

Egypt's national security strategy and its effectiveness in sustaining stability in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden: Addressing hybrid maritime threats and regional competition

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ABSTRACT

The Red Sea and Gulf of Aden are strategically vital maritime corridors connecting Africa, Asia, and Europe, and are increasingly affected by geopolitical rivalry, maritime insecurity, hybrid threats, and military competition. These developments carry significant implications for Egypt's national security, economic interests, and the security of the Suez Canal. This study assessed the effectiveness of Egypt's national security strategy in sustaining stability in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden between 2015 and 2025, with particular attention to hybrid maritime threats and regional strategic competition. The study adopted a descriptive mixed-methods research design, employing structured questionnaires, semi-structured key informant interviews, and documentary analysis. Data were obtained from 125 valid respondents drawn from military, diplomatic, academic, strategic research, and maritime institutions. Realist Theory and Regional Security Complex Theory guided the interpretation of the findings. The findings indicate that Egypt has progressively shifted from a predominantly reactive and territorially oriented maritime posture towards a proactive, multifaceted security strategy characterized by naval modernization, forward maritime deployment, strategic diplomacy, regional cooperation, and technology-enabled maritime domain awareness. Approximately 89.6% of respondents reported that naval modernization has contributed profoundly to regional stability, while 83.2% identified forward maritime deployment as important for protecting strategic maritime chokepoints. In addition, 69.6% recognized the significant contribution of artificial intelligence and digital technologies to maritime security, while 71.2% identified hybrid threats as a major risk to long-term regional stability. The study concludes that Egypt's strategy has strengthened maritime deterrence and contributed to regional stability, but that sustainable security cannot be achieved through military capabilities alone. It requires integrated institutional coordination, cyber resilience, technological innovation, economic resilience, regional diplomacy, and cooperative maritime governance.

Keywords: Egypt, Gulf of Aden, Hybrid Maritime Threats, Maritime Domain Awareness, Maritime Security, National Security Strategy, Naval Modernization, Red Sea, Regional Security, Strategic Competition

I. INTRODUCTION

The Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden have increasingly become a significant arena for rising inter-state rivalries, maritime competition, and maritime insecurity in the current international system (Fahmy, 2022). This vital trade route connects Europe, Asia, and Africa through key waterways such as the Suez Canal and the Bab El-Mandeb Strait. It is one of the world's major sea lanes, carrying nearly 12% of global cargo and a substantial share of the world's oil (World Bank [WB], 2025). This underscores the importance of keeping the region safe both for regional actors and for the protection of the global economy. The regional security situation in the area has undergone an enormous transformation over the last ten years. The renewed Yemen conflict, renewed maritime attacks, the expansion of foreign military bases, and the emergence of hybrid threats have raised the level of strategic competition throughout the Red Sea basin (Melvin, 2019). At the same time, new non-traditional threats—such as cyber insecurity, maritime terrorism, marine pollution, and digital disruption—have added to the operational environment for those who provide maritime security (Bueger & Edmunds, 2024). All of this has contributed to the Red Sea becoming one of the most militarized and strategically contested spaces in the world, rather than a traditional trade route (Till, 2018). Apart from geographical considerations, the strategic importance of the Red Sea for Egypt is very much connected with its own national security.

The Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden are the two main elements of Egypt's overall national security. Egypt's national interest is sustainable economic development and sufficient regional and global influence. The Suez Canal is one of the most important economic assets of Egypt and generates billions of dollars per year. In addition, it provides substantial income and serves as a strategic tool for acquiring geopolitical leverage (Fahmy, 2022). Thus, any instability that can affect safe passage by sea in the Red Sea is an immediate threat to the national interests of Egypt. Between 2015 and 2025, the strategic environment became increasingly unstable due to the rapidly escalating militarization of maritime choke points, escalating levels of strategic rivalry amongst regional and global powers, and

multiple attacks directed towards commercial shipping routes (Vertin, 2019). The increasing Houthi attacks on commercial shipping near Bab el-Mandeb, the threat of piracy in the Gulf of Aden, and the increasing number of foreign naval ships sent to protect international shipping showed how vulnerable critical infrastructure and global supply lines were (International Crisis Group, 2025; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2023). At the same time, regional instability in Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, and the Horn of Africa further complicated Egypt's maritime security calculations.

As it became clear that developments in Egypt were symptoms of larger problems for Egyptian national security, the country began to institute changes to its national security strategy. These included improvements in Egypt's Naval Modernization Programs, expansion of Egypt's Maritime Surveillance Systems, establishment of forward naval capability, improved cooperation with neighboring countries on matters related to defense, and increased investments in strategic maritime infrastructure by the government of Egypt (Till, 2018; Mazarr, 2018). This was a sign of a paradigmatic shift in Egypt's maritime posture from a defensive-minded naval doctrine to an integrated security approach for the protection of Egyptian interests beyond the territorial waters of the nation.

Egypt's maritime role is becoming increasingly important in terms of overall strategic importance, but studies analyzing this aspect have generally concentrated on global maritime competition, regional instability, piracy, and/or geopolitical rivalries without providing a comprehensive evaluation of the ability of Egypt's national security strategy to sustain long-term regional stability (Kraska, 2011). Furthermore, there is also a lack of research that explores how Egypt can integrate technological innovations like Artificial Intelligence, Hybrid Security Management, and Institutional Coordination into its maritime security structure (Bueger & Edmunds, 2024). Thus, this article assessed whether the national security strategy used by Egypt has succeeded in achieving sustainable stability in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden from 2015 to 2025. Specifically, this article analyzes the strategic elements of Egypt's evolving maritime security posture, the changing nature of threats emanating from the region, and the advances in military modernization capabilities, diplomatic efforts, technology infusion into its security posture, and regional collaboration that are contributing to long-term regional maritime stability.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Both the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden have become increasingly vulnerable to maritime insecurity, geopolitical rivalry, conflict spillover, piracy, maritime terrorism, cyber threats and other hybrid security challenges. These developments have culminated in heightened risks to Egypt's national security and economic interests because the Suez Canal is a vital maritime and economic asset whose operations are embedded in secure navigation through the wider Red Sea–Gulf of Aden corridor (Al Esbili 2026). Despite Egypt's response through naval modernization, forward maritime deployment, enhanced surveillance, diplomatic engagement and regional cooperation (Till, 2018), the effectiveness of these measures in sustaining long-term regional stability remain less established. Existing studies have largely focused on the examination of maritime competition, piracy, regional instability and geopolitical rivalry separately, scanty attention to how Egypt's military, diplomatic, technological and institutional instruments operate collectively (Kraska, 2011). Additionally, emerging hybrid threats and regional fragmentation increasingly challenge conventional security approaches. It is against this backdrop that this study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of Egypt's national security strategy in addressing interconnected and evolving maritime-security challenges in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

