

The Role of Defense Diplomacy in Enhancing National Security: A Case Study of Kenya (2012-2022)

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ABSTRACT

Defence diplomacy has increasingly become an important avenue of engagement across countries. It aims at enhancing diplomatic capacity of a country. Kenya, since gaining its independence from Great Britain in 1963 has been engaged in defence diplomacy within the larger Eastern Africa region and beyond. With intensifying security uncertainty in the Horn of Africa, necessitating Kenya to consider increasing her defence diplomacy activities in addition to increasing her military expenditure on equipment and personnel in order to address emerging security threats. This study is interested in establishing the role defence diplomacy has played in thwarting threats to Kenya's national security. How, for instance is Kenya courting new partners in military diplomacy and trade. This paper also provides the structure of the proposed study that focuses on Kenya's defence diplomacy approach within the Eastern Africa region and beyond. In the quest of unbundling the defence diplomacy phenomena, the following research questions were considered: In what ways has Kenya's defense diplomacy promoted security in the East Africa region? Are there requisite policy and legal frameworks that guides the conduct of defence diplomacy? What future challenges can Kenya anticipate in its defense diplomacy processes?

Key Words: Defence Diplomacy, National Security,

INTRODUCTION

The term 'defence diplomacy' arose in the early 1990s when a number of states experienced political, social and economic upheavals leading to the ousting of a number of heads of state within the global south. Following the end of the cold war, and the collapse of the USSR, there was no more requirement for the global powers to continue protecting their despotic global south allies. Scholars have argued that, the cold war created despotic leader within the global south states whom they abandoned immediately the cold war ended (Weisiger, 2013). This led to the overthrow of Siad bare and Mobutu Seseseko among other leader in Africa, hence the resultant chaos in most African countries. As a result, the term defence diplomacy began gaining prominence. To African states, it was a way of ensuring that there was peaceful coexistence, meaningful and collective interaction, communication and mutual agreements on measures taken to mitigate conflict within the region (Ebitz, 2019).

Though the term defence diplomacy does not have globally accepted definition, it continue to gain milage especially in the global south due to the increasing frequency and number of intrastate conflict, withdrawal of funding by global powers following the end of cold war, threat to national and regional security due to insecurity caused by terrorism and issues of human security such as pandemics, environmental degradation, drought, hunger and natural calamities like locusts, floods and volcanic eruptions. These challenges forced nations of the world and more so global south countries to focus more on the soft aspects of defence diplomacy to ensure their own survival amidst absence of support by global north powers.

As such, collective effort to counter regional threats adds value to individual states security; this is due to cost sharing effects and economy of scale which tends to reduce the operational cost by way of sharing

responsibilities (McCormick,1990).

Soft skills such as social intelligence sharing, negotiation, collective peace keeping, peace building and peace enforcement efforts such as AMISOM intervention, EARF intervention in DRC, bilateral and multilateral agreements amongst states on security related issues, and collective military planning, training and exercises have worked well in Africa.

This paper also provides the structure of the proposed study that focuses on Kenya's defence diplomacy approach within the Eastern Africa region and beyond. In the quest of unbundling the defence diplomacy phenomena, the following research questions were considered: In what ways has Kenya's defense diplomacy promoted security in the East Africa region? Are there requisite policy and legal frameworks that guides the conduct of defence diplomacy? What future challenges can Kenya anticipate in its defense diplomacy processes?

Significance of the Study

Traditionally, Kenya has relied upon powerful friends like the United States of America or her former colonial master United Kingdom for their support in boosting her defense diplomacy missions within the wider EACR. Such support has enabled the country to be by far the biggest military spender in the region competing amongst some of the best in terms of military hardware and trained personnel in Africa.

