

SECURITY MANAGEMENT, STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP, SHARED STRATEGIC GOALS, AND STATE PERFORMANCE IN THE ETHIOPIA–KENYA BORDERLANDS: EVIDENCE FROM THE MOYALE CORRIDOR

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study: This study examined the association between security management, strategic leadership, shared strategic goals, and state performance in the Ethiopia–Kenya borderlands, focusing on the Moyale corridor.

Problem Statement: Despite bilateral security cooperation and investment in border infrastructure, localized conflict, livestock theft, resource competition, unequal development benefits, and limited community participation remain concerns. The study investigated whether the three dimensions of cooperation are associated with stronger state performance.

Methodology: A descriptive mixed-methods design was used. Sixty-four valid questionnaires were analysed, supplemented by open-ended responses from 37 respondents, two focus group discussions involving eight participants, and secondary documents. Quantitative analysis included descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression; qualitative data were analysed thematically and triangulated.

Results of the Study: The regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 60) = 38.00$, $p < .001$, and explained 67.7% of the variance in state performance ($R^2 = .677$; adjusted $R^2 = .646$). Security management was the strongest standardized predictor ($\beta = .438$, $p < .001$), followed by strategic leadership ($\beta = .372$, $p < .001$) and shared strategic goals ($\beta = .278$, $p = .004$). Participants also reported improvements in security, trade facilitation, and institutional coordination, alongside concerns about unequal benefits and limited consultation.

Conclusion: The findings indicate that stronger state performance is associated with integrated security operations, sustained bilateral leadership, and aligned strategic priorities.

Policy Recommendation: Governments should strengthen community consultation, equitable access to development benefits, women's representation, and collaboration with locally legitimate customary institutions. The cross-sectional design supports interpretation as association rather than causation.

Keywords: *Borderlands, Ethiopia–Kenya Relations, Security Management, Strategic Leadership, Shared Strategic Goals, State Performance*

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

State performance is an important indicator of a government's capacity to formulate and implement policies, deliver quality public services, uphold the rule of law, and respond effectively to citizens' needs (World Bank, 2025). Effective state performance is especially important in borderland regions, where geographical remoteness, cross-border mobility, insecurity, and weak institutional coordination can complicate public administration (African Union Commission, 2020). In such settings, state performance can be assessed through institutional effectiveness, security provision, governance functionality, responsiveness to communities, and the capacity to support socioeconomic development (World Bank, 2025). Across Africa, borderlands present both opportunities for regional integration and persistent governance, security, and development challenges. The African Union's Integrated Border Governance Strategy emphasizes that effective border management should promote peace, security, stability, cross-border cooperation, and the movement of people and goods (African Union Commission, 2020). However, where public institutions fail to coordinate effectively or address local conflicts, border communities may experience insecurity, disruption of economic activities, and limited access to the benefits of regional integration. These conditions make state performance a critical concern for governments seeking to strengthen institutional effectiveness and promote inclusive development in border regions.

In East Africa, the Ethiopia–Kenya borderlands provide an important context for examining state performance because of the close interaction between pastoral livelihoods, cross-border trade, mobility, and recurring security challenges (Shidane, 2020). The Moyale corridor is especially significant because it serves as a major border crossing and a centre of commercial interaction between Ethiopia and Kenya, while the Lamu Port–South Sudan–Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPSSET) creates opportunities for enhanced regional connectivity and economic integration (Journal of Eastern African Studies, 2023). Despite these opportunities, studies on Moyale have documented violent intercommunal clashes, trade barriers, smuggling routes, territorial disputes, and tensions surrounding access to resources, all of which complicate the relationship between infrastructure development, security, and state authority (Journal of Eastern African Studies, 2023). Earlier research on the Kenya–Ethiopia border similarly identified inter-ethnic tensions, competition over scarce resources, cattle raiding, and banditry as significant cross-border security concerns (Shidane, 2020). These challenges raise important questions about the ability of state institutions to maintain security, coordinate border

operations, facilitate legitimate trade, and respond effectively to the needs of local communities.