1.2 Research Objective

To evaluate the effectiveness of Egypt's national security strategy in addressing emerging regional threats and maritime security challenges.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 The Realist Theory

The theory views the international system as one in which states remain primarily responsible for protecting their own security and national interests. Morgenthau (1948) places power and national interest at the center of state behavior. From this perspective, states seek sufficient political and military capability to defend their sovereignty, protect strategic interests and maintain influence within the international system. Waltz (1979) further explains that the international system operates without an overarching authority capable of guaranteeing the security of individual states. States must therefore rely substantially on their own capabilities and strategic relationships to reduce vulnerability. This condition helps explain why military preparedness, deterrence and balance of power remain important considerations in national security planning.

Realism is particularly relevant to Egypt because the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden contain strategic maritime routes that are closely connected to the country's national interests. The Suez Canal is not only an economic asset but

also a strategic maritime passage whose security affects Egypt's wider national position. Protecting access to the canal and securing the maritime routes leading towards it therefore form an important part of Egypt's security calculations. The theory also helps explain Egypt's emphasis on naval modernization and forward maritime presence. From a realist perspective, naval capability provides the state with the means to deter threats, protect important sea lines of communication and respond to developments that may affect its strategic interests. Egypt's efforts to strengthen its maritime capability can therefore be interpreted as measures intended to reduce vulnerability and maintain a credible capacity to defend national interests.

Strategic depth is another relevant consideration. Threats affecting Bab el-Mandeb or the southern Red Sea may have consequences for shipping moving towards the Suez Canal. A forward maritime presence therefore gives Egypt greater ability to identify and respond to security concerns before they reach its immediate territorial approaches. Realism helps explain this behavior as an effort to protect strategic interests rather than simply as an attempt to project military power. However, the theory mainly focuses on the state as the most potent actor without explicitly shedding light on the security dynamics within the region, thus, this weakness warrants the adoption of regional security complex theory (RSCT).

2.1.2 Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT)

Regional Security Complex Theory was developed by Buzan and Wæver (2003) to explain the way security concerns become interconnected within geographically related regions. The theory argues that the security of one state often cannot be fully understood without considering the security conditions of neighboring states. Threats, conflicts and political tensions can move across borders and influence the security calculations of other countries within the same region. This perspective is particularly relevant to the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden because the area connects several states whose security interests overlap. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Somalia are affected in different ways by developments in the same broader maritime environment. Political instability, military competition, maritime disruption and conflict in one part of the region may therefore create consequences elsewhere.

Yemen provides a clear example of this regional interdependence. Its location near Bab el-Mandeb means that conflict affecting Yemeni territory or waters can influence commercial shipping entering or leaving the Red Sea. Such disruption can in turn affect maritime traffic moving towards the Suez Canal. Egypt's concern with developments in Yemen is therefore not separate from its own national security interests. Security developments in the Horn of Africa are also relevant. Political instability, piracy risks, foreign military presence and competition over ports and maritime access have made the Horn of Africa an important part of the wider Red Sea security environment. From the perspective of RSCT, these developments demonstrate that Egypt's security cannot be assessed only within its territorial waters. Saudi Arabia is another important regional actor because of its extensive Red Sea coastline, commercial ports, energy interests and strategic concerns regarding both Yemen and maritime security. The interaction between Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other Red Sea states illustrates the interdependent nature of regional security. Cooperation among these actors may strengthen stability, while rivalry or weak coordination may increase uncertainty.

External powers further complicate this regional system. Military deployments and strategic interests of non-regional actors add another layer to the security calculations of countries bordering the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Regional Security Complex Theory therefore provides a useful framework for understanding how both local and external actors influence the security environment within which Egypt pursues its national strategy. RSCT is particularly because effectiveness of Egypt's strategy depends partly on developments outside Egypt's direct control, including instability in Yemen, conflict in the Horn of Africa, external military presence, regional rivalries and the quality of cooperation among neighboring states.

2.2 Empirical Review

Bueger and Edmunds (2017) examined the changing nature of maritime security and demonstrated that contemporary maritime threats transcends beyond conventional naval confrontation to include piracy, maritime terrorism, smuggling, attacks on commercial vessels, and other non-traditional threats. The study emphasizes that effective maritime security calls for the states to combine naval capabilities with surveillance, intelligence, inter-agency coordination and broader regional security mechanisms. This finding is relevant to Egypt because its maritime security environment in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden is characterized by a combination of conventional and asymmetric threats. Therefore, the study suggests that the effectiveness of Egypt's national security strategy should be assessed not only in terms of its naval strength but also in its capacity to identify and respond to diverse and evolving maritime threats.

A study conducted by Kraska (2011) focused on the relationship between maritime power, strategic sea lanes and international security, emphasizing the continued vulnerability of strategically important maritime routes and chokepoints. It established that states striving to protect critical maritime interests require credible naval capabilities,

sustained maritime presence and the capacity to respond rapidly to threats. In the Egyptian context, this is particularly significant because the Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb and the Suez Canal constitute strategically important maritime corridors. Consequently, the study provides an empirical basis for evaluating whether Egypt's naval modernization and maritime deterrence capabilities have enhanced its ability to protect these strategic waterways and respond effectively to emerging threats.

Focusing on the evolution of Egypt's security doctrine from traditional border defence towards a more integrated regional security approach, International Crisis Group (2025) found that Egypt increasingly relies on a combination of military preparedness, diplomatic engagement and regional cooperation to address security challenges beyond its immediate territorial borders. This approach is particularly relevant to the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, where maritime insecurity is influenced by conflicts, political instability and the activities of external powers. The findings imply that the effectiveness of Egypt's national security strategy depends partly on its ability to complement military capabilities with diplomatic and cooperative mechanisms for addressing regional maritime insecurity.