With intensifying security uncertainty in the Horn of Africa, Kenya had to increase her defence diplomacy activities in addition to an increase in her military expenditure on hardware and personnel to address the emerging security threats. This study is interested in establishing the role that defence diplomacy has played in responding to some of the threats to national security posed and responses adopted in promoting overall security in Kenya. National security in this context refers to "hard security," which includes the military's function in defending the nation's sovereignty and maintaining territorial integrity. However national security is not only limited to 'hard security. According to this paper, national security also entails human security as prescribed by the UNDP to the effect that it entails protection of human lives, facilitating human freedoms and self-actualization among other rights and freedoms (UNDP Human Development Report of 1994). The UNDP also recommends seven essential concerns for human security, including political, economic, and food security. Other concerns include environmental and personal security, health and safety, and environmental security.

It has been generally observed that hard security on its own cannot be a solution to most of the crises facing the world today, globalization for example brought in a number of dynamics that have posed a threat to national security, these include terrorism, cyber-crime, drug trafficking and human trafficking. Notably also is the reality that there are more reports of intrastate conflicts especially after the Cold War than ever before. For instance, in Somalia, internal threats to national security may not be addressed by hard security measures alone. To put it another way, the military cannot be occupied defending the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state when the real problems lie within, including issues such as terrorism, political segregation of certain segments of society, marginalization, poverty, and health concerns.

In light of the aforementioned, Kenya has been wooing new trading and diplomatic allies in the military sphere? Based on these emerging new military diplomatic ties between Kenya and other countries, it is prudent to evaluate Kenya's long-standing military cooperation with her neighbours in East Africa to ascertain whether there have been any gains for both parties 2012 to 2022.

METHODOLOGY

The research study used a mixed-methods strategy to get its data. This entailed combining qualitative and

quantitative research approaches. (Kothari, 2005). Since the target population consists of specific individuals who served and are serving as diplomats of defence attachees, the purposive random sampling method came in handy.

Target Population. This entailed Diplomats, Defence attachees, Civil Servants and Senior Security personnel. The target population was 30, however a total 23 people responded. According to Creswell this is representative enough (Creswell, 1998)

Sampling Techniques. Purposive random sampling target 30 respondents, 23 responded, Making it 77% (Creswell).

Data Instrument. Field questionnaire (Creswell, 1998)

Analysis. Quantitative & Qualitative, (Kothari, 2005, Mugenda, 2003)

Theoretical Framework

The Social Constructivism theory of International Relations (IR) was applied in this study to clarify the causal connection between diplomacy and national security. A school of thought in international relations (IR) theory known as social constructivism was first introduced by Nicholas Onuf in his book "The World of our making" in 1989. In this book, Onuf made the argument that nation states, like people, lived in a reality that was primarily created by themselves rather than by external material entities. Because it holds that reality is socially produced, the theory was thought to be the best fit for the investigation (Onuf, 1989). In the sense that constructivists place a larger emphasis on norm creation, identity, and idealization power than the other major theoretical paradigms, defense diplomacy has played a crucial role in both physical and human (Andrew 2006).

Norms, identity, and ideas are key factors in constructivist theory. Military diplomacy entails use of common norms, ideas and identity to construct cordial relationship among themselves, this has in many ways enhanced national security, unity, peaceful coexistence and cooperation among neighbouring nations. Kenya defence diplomacy revolves around military cooperation which is accomplished by way of joint training where participants from allied countries from Africa and other parts of the world attend courses in the country while own participants attend courses in other parts of Africa and the world (Charles, 2000).

Joint cooperation has been achieved by way of military exercises attended by allied forces from the region and other parts of the world. This creates a window for joint planning and execution of operation (Forstey, 2004). As a result of joint planning and joint exercises, the East African Standby forces have successfully managed to respond to the Somalia crisis and the DRC crisis among others. Cooperation makes it easier to share intelligence, policies and strategies for combating terrorism, crime and natural calamities.

The concept that knowledge is generated through human action is one of several underlying assumptions or guiding principles of the social constructivism theory of IR. Collectively, the individuals of a society construct reality. Learning is a social, interactive activity. Through their relationships with others and their surroundings, people produce meaning. The military forces of the East African region, for example, have been able to form a bond through joint learning (diplomatic training), and it is now simpler for the regional forces to come together and mitigate insecurity situations within the region through diplomatic means. Kenya has used this strategy with positive results.