Efforts to improve governance and regional integration in the Ethiopia–Kenya borderlands have included infrastructure and institutional initiatives such as the Moyale One Stop Border Post and the LAPSET corridor. These initiatives are intended to facilitate movement, improve trade efficiency, strengthen border management, and enhance bilateral cooperation. However, infrastructure investment alone may not resolve deep-rooted local conflicts or automatically translate into effective governance, institutional coordination, and improved public service delivery (African Union Commission, 2020; Journal of Eastern African Studies, 2023). The effectiveness of state institutions in such environments therefore depends not only on physical infrastructure, but also on how security is managed, how leaders coordinate institutional responses, and the extent to which actors pursue shared strategic priorities. This makes it necessary to examine the institutional and strategic factors associated with state performance in the Moyale border context.

Against this background, the study examined the effects of security management, strategic leadership, and shared strategic goals on state performance along the Ethiopia–Kenya borderlands, with particular reference to the Moyale corridor. The study focused on how these factors relate to security provision, institutional coordination, governance functionality, and responsiveness to community needs. By examining these dimensions together, the study sought to provide a clearer understanding of the strategic conditions that shape state performance in a complex border environment. The findings are expected to inform policies and practices aimed at strengthening state performance, improving Ethiopia–Kenya bilateral cooperation, enhancing border governance, and promoting sustainable peace and socioeconomic development in the borderlands.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

State performance is essential for maintaining security, ensuring effective governance, facilitating trade, and delivering public services, especially in borderland regions where governments face complex cross-border challenges. Along the Ethiopia–Kenya borderlands, state institutions are expected to maintain public order, coordinate security agencies, support pastoral livelihoods, and promote socioeconomic development. However, the region continues to experience cattle rustling, inter-ethnic conflict, smuggling, banditry, competition over scarce natural resources, and other forms of insecurity, raising concerns about the effectiveness of

state institutions in fulfilling these responsibilities (Shidane, 2020; Mutinda, 2019). Ideally, effective state performance should be reflected in reduced insecurity, coordinated institutional operations, efficient border management, responsive governance, and improved socioeconomic conditions for border communities.

The Ethiopian and Kenyan governments have introduced several initiatives to improve border governance, including the Moyale One Stop Border Post, joint security operations, and bilateral cooperation mechanisms. Imboywa et al. (2022) found that 79% of respondents reported reduced insecurity and 64% reported increased revenue following implementation of border management initiatives, although inadequate community cooperation, continued security incidents, and the absence of an effective border management committee remained significant challenges. Similarly, Shidane (2020) identified small-arms proliferation, corruption, inadequate security personnel, weak coordination among regional security agencies, and competition over scarce resources as persistent drivers of insecurity. Mutinda (2019) further linked cross-border conflict to poverty, marginalisation, state neglect, resource competition, and proliferation of small arms, while Kioko (2023) found that infrastructure development and improved regional connectivity had not eliminated violent clashes, trade barriers, or informal smuggling practices.

These findings suggest that investments in border infrastructure and security interventions do not automatically translate into improved state performance. Persistent insecurity, weak coordination, and governance challenges may undermine public confidence, disrupt trade and livelihoods, and limit the benefits of regional integration. Although previous studies have examined border security, sociocultural dynamics, ethnic conflict, and trade corridor development, they have largely addressed these issues separately. Imboywa et al. (2022) focused on sociocultural influences on border security, Shidane (2020) examined cross-border insecurity, and Kioko (2023) investigated trade corridor development and local conflict. Consequently, limited empirical evidence exists on how security management, strategic leadership, and shared strategic goals jointly relate to overall state performance along the Ethiopia–Kenya borderlands.

This gap limits policymakers' understanding of whether coordinated security operations, effective strategic leadership, and shared bilateral priorities are associated with stronger institutional effectiveness, governance functionality, and responsiveness to community needs. The study therefore sought to examine the effects of security management, strategic leadership,

and shared strategic goals on state performance along the Ethiopia–Kenya borderlands, with particular reference to the Moyale corridor. The study aimed to generate empirical evidence that can inform bilateral policy, strengthen institutional coordination, and support more effective and inclusive border governance.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- i. To assess the relationship between security management and state performance along the Ethiopia and Kenya borderlands.
- ii. To evaluate the relationship between strategic leadership and state performance along the Ethiopia and Kenya borderlands.
- iii. To examine how shared strategic goals between Ethiopia and Kenya relate to state performance along their shared borderlands.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS/QUESTIONS

H_{a1}: Security management has a statistically significant positive association with state performance along the Ethiopia and Kenya borderlands.