A study by Al Esbili (2026) focused on the geopolitical and institutional dynamics shaping security in the Red Sea region. The study found that competing regional interests, institutional fragmentation and the involvement of multiple external powers complicate information sharing, crisis management and coordinated maritime-security responses. These findings are significant for assessing Egypt's national security strategy because the effectiveness of its maritime-security measures is influenced by the broader regional security environment. Consequently, even when Egypt possesses adequate naval and surveillance capabilities, regional fragmentation and competition among states may constrain the extent to which these capabilities can generate sustainable maritime security.

Thean and Clive (2010) examined regional conflicts and instability within the Red Sea basin and established that insecurity in countries such as Yemen, Somalia and Sudan can generate wider regional and maritime-security consequences. The study demonstrated that instability on the shores of the Red Sea can spill over into maritime spaces and threaten navigation, commercial shipping and regional stability. For Egypt, these findings are significant because instability around the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden directly affects the security of its maritime interests and the Suez Canal. To this end, the study suggests that the effectiveness of Egypt's strategy should also be assessed according to its capacity to anticipate and respond to the regional spillover effects of political and armed conflicts.

Mazar (2018) examined the emergence of hybrid forms of competition and demonstrated that contemporary security threats increasingly exploit critical infrastructure, institutions, information systems and technological networks. The study implies that conventional military capabilities alone may be insufficient for protecting strategically important maritime systems. This finding has particular relevance to Egypt owing to the increasing vitality of ports, navigation systems, logistics networks and digital infrastructure to maritime trade. It therefore provides a basis for assessing whether Egypt's national security strategy has adequately incorporated technological surveillance, cyber-security and other capabilities necessary to address emerging non-traditional maritime threats.

A study conducted by Fahmy (2022) examined the relationship between maritime security and Egypt's economic development, particularly in relation to the Suez Canal and the country's aspirations to strengthen its position as a regional logistics and maritime hub. The findings suggest that maritime security has implications beyond territorial defence because the protection of sea lanes, ports and logistics infrastructure is essential for sustaining trade and economic activity. Furthermore, it indicates that the effectiveness of Egypt's national security strategy can also be measured by its ability to protect the economic benefits associated with secure maritime navigation. Thus, maritime security embodies both a national defence priority and an important component of Egypt's economic resilience.

Similarly, a study conducted by Opeoluwa and Abdelsalam (2025) examined Egypt's strategic maritime policy and emphasized the importance of preventive maritime deterrence. The study found that Egypt requires the capacity to identify and counter maritime threats before they reach its territorial waters and strategically important maritime infrastructure. This finding highlights the importance of forward deployment, maritime surveillance and rapid-response capabilities in Egypt's security strategy. It further suggests that the effectiveness of Egypt's maritime-security approach depends on its ability to move from reactive responses towards preventive and anticipatory security measures.

Overall, the empirical literature demonstrates that Egypt has developed several instruments for addressing maritime-security challenges, including naval modernization, forward maritime deployment, surveillance capabilities, diplomatic engagement and protection of strategic economic infrastructure. However, the reviewed studies provide a mixed assessment of their effectiveness. While military modernization and maritime deterrence can strengthen Egypt's capacity to protect its strategic interests, their effectiveness is constrained by regional instability, geopolitical competition, institutional fragmentation and the emergence of hybrid and cyber threats. The literature therefore indicates that Egypt's national security strategy should be understood as a multidimensional response in which military, diplomatic, technological and economic instruments interact. Nevertheless, existing empirical studies provide limited evidence on how effectively these instruments operate collectively in addressing emerging regional threats and maritime-security challenges. This gap provides the basis for the present study, which evaluates the effectiveness of

Egypt's national security strategy in responding to the changing maritime-security environment in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive mixed-methods research approach guided by a pragmatic orientation. The design was considered appropriate because the evaluation of the effectiveness of Egypt's national security strategy required both quantitative evidence on expert perceptions and qualitative explanations of the strategic, institutional and regional factors shaping maritime-security outcomes. The quantitative component generated structured evidence on respondents' perceptions of Egypt's capacity to respond to emerging regional threats, the effectiveness of its deterrence capabilities, regional cooperation mechanisms and its ability to reduce maritime-security risks. The qualitative component provided deeper explanations of these perceptions through key informant interviews and documentary analysis.

The descriptive dimension of the design enabled the study to assess the existing effectiveness of Egypt's national security strategy in responding to emerging maritime-security challenges in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. The quantitative component involved a structured questionnaire administered to respondents with relevant knowledge of defence, diplomacy, maritime affairs, strategic policy and the Suez Canal, while the qualitative component comprised semi-structured key informant interviews and documentary analysis. The combination of these sources facilitated triangulation by allowing questionnaire findings to be compared with expert perspectives and evidence from official, policy and scholarly documents.

3.2 Study Area

The study focused on the area known as the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, which are both geographically and strategically important for the purposes of this investigation. As one of the most important maritime highways in the world connecting Europe to Asia and Africa through strategic chokepoints such as the Bab-el- Mandeb Strait and the Suez Canal, the Red Sea-Gulf of Aden area is of great interest (Till, 2018). The reason for choosing to examine the area surrounding the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden in relation to increasing geopolitical influence in this region due to an increase in militarization within this geographical region since 2015. Additionally, there has also been an increase in various types of security concerns associated with maritime security, including piracy and disruptions in international trade routes, which pose direct threats to Egypt's national security and its ability to protect its strategic position (International Crisis Group, 2025). Moreover, given that the location being examined is of strategic value to Egypt specifically concerning protecting the Suez Canal, other shipping lanes and maintaining regional stability throughout the Horn of Africa and the broader Middle East provides a rational and strategic foundation for evaluating Egypt's national security strategies based upon policies and processes operating along the Red Sea/Gulf of Aden.

3.3 Target Population

The target population comprised 182 respondents drawn from institutions and professional categories with relevant knowledge of Egypt's national security, maritime strategy, foreign policy, regional security and maritime-economic interests. The study focused on respondents whose professional roles gave them strategic, operational, diplomatic, economic or analytical knowledge relevant to the research objectives. The target population included senior officers from the National Defence University–Egypt, Egyptian officers undertaking strategic studies abroad, officers and planners from the Egyptian Naval Forces Command, defence planning personnel from the Ministry of Defence, diplomats and defence attachés, Ministry of Foreign Affairs personnel, Suez Canal Authority officials, and experts from academic and strategic research centres. These groups were selected because the study required informed professional assessments rather than general public opinion. Their institutional diversity also enabled the study to obtain military, diplomatic, maritime-economic and analytical perspectives on Egypt's national security strategy.