The theory further emphasizes on the importance of Inquiry-based Interaction (IBI), Problem based Interaction (PBL), Cooperative Interaction (CI) and Reciprocal Interaction (RI). These are important aspects

in defence diplomacy, for defence diplomacy to thrive there has to be objective inquiry of the interaction, approached using the problem-based tenets, there has to be cooperation and reciprocity (Katz, 2020).

Data from the study shows that Kenya's defence diplomacy is made up of several different sets of activities. Most respondents pointed out that joint military training and peace enforcement operations were the most prominent. They then expressed their views at 84% that peacekeeping operations and joint regional exercises as well as military secondment in international and regional bodies were the second most important defence diplomacy engagement. Diplomatic engagement came third. From this data, we affirm the study's first hypothesis that Kenya's defense diplomacy has promoted security in Kenya through defence cooperation, common training, sharing of information and joint operations to respond to common threats.

The study also finds that membership of regional and international organizations plays a significant role in shaping Kenya's defense diplomacy policy. These organizations provide a platform for Kenya to engage with other countries and to shape the direction of regional and international security policies. Data from the study shows that a significant majority of the respondents were in agreement that Kenya's defence diplomacy plays an important role in preventing regional interstate conflicts. Further, data drawn from the study shows overwhelming support by respondents at 100% for regional cooperation and enhanced national security as well as enhanced collaboration. At the same time, the data also shows that respondents looking at the benefits of defence diplomacy in the wider East African Community play a significant role of enhancing human security, military coalition establishment and the sharing of experiences on emerging issues (Bar-Joseph, 1998).

At the same time, Kenya uses deterrence as one of the strategies of its defense diplomacy (Ebitz, 2019). As a method, deterrence has a long history in the context of maintaining not only the military and security landscapes but also in the law-and-order realm where the deterrence hypothesis remains a key intellectual foundation for most criminal law and criminal justice systems (Harvey, 1998).

Kenya's Internal Defence Policy on Defence Diplomacy

Kenya's military defense White Paper, which outlines the National Economic Development Activities that the military can engage in to foster peace across communities, outlines the country's defense diplomacy. Some of these initiatives include the building of roads and bridges, the boring of boreholes, the provision of healthcare to nearby villages, as well as various peace-building initiatives in Kenya and neighbouring troubled countries. The Kenya Defence Forces' capabilities, which include maritime, medical, air, and transport services as well as the Kenya Army Corps of Engineers, are also mentioned in the White Paper. These services are intended to improve social infrastructure, foster peace, reduce poverty, and address destructive cultural practices like cattle rustling (The Kenya Defence White Paper, 2019 Edition).

The Kenya Defence Forces Act and the nation's 2010 constitution both contain provisions governing actions conducted in the context of defense diplomacy. One of the most essential roles assigned to the military in Kenya is to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Kenya. This means that in cases of emergency or disaster, like the recent droughts in some parts of the country, the military offers assistance or, if required, work in conjunction with other civil authorities. That being said, Kenya, like other nations, continues to face threats to her sovereignty from both internal and external sources, necessitating the deployment of both military force and soft power defense diplomacy.

Nation-states have used defense diplomacy to organize their resources so they can respond to international crises in a coordinated manner. Kenya is one such nation-state that has done this. The term "defence diplomacy" has also been used to describe "military diplomacy," "soft power," and "strategic communication," (Ebitz, 2019). It makes it possible for the military to directly influence foreign policy through other channels. Military ties between states lay the groundwork for future ties between countries,

even though they are not diplomatic in the conventional sense of a state department role.

Hence, defense diplomacy is a core component and pillar of Kenya's foreign policy in the context of the country. The Ministry of Defence of Kenya engages in a variety of bilateral international activities, primarily based on conversation and collaboration, with its allies, partners, and other friendly nations with the aim of advancing the achievement of defense policy objectives in support of Kenya's foreign policy. While conventional wars are less common in Kenya today, the nation still faces serious challenges that can be categorized as low to medium-intensity conflicts that take place inside Kenya's sphere of influence in the larger Eastern Africa region. Beyond Kenya's boundaries, the effects of the growth of these asymmetric wars and the advent of new threats are felt.