H_{a2}: Strategic leadership has a statistically significant positive association with state performance along the Ethiopia and Kenya borderlands.

H_{a3}: Shared strategic goals have a statistically significant positive association with state performance along the Ethiopia and Kenya borderlands.

THEORETICAL REVIEW/Framework

The analysis draws on four complementary perspectives. Borderlands theory conceptualizes borders as spaces of interaction, exchange, and contested authority rather than as simple territorial lines (Newman, 2006). It directs attention to cross-border identities, informal economies, and customary institutions that shape how communities experience state performance. The security–development nexus perspective emphasizes that insecurity and underdevelopment can reinforce each other, making isolated security interventions insufficient where poverty, exclusion, and resource scarcity remain unresolved (Duffield, 2001). Strategic leadership theory highlights the role of leadership in setting direction, coordinating institutions, sustaining commitment, and translating shared objectives into action (Boal & Hooijberg, 2000; Hambrick & Mason, 1984).

State-capacity perspectives, in turn, focus on the ability of institutions to formulate and implement policy, provide services, coordinate action, and exercise authority in ways that are

effective and regarded as legitimate (Fukuyama, 2013; Migdal, 1988). Together, these perspectives suggest that state performance in borderlands is likely to be stronger where operational security, sustained leadership, and shared priorities are mutually reinforcing and responsive to local realities.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Security Management and State Performance

Shidane (2020), in a study examining cross-border security challenges along the Kenya–Ethiopia Moyale border, investigated the security threats affecting the border region and the challenges confronting security institutions. The study highlighted concerns associated with cross-border insecurity, including resource-based conflicts and weaknesses in security coordination. These findings demonstrate the importance of coordinated security management in maintaining stability along the border. However, the study primarily focused on security challenges rather than empirically establishing how security management relates to broader state performance indicators such as institutional responsiveness, governance effectiveness, and service delivery.

Similarly, Imboywa, Mutungi, and Muthomi (2022) examined sociocultural dynamics influencing border security management along Kenya’s northern border with Ethiopia, with particular attention to the Moyale One Stop Border Post. Their study considered how sociocultural factors influence security management and cooperation among border stakeholders. The findings highlighted the significance of community cooperation and institutional coordination in managing border security. The study is relevant because it demonstrates that security management extends beyond law enforcement to include the relationships between state institutions and border communities. Nevertheless, its emphasis on sociocultural influences and border security management leaves scope for further examination of the relationship between security management and broader state performance.

Strategic Leadership and State Performance

Belete (2023), as cited in the study's original literature review, discussed challenges associated with the implementation of bilateral strategic agreements between Ethiopia and Kenya. The discussion identified concerns relating to institutional coordination, operational implementation, community participation, and the distribution of development benefits. These issues suggest that formal agreements alone may not guarantee effective governance unless

leaders provide sustained commitment, establish functional coordination mechanisms, and ensure that agreed priorities are implemented at the local level. However, the available information does not provide sufficient methodological and statistical details to establish the magnitude of the relationship between strategic leadership and state performance in the Moyale corridor.

The strategic leadership literature also emphasises the importance of leaders' capacity to align organisational direction with changing institutional environments. Boal and Hooijberg (2000), in their theoretical review of strategic leadership research, examined the role of leadership in organisational adaptation, managerial wisdom, and the effectiveness of strategic decision-making. Although their work provides a useful conceptual foundation for understanding strategic leadership, it is not a direct empirical investigation of state performance in the Ethiopia–Kenya borderlands. Its application to the present study therefore requires contextual examination of leadership commitment, bilateral decision-making, institutional coordination, and implementation of shared policies.