Table 1*Target Population Distribution*

No	Category / Institution	Target Group	Location / Country	Estimated Respondents
1	(NDU-Egypt)	Senior Egyptian officers (Army, Navy, Air Force)	Cairo, Egypt	28
2	Egyptian Officers Studying Abroad	Egyptian NDC officers on strategic studies courses	International NDUs	22
3	Egyptian Naval Forces Command	Naval officers and planners	Berenice Naval Base	25
4	Ministry of Defence – Egypt	Defence planning and strategic affairs officers	Cairo, Egypt	22
5	Egyptian Embassies and Diplomatic Missions	Defence Attachés and diplomats	Kenya, Djibouti, Yemen, Somalia	22
6	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Policy and regional cooperation officers	Cairo, Egypt	20
7	Suez Canal Authority	Maritime operations and economic planning officials	Ismailia, Egypt	20
8	Academic & Strategic Research Centres	Experts in defence, strategy, and maritime studies	Cairo & Alexandria Universities.	23
Total				182

3.4 Sampling and Sample Size

The purposeful sampling approach was used in this study because of its specialized and strategic nature. A focus on respondents who have the relevant professional experience, institutional knowledge and strategic expertise of Egypt's national security in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden were targeted in this study. This approach targets elite and expert respondents, rather than the general public, and provides informed and policy relevant insights as opposed to random statistical representation.

Stratified purposeful sampling was used to increase the methodological rigor of the study. Respondents are categorized into groups based on their institutional and professional affiliations (military, diplomatic, policymaking, academic, and maritime) to include operational, strategic, and policy-level perspectives on maritime and national security strategies. Expert sampling has also been utilized to find specialized respondents, with the specialized respondents' professional expertise being required to analyze maritime security, strategic policy effectiveness, and regional security dynamics within the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Finally, limited snowball sampling was used when possible and especially to access senior military personnel and diplomatic experts via professional references, given the sensitive and strategic nature of the study location. Ultimately, the combination of purposeful, stratified, expert, and limited snowball sampling provided an opportunity to select knowledgeable respondents able to provide accurate and reliable data that would be consistent with the mixed-methods research design of the study.

The sample size for this qualitative dominant mixed methods study was based on both the number of participants that would provide adequate numerical representation of the target population, as well as their knowledge, experience, and institutional diversity. The researchers identified potential participants across all levels of the public and private sectors related to Egypt's national security environment in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. As shown in Table 1, the total estimated target population for this study is 182 participants representing each of the institutional types. Since it is impossible to contact every member of a finite population, the researchers chose to use Yamane's (1967) method to calculate a statistically appropriate sample size given a five percent margin of error ($e=0.05$).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{182}{1 + 182(0.05^2)} = \frac{182}{1 + 182(0.0025)} = \frac{182}{1.455} \approx 125$$

Therefore, the total number of participants surveyed as part of this research project were 125 respondents. The participants were proportionally chosen from among the defined institutional segments, therefore enabling a collection of all appropriate views on how to assess Egypt's National Security Strategy in terms of its strategy in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, which include strategic, operational, diplomatic, economic, and analytical viewpoints.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Data were collected using three principal instruments: a structured questionnaire, a Key Informant Interview (KII) guide, and a documentary analysis matrix. The structured questionnaire constituted the primary quantitative instrument and was administered to purposively selected defence, diplomatic, maritime and strategic experts. The questionnaire contained closed-ended Likert-type items designed to measure expert perceptions of Egypt's security

strategy, including its effectiveness in responding to regional threats and maritime-security challenges. A limited number of open-ended questions were also included to provide respondents with an opportunity to explain their assessments.

The KII guide was used to obtain detailed perspectives from stakeholders in defence, diplomacy, maritime operations and policy institutions. The interviews employed a semi-structured format, which provided consistency across interviews while allowing participants to elaborate on strategic readiness, maritime defence, regional cooperation, institutional coordination and emerging security challenges. Interviews lasted approximately 45–70 minutes and were conducted either physically or through internet-based communication depending on participants' location and the sensitivity of their institutional positions. Informed consent was obtained before participation and recording, where recording was authorized.

Documentary analysis complemented the primary data. The study reviewed government policy documents, defence and foreign-policy statements, institutional reports, regional strategic reports, international-organization publications and relevant academic literature. These materials were organized around themes including maritime security, transnational threats, regional cooperation and global power competition. Documentary analysis was undertaken alongside field data collection to provide contextual evidence and facilitate comparison between documented strategic developments and respondents' assessments.

The study targeted respondents with professional knowledge and experience relevant to Egypt's national security and maritime strategy. The original study identified a target population of 182 participants and ultimately obtained 125 valid questionnaire responses. These respondents represented the Egyptian Navy and Maritime Operational Command, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, academia and strategic research institutions, and Suez Canal and maritime-economic stakeholders. Purposive and expert sampling were employed because the study required informed assessments from individuals possessing specialized knowledge of Egypt's national security, maritime strategy and regional security dynamics. Stratified purposive sampling was further used to ensure representation of military, diplomatic, policy, academic and maritime perspectives, while limited snowball sampling facilitated access to senior military and diplomatic respondents.

For the article, data collection was therefore focused specifically on evidence relevant to Objective Three: threat-response capacity, deterrence effectiveness, regional cooperation, institutional coordination and maritime-risk reduction. This narrower focus ensures that the methodology corresponds directly with the article's central concern of evaluating the effectiveness of Egypt's national security strategy rather than reproducing all three objectives of the parent study.

3.6 Data Analysis

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative techniques to analyze the collected data. Quantitative questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages and measures of central tendency, particularly mean values for Likert-scale items. These techniques were used to establish patterns in expert perceptions regarding the effectiveness of Egypt's national security strategy in responding to emerging regional threats and maritime-security challenges.

Qualitative data generated through the KIIs were analyzed thematically using a hybrid inductive and deductive approach based on the thematic analysis framework proposed by Braun and Clarke. The analysis involved open coding of interview transcripts and field notes to identify recurring concepts relating to perceived threats, institutional readiness, regional cooperation and strategic responses. The identified concepts were subsequently grouped into broader analytical categories and selectively compared with survey findings and documentary evidence. This process strengthened analytical transparency and enabled the qualitative evidence to be directly linked to the study objective. Documentary evidence was analyzed through qualitative content analysis. Official policy documents, strategic statements, institutional reports and selected international assessments were organized into thematic clusters corresponding to maritime-security threats, regional cooperation, geopolitical competition, naval and institutional preparedness, and opportunities for stability. Particular attention was given to the evolution of concepts such as deterrence, regional cooperation, sovereignty and maritime-domain awareness in order to identify changes in Egypt's strategic priorities over time.