Defense Diplomacy and National Peace-Building

According to American military historian Charles Walker, the UN first acknowledged the value of defense diplomacy more precisely, the contribution played by the military in peacekeeping operations, particularly in conflict and post-conflict regimes in 1962 is a good example. Since then, militaries all over the world, including Kenya, have embraced the use of their armed forces in civil tasks both locally and abroad like the construction of dams and bridges and other development-oriented initiatives aimed at raising the living standards of the communities affected by conflict or still experiencing conflict. One may point out that Kenya's defense diplomacy activities have changed as a result of the country's adaptation to the trajectory of general global change that has affected the military sector (Forstey, 2004).

One could argue that in modern warfare, the pursuit of peace and security has necessitated the use of other strategies. In other words, using military force or organized violence alone cannot ensure community peace and stability over the long term. In nation-states like Kenya, the military, such as the KDF, must be active in the peace-building process employing paradigms derived from defense diplomacy in order to secure a lasting peace (Andrew, 2006)

Since the beginning, the military has not been regarded as appropriate institution to carry out operations of social reconstruction; in fact, in many post-conflict regimes, community reconstruction was regarded as a civilian responsibility. The Kenyan government has prioritized the KDF's participation on equal basis with conventional military operations. This is a significant change in the KDF's involvement in internal intracommunity disputes as well as its strategy for post-conflict defense diplomacy and peace-building initiatives. There are several reasons for this, but the main one is that, for example, in internal disputes where the KDF was ultimately called in to suppress or neutralize perpetrators of conflict, the combatants or contending parties were not fighting the state.

Objectives of Military Involvement in Peace-Building

The primary goal of military involvement in post-conflict rebuilding, according to peace and conflict scholars, is to re-examine peace-building as understood and practiced by the community as well as to build trust in the community that may have been lost as a result of the conflict by warring parties, which may include the military itself. In order to create a peaceful outcome and a sustainable and peaceful atmosphere for everyone in the community, it is important to take into account the disputing parties' opinions and to make accommodations for them in the process of moving forward (Cole, 2010)

In general, military scholars like Andrew Rigby (2006) have concurred that the military has a legitimate goal in its involvement in promoting peace, particularly in post-conflict societies where there is a critical need for expertise in restoring the infrastructure that was damaged in the first place. The military's reconstruction efforts are an essential component of a lasting cease-fire and a tranquil atmosphere conducive to trade, business, and other economic and social activities. Rigby notes that it can be difficult to involve

the military in defense diplomacy and peace-building initiatives like reconstruction in areas where the military was directly involved in the fighting, as was the case with the KDF's Operation Linda Inchi, however the Kenyan military successfully proved this notion wrong.

Several academics disagree with the idea of defense diplomacy, particularly when it comes to the military's participation in operations that promote peace, like reconstruction. For instance, Alexandra Gheciu (2011) stated that non-governmental groups and the private sector in general should be in charge of reconstruction efforts in post-conflict regimes. Gheciu emphasizes that the military should stick to its traditional role based on its combat expertise and training in warfare and not in peace-building activities where there are many skills and expertise in social justice and peace-building in the non-governmental world, where the military is perceived as an intruder in the humanitarian space when it attempts to carry out reconstruction work in the community (Gicheru, 2011)

Kenya Defence Forces' Defence Diplomacy and Peace-Building Activities

As a nation, Kenya has been recognized internationally for its contributions to peace-building efforts since the 1980s. For instance, Kenya received appreciation from the previous UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in 2010 for her efforts to establish and uphold peace not only in Kenya but also throughout the region. Kenya's defense diplomacy was praised for its work in Sudan and Somalia, as well as for hosting and facilitating several peace meetings and being a signatory to numerous treaties. Naturally, Kenya's strategy for fostering peace is firmly based on a dedication to diplomacy, multilateralism, and soft power methods that are intended to foster lasting peace among its communities both internally and with its external neighbours.