Shared Strategic Goals and State Performance

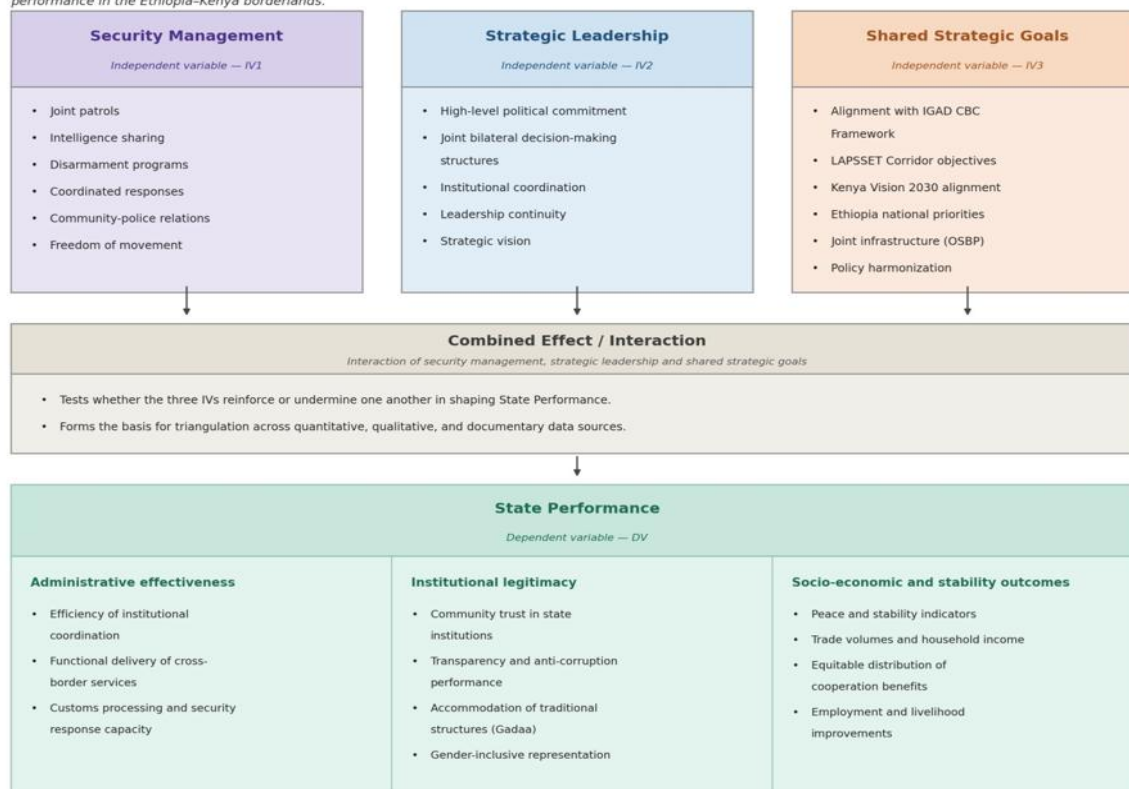
Kioko (2023), in the study “Little Dubai” in the Crossfire: Trade Corridor Dynamics and Ethno-Territorial Conflict in the Kenyan–Ethiopian Border Town Moyale, examined the relationship between trade corridor development and local conflict dynamics. The study highlighted the complexities surrounding trade, infrastructure development, and ethno-territorial tensions in Moyale. Its findings are relevant to shared strategic goals because they illustrate that economic connectivity and infrastructure development operate within broader political and social environments. Consequently, regional development priorities may not automatically produce stability or effective governance when underlying conflicts and local concerns remain unresolved.