Finally, the quantitative, qualitative and documentary findings were integrated through methodological triangulation. Questionnaire responses were compared with KII evidence and documentary findings to identify areas of convergence, divergence and explanation. The interpretation was guided by Political Realism and Regional Security Complex Theory, with Realism informing analysis of deterrence and power competition, while Regional Security Complex Theory helped explain the influence of regional interdependence, geopolitical rivalry and security spillovers on Egypt's strategic effectiveness. Quantitative findings were considered alongside qualitative themes and documentary evidence to produce an integrated assessment of the effectiveness of Egypt's national security strategy.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical requirements because the research involved national-security, defence, diplomatic and strategic-policy issues. The required academic and institutional approvals were obtained before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation and their right to withdraw. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process. Identifying information such as names, ranks, specific operational roles and sensitive institutional details was not disclosed in the final report. Interview responses were anonymized during transcription and analysis. Digital records, interview material and questionnaire data were stored securely and were accessible only to the researcher. Physical research materials were also kept in secure storage. The study did not seek or use classified information; documentary analysis was limited to publicly available and academically appropriate sources. The researcher maintained academic objectivity in analyzing politically and strategically sensitive issues in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Sources were acknowledged in accordance with APA 7th edition requirements, and the research was conducted in line with the ethical and academic requirements of the National Defence College and National Defence University–Kenya.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

This section presents the findings and discussion relating to the third research objective, which evaluates the effectiveness of Egypt's national security strategy in addressing emerging regional threats and maritime security challenges in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. The analysis draws on quantitative data from 125 valid questionnaire responses, qualitative insights from key informant interviews, and documentary evidence. The findings are organized thematically to address the multidimensional nature of strategic effectiveness, encompassing structural constraints, operational capabilities, institutional coordination, and emerging threat responses.

4.1.1 Structural constraints

The study sought to establish structural constraints hindering Egypt's national security strategy in addressing emerging regional threats and maritime security challenges. The researcher asked the respondents to ascertain the extent of regional fragmentation on strategic effectiveness. The findings are shown in Table 2;

Table 2

Regional fragmentation and conflict spillover

Institutional Cluster	Very High / High	Moderate	Low
Navy (n=30)	23	5	2
MOD (n=21)	17	3	1
MFA (n=36)	28	6	2
Academia (n=20)	16	3	1
SCA (n=18)	12	5	1
Total (N=125)	96 (76.8%)	22 (17.6%)	7 (5.6%)

The survey results demonstrate that regional political fragmentation and conflict spillover constitute a major constraint on the effectiveness of Egypt's national security strategy. As illustrated in Table 2, 96 respondents (76.8%) rated the impact of regional fragmentation on strategic effectiveness as "high" or "very high," while 22 respondents (17.6%) rated it as "moderate," and only 7 respondents (5.6%) regarded its effect as "low." The qualitative data from key informant interviews and open-ended survey responses reinforces these findings. For instance, a key informant interview with articulated the force multiplier effect of regional instability revealed the following:

"Instability increases response requirements beyond expected limits." (Key informant interview with an operational officer held on 12th April, 2026).

The interviews further revealed that regional instability in Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, and the Horn of Africa creates a complex security environment in which threats are interconnected and diffuse.

For instance, an interview with senior defence planner yielded the following;

Threats do not respect maritime boundaries" and that "instability on land translates directly into insecurity at sea." (Key informant interview with defence planner held on 15th April, 2026).

The respondents were asked whether resource sustainability is a constraint. The findings are shown in Table 3;

Table 3*Resource Sustainability and Operational Burden*

Institutional Cluster	High Concern	Moderate	Low
Navy (n=30)	14	10	6
MOD (n=21)	11	7	3
MFA (n=36)	18	12	6
Academia (n=20)	16	3	1
SCA (n=18)	14	5	1
Total (N=125)	73 (58.4%)	37 (29.6%)	15 (12.0%)

As shown in Table 3 indicate that resource sustainability and the long-term operational burden of maintaining Egypt's maritime security posture are significant concerns. For instance, 73 respondents (58.4%) expressed high concern regarding resource sustainability, while 37 respondents (29.6%) rated it as moderate, and 15 respondents (12.0%) regarded it as a low concern. Specifically, the institutional distribution reveals that academic respondents expressed the highest level of concern, with 16 of 20 respondents (80.0%) rating resource sustainability as a high concern. This may reflect the analytical community's awareness of the long-term fiscal and logistical implications of sustained military modernization and forward deployment. Naval respondents demonstrated more moderate concern, with 14 of 30 respondents (46.7%) expressing high concern, suggesting operational awareness of resource constraints but also confidence in current capability levels. The qualitative data provide context for understanding the nature of resource sustainability concerns. For instance, a senior naval officer acknowledged the following:

"Maintaining a forward presence requires continuous logistical support, which is expensive and demanding." (Key informant interview with a senior naval officer held on 18th April, 2026).

Additionally, an official from the Ministry of Defence emphasized the need to balance capability development with fiscal sustainability. He observed the following:

"We must ensure that our ambitions do not exceed our resources; the strategy must be sustainable over the long term." (Key informant interview with an official from the Ministry of Defence held on 18th April, 2026).

Respondents were asked about the effectiveness of institutional effectiveness. The findings are shown in Table 4;

Table 4*Institutional Integration and Cross-Sector Coordination*

Institutional Cluster	Highly Effective	Adequate	Needs Improvement
Navy (n=30)	10	14	6
MOD (n=21)	8	9	4
MFA (n=36)	7	19	10
Academia (n=20)	3	11	6
SCA (n=18)	4	14	0
Total (N=125)	32 (25.6%)	68 (54.4%)	25 (20.0%)

The survey results on institutional integration and cross-sector coordination are presented in Table 4. Of the 125 respondents, 68 (54.4%) characterized coordination as "adequate but capable of improvement," 32 (25.6%) rated it as "highly effective," and 25 (20.0%) reported "significant coordination gaps." The institutional breakdown reveals significant variation in perceptions of coordination effectiveness. Suez Canal Authority respondents demonstrated the highest level of satisfaction, with 14 of 18 respondents (77.8%) rating coordination as "adequate" and none identifying significant gaps. This may reflect the SCA's focused operational mandate and its established relationships with relevant security institutions. Academic respondents expressed the most critical view, with 6 of 20 respondents (30.0%) identifying significant coordination gaps. The qualitative data provide nuanced insight into the nature of institutional coordination challenges. A Ministry of Defence respondent observed the following:

"Systemic coherence must match operational excellence." (Key informant interview with an official from the Ministry of Defence held on 19th April, 2026). This statement captures the essence of the coordination challenge: while individual institutions may perform effectively within their mandates, the overall system may not achieve the level of integration required for optimal effectiveness.

