly. This invites a discussion of the political-military integration and how much the military is acting under the policies of the civilian government. No matter how sophisticated the military forces are, if they are not in line with the civilian government's political policies, any action is bound to produce counterproductive results.

The analysis provides an overall picture that the KDF has been faltering in its mandate. Given the security environment of Kenya and the performance of the KDF, the KDF must undergo an overhaul to maintain its relevance and effectively employ its capabilities to alleviate the security threats of Kenya. The White Paper must be made more comprehensive. Especially since Kenya is a lower-middle income country, more planning must go into prioritization and optimal and efficient resource allocation.

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