However, the study focused on trade corridor dynamics and conflict rather than directly measuring the relationship between shared strategic goals and state performance. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD, 2023), through its regional cross-border cooperation agenda, provides a policy framework for cooperation among neighbouring countries in addressing shared development, peace, and security challenges. Similarly, the Lamu Port–South Sudan–Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPSSET) represents a regional infrastructure initiative intended to improve connectivity and facilitate economic integration. These frameworks provide institutional and policy contexts within which shared strategic goals

can be pursued. Nevertheless, the existence of regional frameworks and infrastructure projects does not, by itself, establish whether national priorities are consistently aligned or whether cooperation produces measurable improvements in institutional effectiveness, governance

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Security management, strategic leadership and shared strategic goals, and their combined contribution to state performance in the Ethiopia-Kenya borderlands.



functionality, and responsiveness to border communities.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive mixed-methods design under a pragmatic research philosophy. Its geographic focus was the Moyale corridor, including Marsabit County in Kenya and the Borana Zone in Ethiopia. The target population comprised institutional and community stakeholders directly involved in border security, administration, cross-border policy, or community-level governance. The thesis estimated an accessible population of 234 and applied Yamane's formula with a 10% margin of error to obtain a target sample of approximately 70 participants. Stratified purposive sampling was used to select participants from six categories: Ethiopian defence personnel, water and irrigation officials, foreign affairs officers, customs and

immigration officers, local administrators, and community representatives. Seventy questionnaires were distributed; 64 valid questionnaires were returned, yielding a 91.4% response rate. The questionnaire used five-point Likert-scale items and included three open-ended questions.

Two focus group discussions were held one on each side of the border with four participants per group, giving eight participants in total. Secondary documents were used to contextualize and triangulate primary findings. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, group comparisons, and multiple regression. The regression model used a separate nine-item state-performance scale, reported in the thesis as having Cronbach's alpha of .891, to reduce the risk of a part-whole relationship between predictors and outcome. Qualitative responses were analysed thematically, with patterns compared across closed-ended questionnaire items, open-ended responses, and focus group discussions. The 37 respondents who answered the open-ended questions represented 57.8% of the 64 valid survey respondents. The thesis reports that the regression diagnostics did not indicate serious violations: Shapiro-Wilk $W = .984$, $p = .216$; Breusch-Pagan $\chi^2(3) = 4.21$, $p = .240$; Durbin-Watson = 1.98; and variance inflation factors ranged from 2.05 to 2.18. The cross-sectional design supports analysis of associations but does not establish causal effects. In addition, the small focus-group sample and single-corridor setting constrain transferability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The composite means for the three broad dimensions were close: security, $M = 3.59$ ($SD = 1.09$); development, $M = 3.58$ ($SD = 1.04$); and governance, $M = 3.60$ ($SD = 1.06$). The overall mean was 3.59 ($SD = 1.03$), suggesting a modestly positive, "agree-leaning" assessment rather than uniformly strong endorsement. Security improvements were reported by 62.5% of survey respondents. Specifically, 61.0% agreed that cattle rustling had reduced and 64.1% agreed that cross-border crime had declined. These results indicate perceived improvements while also showing that a substantial minority did not report the same level of progress. Development and border administration were also viewed positively, but the gains were not uniformly distributed.

Some 63.5% agreed that the OSBP had improved efficiency, and 64.0% agreed that trade had increased household income. At the same time, 25.0% did not agree that development benefits were distributed equally. Institutional coordination was a prominent governance finding:

66.7% agreed that coordination between authorities had improved. Community consultation, however, had the lowest mean among the governance items ($M = 3.52$), and focus group participants described consultation as inadequate or superficial. Participants also identified the under-representation of women in peace-building and local governance as a continuing concern.

Table 1: Correlation's Analysis

	Security (Obj. 1)	Development (Obj. 2)	Governance (Obj. 3)
Security (Obj. 1)	1.000		
Development (Obj. 2)	0.824**	1.000	
Governance (Obj. 3)	0.806**	0.812**	1.000

Pearson correlations reported in the thesis showed strong positive associations among the three objective-level composites: security and development, $r = .824$; security and governance, $r = .806$; and development and governance, $r = .812$. All were reported as statistically significant at $p < .001$ ($n = 64$). These results indicate that respondents who rated one dimension more positively also tended to rate the other dimensions more positively. The correlations support an integrated view of security, development, and governance, although they do not establish that improvement in one dimension causes improvement in another.