An emphasis was made by diplomatic respondents who emphasized the need for stronger coordination between defence, diplomacy, and economic institutions. For instance, one diplomat submitted the following:

"Maritime security is not just a military issue; it requires a whole-of-government approach that integrates all instruments of national power." (Key informant interview with a diplomat held on 20th April, 2026).

April, 2026). This perspective aligns with the findings on the multidimensional nature of maritime security challenges.

Furthermore, naval respondents identified specific operational coordination challenges, particularly regarding intelligence sharing and joint planning. For instance, one naval officer noted:

"We have the capability, but we need better mechanisms for sharing information and coordinating responses with other agencies." (Key informant interview with a naval officer held on 16th April, 2026).

The respondents were asked to identify the extent of emerging threats. The results are shown in Table 5;

Table 5

Emerging Threats and Technological Adaptation

Institutional Cluster	High / Very High	Moderate	Low
Navy (n=30)	21	7	2
MOD (n=21)	16	4	1
MFA (n=36)	25	8	3
Academia (n=20)	17	2	1
SCA (n=18)	10	6	2
Total (N=125)	89 (71.2%)	27 (21.6%)	9 (7.2%)

The survey results on the recognition of hybrid and non-traditional threats are presented in Table 5. Of the 125 respondents, 89 (71.2%) rated hybrid and non-traditional threats as "high" or "very high" risks, 27 (21.6%) rated them as "moderate," and 9 (7.2%) expressed low concern. The institutional breakdown demonstrates that academic respondents expressed the highest concern regarding hybrid threats, with 17 of 20 respondents (85.0%) rating them as high or very high. This may reflect the analytical community's awareness of emerging threat vectors and the evolving nature of maritime security challenges. Diplomatic respondents also expressed significant concern, with 25 of 36 respondents (69.4%) rating hybrid threats as high or very high. The qualitative data provide insight into how respondents perceive the evolving threat environment. An academic respondent observed the following;

"Maritime disruptions today are digital before they are physical." (Key informant interview with an academican held on 21st April, 2026).

This statement captures the growing importance of cyber and hybrid threats in the maritime domain.

Naval respondents identified specific operational challenges associated with hybrid threats, including drones, cyber-attacks on logistics infrastructure, and information operations. For instance, a key informant interview with a naval officer yielded the following;

"The threat environment is becoming more complex; we face not just conventional naval threats but also asymmetric and hybrid challenges that require new capabilities and approaches." (Key informant interview with a naval officer held on 17th April, 2026).

4.1.2 Effectiveness of Egypt's National Security Strategy

This section presents findings on the effectiveness of Egypt's national security strategy. The respondents were asked to establish the extent of priority of deterrence and maritime operational capability. The findings are shown in Table 6;

Table 6

Deterrence and Maritime Operational Capability

Institutional Cluster	Very High / High (n)	%	Moderate (n)	%
Navy (n=30)	28	93.3%	2	6.7%
MOD (n=21)	19	90.5%	2	9.5%
MFA (n=36)	31	86.1%	5	13.9%
Academia (n=20)	15	75.0%	5	25.0%
SCA (n=18)	14	77.8%	4	22.2%
Total (N=125)	112	89.6%	18	14.4%

As demonstrated in Table 6, naval modernization remains the central pillar of Egypt's maritime-security strategy. Of the 125 respondents, 112 (89.6%) rated naval modernization as either a high or very high priority, while none rated it as a low priority. The finding was consistent across the institutional categories, including the Egyptian Navy, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, academia and Suez Canal stakeholders. A second quantitative indicator reinforces this finding. The respondents' rated forward deployment as a high or very high priority by 104 respondents (83.2%), with only four respondents (3.2%) regarding it as a low priority. The qualitative evidence

supports this finding. Key informants identified naval modernization, forward deployment, and readiness as essential elements of Egypt's maritime-security posture. For instance, one senior naval respondent observed the following:

"Security threats do not originate at the canal; they move toward it." (Key informant interview with a naval officer held on 19th April, 2026).

However, the findings also suggest that deterrence alone cannot guarantee sustained maritime security. While 89.6% rated naval modernization as a high priority, only 69.6% assigned comparable priority to AI-supported maritime domain awareness, and only 67.2% identified integrated maritime intelligence platforms as a high-impact opportunity. The study consequently finds that Egypt's maritime strategy is strongest in terms of deterrence and operational preparedness, but less complete in terms of anticipating and preventing emerging forms of disruption. A strategy that can impose costs after a threat emerges may still be insufficient if it cannot detect and anticipate the threat early enough.

The researcher asked the respondents the impact of regional fragmentation on strategic effectiveness. The findings are shown in Table 7;

Table 7
Regional Instability and the Limits of Strategic Effectiveness

Institutional Cluster	Very High / High (n)	%	Moderate (n)	%	Low (n)	%
Navy (n=30)	23	76.7%	5	16.7%	2	6.7%
MOD (n=21)	17	81.0%	3	14.3%	1	4.8%
MFA (n=36)	28	77.8%	6	16.7%	2	5.6%
Academia (n=20)	16	80.0%	3	15.0%	1	5.0%
SCA (n=18)	12	66.7%	5	27.8%	1	5.6%
Total (N=125)	96	76.8%	22	17.6%	7	5.6

The findings reveal that regional instability represents one of the most significant constraints on the effectiveness of Egypt's national security strategy. Ninety-six respondents, representing 76.8% of the sample, rated regional fragmentation and conflict spillover as having a high or very high impact on Egypt's strategic effectiveness. Only seven respondents (5.6%) considered the effect low.

The finding illustrates an important limitation of nationally oriented security strategies. Egypt may reinforce its naval capabilities and improve its preparedness, but it cannot directly control instability in Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, or other parts of the Horn of Africa. Such instability can nevertheless affect the maritime environment through conflict spillover, disruption of shipping, and increased insecurity around the Bab el-Mandeb chokepoint. The interviews similarly identified the Bab el-Mandeb as a critical vulnerability and emphasized that instability in Yemen and the Horn of Africa multiplies maritime-security risks. These findings were reinforced by key informants. For instance, an operational officer observed the following;

"Instability increases response requirements beyond expected limits," (Key informant interview with an operational officer held on 21st, April, 2026).

The researcher asked the respondents to establish the effectiveness of institutional integration. The findings are shown in Table 8;

Table 8
Institutional Coordination, Intelligence and Technological Adaptation

Institutional Cluster	Highly Effective (n)	%	Adequate (n)	%	Needs Improvement (n)	%
Navy (n=30)	10	33.3%	14	46.7%	6	20.0%
MOD (n=21)	8	38.1%	9	42.9%	4	19.0%
MFA (n=36)	7	19.4%	19	52.8%	10	27.8%
Academia (n=20)	3	15.0%	11	55.0%	6	30.0%
SCA (n=18)	4	22.2%	14	77.8%	0	0.0%
Total (N=125)	32	25.6%	68	54.4%	25	

The findings indicate that institutional coordination is functional but not yet optimal. Of the 125 respondents, 68 (54.4%) regarded institutional coordination adequate but capable of improvement, 32 (25.6%) considered it highly effective, while 25 (20.0%) identified significant coordination gaps. Specifically, the SCA respondents expressed the highest satisfaction, with 14 of 18 respondents (77.8%) rating coordination as adequate and none identifying significant gaps. Diplomatic respondents were more critical, with 10 of 36 (27.8%) identifying significant coordination gaps. This suggests that the principal challenge is not institutional failure but incomplete integration across defence, diplomacy, intelligence, economic management, and technological systems. The qualitative findings

provide further support. Key informants identified an intelligence-integration gap despite acknowledging the strength of Egypt's deterrent posture. They emphasized the need for deeper maritime intelligence fusion and predictive analytics.

For instance, an interview with operational officer yielded the following;

"Shared intelligence reduces reaction times and increases certainty." (Key informant interview with an operational officer held on 18th April, 2026).

Technological adaptation emerged as another important dimension of effectiveness. The findings show that 73 respondents (58.4%) identified AI-based surveillance systems as a high-impact priority for strengthening maritime security. Regarding this, academic respondents expressed the strongest support, with 18 of 20 (90.0%) rating AI-based surveillance as a high priority, compared with 16 of 30 Navy respondents (53.3%). Respondents nevertheless differed regarding the speed and manner of technological adoption. One academic respondent stated:

"Maritime superiority without predictive intelligence is reactive, not preventative," (Key informant interview with an academican held on 19th April, 2026).

The respondents were asked the extent of support for strengthened maritime institutions. The findings are shown in Table 9;

Table 9
Regional Cooperation and Diplomatic Effectiveness

Institutional Cluster	High Priority (n)	%	Moderate (n)	%	Low (n)	%
Navy (n=30)	15	50.0%	10	33.3%	5	16.7%
MOD (n=21)	12	57.1%	6	28.6%	3	14.3%
MFA (n=36)	24	66.7%	8	22.2%	4	11.1%
Academia (n=20)	11	55.0%	6	30.0%	3	15.0%
SCA (n=18)	7	38.9%	8	44.4%	3	16.7%
Total (N=125)	69	55.2%	38	30.4%	18	14.4%

The findings demonstrate that regional cooperation constitutes an important but underdeveloped component of Egypt's maritime-security effectiveness. The survey found that 69 respondents (55.2%) identified stronger regional maritime institutions as an important mechanism for promoting stability. This was the lowest-ranked of the four high-impact strategic opportunities examined, behind integrated maritime intelligence (67.2%), expanded joint exercises (60.8%), and AI-based surveillance systems (58.4%), though still representing a majority of respondents. Diplomatic respondents particularly emphasized predictable engagement frameworks, with 24 of 36 (66.7%) identifying regional institutions as a high priority. Operational respondents associated regional cooperation with reducing uncertainty arising from regional volatility.

4.2 Discussion

The findings on regional fragmentation strongly support the theoretical framework of Regional Security Complex Theory. Buzan and Wæver (2003) explain that the security of states located within the same regional complex is interconnected, and that threats, conflicts, and political tensions can move across borders and influence the security calculations of other countries within the same region. The Red Sea and Gulf of Aden constitute precisely such a regional security complex, where developments in Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, and the Horn of Africa directly affect Egypt's maritime security environment.

The high level of concern expressed by both operational and diplomatic respondents indicates that Egypt's strategic effectiveness cannot be assessed solely on the basis of its national capabilities. As Thean and Clive (2010) demonstrates, land-based conflicts in the Horn of Africa and Arabian Peninsula spill into the maritime environment, affecting navigation and security around strategic chokepoints such as Bab el-Mandeb. The findings confirm that Egypt's strategy must account for these exogenous factors, which lie largely beyond its direct control. The distinction between "hostility" and "uncertainty" articulated by diplomatic respondents is particularly important. It suggests that the primary constraint on strategic effectiveness may not be the presence of active threats per se, but rather the unpredictability of the regional environment. This finding has implications for strategic planning, suggesting that Egypt's strategy must incorporate mechanisms for managing uncertainty and adapting to rapidly changing circumstances, rather than focusing solely on responding to identified threats.

Regarding resource sustainability, the findings raise important questions about the long-term viability of Egypt's current maritime security posture. Till (2018) emphasizes that maritime power depends not only on acquiring platforms but also on the ability to maintain, support, and employ them over time. The survey data indicate that respondents recognize this distinction, viewing resource sustainability as a relevant medium- and long-term concern rather than an immediate failure of Egypt's maritime posture. The pattern of responses suggests that Egypt's current

strategy is financially and logistically sustainable in the short to medium term, but that long-term sustainability will require careful management of the balance between capability development and resource availability.