MULTIPLE REGRESSION

The multiple regression model predicting state performance from security management, strategic leadership, and shared strategic goals was statistically significant, $F(3, 60) = 38.00$, $p < .001$. The model had $R = .823$, $R^2 = .677$, and adjusted $R^2 = .646$, meaning that the three predictors jointly accounted for approximately 67.7% of the observed variance in the state-performance measure in this sample. Security management was the strongest standardized predictor ($B = 0.412$, $\beta = .438$, $t = 5.217$, $p < .001$). Strategic leadership was also positively associated with state performance ($B = 0.358$, $\beta = .372$, $t = 4.876$, $p < .001$). Shared strategic goals had a positive, statistically significant association ($B = 0.271$, $\beta = .278$, $t = 3.542$, $p = .004$). The reported variance inflation factors (2.05–2.18) did not suggest severe multicollinearity. These coefficients should be read as adjusted associations within the specified model, not proof of causal effects.

Table 2: Regression Analysis

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized B	Standardized β	t	p	VIF
(Constant)	0.412		2.134	0.037	
Security Management	0.412	0.438	5.217	<0.001	2.12
Strategic Leadership	0.358	0.372	4.876	<0.001	2.18
Shared Strategic Goals	0.271	0.278	3.542	0.004	2.05

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The qualitative findings generally supported the quantitative results. Among the 37 respondents who answered the open-ended questions, 72.9% reported improvements in safety and security, 89.2% identified positive economic effects, and 91.9% reported improvements in governance. Respondents associated enhanced security with joint patrols, cross-border meetings, and information sharing, while economic gains were linked to increased trade, reduced travel time and costs, improved access to services, and greater income opportunities. Focus group participants similarly described the One Stop Border Post as an important platform for interaction, coordination, and trust-building among officials.

Security management recorded the largest standardized coefficient in the regression model, indicating its strong association with state performance. The finding suggests that predictable security arrangements create a supportive environment for trade, service delivery, and institutional presence in border areas. Joint patrols and information sharing emerged as important mechanisms, although the qualitative findings showed that enforcement alone cannot address underlying drivers of insecurity such as drought, poverty, unemployment, and competition over pastoral resources. Strategic leadership was also positively associated with state performance, highlighting the importance of political commitment, joint decision-making, and coordination among state agencies.

Shared strategic goals were significantly associated with state performance, although their standardized effect was smaller than those of security management and strategic leadership. This suggests that shared goals may provide an enabling policy framework, while security operations and institutional leadership have more immediate effects on residents and frontline stakeholders. However, the qualitative findings revealed continuing concerns about unequal distribution of benefits, limited community participation, and insufficient involvement of

women. The continued importance of the Gadaa system and other customary institutions further indicates that effective border governance requires cooperation between formal state structures and locally legitimate community institutions.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined how security management, strategic leadership, and shared strategic goals relate to state performance in the Ethiopia–Kenya borderlands, focusing on the Moyale corridor. The regression results show positive and statistically significant associations for all three predictors, with security management having the strongest standardized relationship, followed by strategic leadership and shared strategic goals. Survey and qualitative evidence also point to perceived improvements in security, trade facilitation, and institutional coordination. These gains coexist with unresolved challenges: unequal distribution of development benefits, insufficient community consultation, women’s under-representation, and continuing livelihood and resource pressures. Sustainable state performance in borderlands therefore requires more than security enforcement or formal bilateral frameworks. It depends on coordinated institutions, sustained leadership, inclusive development, and meaningful engagement with the communities and customary structures that shape everyday life along the border. Given the study design, these conclusions concern association and context-specific perceptions rather than causal effects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ethiopia and Kenya should sustain joint security operations, cross-border coordination, and information sharing while addressing underlying drivers of insecurity such as drought, livelihood vulnerability, and youth unemployment. Bilateral institutions should strengthen inter-agency coordination, accountability, and local-level implementation, while evaluating border performance in terms of service quality, accessibility, and fairness. Community participation should be institutionalized by involving elders, youth, women, traders, and marginalized groups in borderland planning and peace-building. Formal institutions should also work constructively with customary governance structures such as the Gadaa system, while cross-border development programmes should include equity measures to ensure fair access to jobs, trade opportunities, services, and infrastructure benefits.

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