The findings on institutional integration suggest that Egypt's maritime security strategy is institutionally functional but not fully synchronized. The dominant view that coordination is "adequate but capable of improvement" indicates that the basic mechanisms for inter-agency cooperation exist, but that there is scope for strengthening integration across defence, diplomacy, intelligence, and economic institutions. This finding is consistent with Buzan and Wæver's (2003) Regional Security Complex Theory, which highlights that managing regional security threats requires countries to have their institutions working together. The interconnected nature of maritime security challenges—spanning military, diplomatic, economic, and technological domains—means that effective responses require coordination across multiple institutions and sectors. The variation in perceptions across institutional categories is analytically significant. The finding that academic respondents were most critical of coordination effectiveness may reflect their capacity to take a systemic view that identifies gaps not visible from within individual institutions. Conversely, the high level of satisfaction among Suez Canal Authority respondents may reflect their focused operational mandate and established relationships with security institutions.

Regarding the emerging threats, the high level of recognition of hybrid and non-traditional threats among respondents indicates a strategic awareness of the evolving nature of maritime security challenges. This finding aligns with Bueger and Edmunds' (2024) argument that contemporary maritime security involves overlapping military, economic, political, and non-traditional threats, and with Mazarr's (2018) observation that hybrid competition increasingly targets systemic infrastructure vulnerabilities rather than engaging in direct military confrontation. The finding that academic respondents expressed the highest concern regarding hybrid threats may reflect their capacity to analyze emerging trends and identify potential future challenges. Operational respondents, while also concerned, may be more focused on current and near-term threats. This difference in perspective is not a disagreement about the importance of hybrid threats but rather a reflection of different analytical horizons.

The findings on hybrid threats also highlight the interconnected nature of modern maritime security challenges. Cyber-attacks on port infrastructure, information operations targeting shipping, and the use of drones and unmanned systems all represent new vectors of threat that require integrated responses. Egypt's strategy must therefore incorporate mechanisms for detecting, deterring, and responding to these emerging threats. Generally, regarding the effectiveness of Egypt's national security in managing maritime threats, the findings corroborate with the broader literature reviewed in the study. Al Esbili (2026) argues that maritime security extends beyond conventional naval power, while Bueger and Edmunds (2017) emphasize the importance of coordination and adaptation to non-traditional threats. The Egyptian case consequently demonstrates that maritime-security effectiveness cannot be measured exclusively through naval strength. Instead, it depends on the ability to combine deterrence, intelligence, diplomacy, technology, economic resilience and regional cooperation. This represents an important shift from evaluating national security strategy according to the possession of military resources to evaluating how effectively those resources are integrated to manage a changing threat environment.

For instance, regarding regional instability and the limits of strategic effectiveness, the finding strongly supports Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT). Buzan and Wæver (2003) argue that security threats within geographically connected regions are interdependent, meaning that insecurity in one state can affect the security of others. The Egyptian case illustrates this interdependence: the effectiveness of Egypt's maritime-security strategy is partly determined by events occurring beyond its immediate territorial jurisdiction. The findings therefore challenge an exclusively national conception of maritime security and demonstrate that Egypt's strategic effectiveness is embedded within a wider regional security complex.

The finding also reinforces the empirical literature reviewed earlier. Vertin (2019) links instability in the Horn of Africa and Arabian Peninsula to maritime insecurity, while Opeoluwa and Abdelsalam (2025) highlights the effects of regional fragmentation and competing interests on coordinated maritime-security responses. The present findings extend this literature by demonstrating that regional instability is not merely an external threat to Egypt; it is a structural condition that directly limits the effectiveness of Egypt's otherwise strengthened maritime capabilities. Concerning institutional coordination, intelligence and technological adaptation, the finding is consistent with Mazarr's (2018) argument that contemporary competition increasingly exploits infrastructure, institutions and information systems. Egypt's future effectiveness will consequently depend not merely on acquiring technology but on integrating technological capabilities into intelligence, decision-making and inter-agency coordination.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study evaluated the effectiveness of Egypt's national security strategy in sustaining stability in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden from 2015 to 2025. Drawing on 125 survey responses, key informant interviews, and documentary analysis, and interpreting the evidence through Realist Theory and Regional Security Complex Theory, the study concludes that Egypt's strategy has been relatively effective but conditional. Egypt has shifted from a reactive, territorially oriented maritime posture towards a proactive, multifaceted strategy anchored in naval modernization, forward deployment, strategic diplomacy, technological integration, and regional cooperation. Approximately 89.6% of respondents reported that naval modernization contributed to regional stability, and 83.2% identified forward deployment as important for protecting strategic chokepoints. However, military capability alone is insufficient. Some 71.2% identified hybrid threats as a major risk, while 76.8% rated regional fragmentation as having a high impact on strategic effectiveness. Only 25.6% rated institutional coordination as highly effective, and 55.2% supported stronger regional maritime institutions. The study therefore concludes that Egypt's future effectiveness depends less on further expanding military capability than on integrating intelligence, technology, and institutional coordination, and on transforming national capabilities into collective regional security outcomes. Sustainable stability in the Red Sea will require adaptive, cooperative, and technologically sophisticated systems that address interconnected maritime threats beyond Egypt's direct control.

5.2 Recommendations

The findings of this study support several strategic recommendations intended to strengthen the effectiveness of Egypt's national security strategy and sustain long-term stability in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. First, Egypt should establish a permanent region-wide maritime security coordination mechanism involving all littoral states. Such a framework would facilitate intelligence sharing, joint maritime surveillance, coordinated naval movements, and collective crisis response, thereby reducing the fragmentation that currently constrains regional cooperation. Second, Egypt should expand the integration of artificial intelligence into its maritime domain awareness systems. AI-enabled predictive analytics have demonstrated considerable potential for improving early threat detection and enhancing operational decision-making, and continued investment in this area would strengthen Egypt's capacity to anticipate rather than merely react to emerging threats.

Third, given the growing risk posed by cyber threats to maritime infrastructure, Egypt should develop dedicated cyber-maritime security capabilities to protect port facilities, logistics systems, navigation equipment, and digital communications networks. Fourth, Egypt should link maritime security planning to broader economic development initiatives, including the Suez Canal Economic Zone and associated logistics corridors, so that economic resilience and maritime security reinforce one another. Fifth, Egypt should intensify regional maritime diplomacy with states along the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa in order to reduce interstate tensions, build confidence, and prevent escalation. Finally, as hybrid and asymmetric threats continue to evolve, Egypt should develop comprehensive hybrid threat preparedness frameworks that integrate military, intelligence, diplomatic, technological, and economic instruments. Collectively, these recommendations emphasize that sustainable maritime stability in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden will depend not on military capability alone, but on the effective integration of national power across multiple domains and the cultivation of durable regional cooperation.

Declaration of Interest

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