Kenya's defence diplomacy projects including peace-building and reconstruction programmes, these are specified in the Kenya Defence Forces Act as well as in the country's 2010 constitution. One of the most fundamental responsibilities assigned to the military in Kenya is to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kenya as a republic; the military have on several occasions conducted military aid to Civil Authority' projects in such situations of emergency or disaster such as the recently experienced droughts in parts of the country. That said, Kenya like other countries continue to face threats to her sovereignty from domestic as well as external sources that have necessitated the use of not just military force but also to engage in soft power defence diplomacy to thwart some the threats that sometimes emerge from internal sources such as intra-community violence that occurs as a result of activities such as cattle rustling banditry common in the Turkana, West-Pokot and Baringo regions in the Rift Valley.

Reconstructions Activities in Mt Elgon Area

The question is 'has the KDF achieved anything in terms of defence diplomacy through peace-building activities and reconstruction programmes' is perhaps more important especially when contextualized in the current conception of military practice of creating a climate of stability-security rather than change through sustainable peace. The Kenya defence forces successfully neutralised the SLFD, a disgruntled ethnic Sabot group that caused mayhem in Western Kenya claiming that the government had allocated their ancestral land to undeserving community members. The defence diplomacy did not end at the hard power, but KDF embarked on human security activities such as medical camps, infrastructure development, food security projects and family reunion and reconciliation projects that normalise the situation (Forstey, 2004)

Restorative Peace-Building Practices

Glancing at the SLDF phenomena, political scholar Ronald Elly Wanda posited that the success of the peace-building exercise and the subsequent reconstruction in the region depended largely on the involvement of the community itself. Wanda argued that the conflict in the Mt Elgon region was triggered by a number of

reasons, including issues of land ownership, defective electoral process, political manipulation, unequal distribution of resources and so forth. His study concluded that traditional approaches embedded in the communities' use of restorative and traditional or indigenous practices to the resolution of local conflicts using cultural practices were a crucial component in the community's transformation (Wanda, 2016).

Therefore, we may point out that however much military defence diplomacy and its subsequent peace-building activities are important, it is far more important to engage the community throughout the process of peace-building and reconstruction in order to legitimise the process as having had public participation and as such the community's blessings. The military succeeded because they engaged the civilians and allowed them to find a lasting solution on their own initiative.

Civil Military Cooperation

The KDF have been utilizing civil military cooperation as a strategy to its peace-building programmes in the community. Diplomats argues that this is a useful way of minimizing interference from the community and at the same time maximizes support from the local community during times of military operations in order to achieve their set targets. The civil military cooperation involves not just combat missions but also involves other non-combatant actors who play a role in helping with the peace-building process such as the non-governmental organisations, the media and other local and cultural leaders. Some of the joint initiative by the different peace actors included negotiations through round-table talks, reconstruction of social amenities like roads, schools and water points and support to the local security and administrative units (Weber, 2009).

CHALLENGES

Kenya Defence Budget

Kenya still leads in the East Africa region in terms of military expenditure with a budget of 1.28 billion USD (Cotter, 2004); this is in spite of recent slight reductions caused by the devastating effects of Covid-19 global pandemic. Uganda follows with a budget of 1.06 billion USD, Tanzania 742 million USD, then Rwanda at 164 million USD and finally Burundi with 68 million USD.(Cotter, 2004)

In the wider Eastern Africa region, Ethiopia is the only country that reduced its defence expenditure significant from 504.07 million USD to 487.8 million USD within the last two years; this is despite the fact that the country launched a civil war against Tigray forces during the two years that it had reduced its defence budget (Cotter, 2004)

Command Control Problems

In a multi-agency operation, command and control becomes a challenge since there exists different operating procedure hence a difficulty in harmonizing civilian and military operating procedures. This has often slowed down progress in peace building activities. Additionally, in multinational operations due to different command structures and procedures it becomes difficult to operate together. This is further aggravated by issues of national interest and national pride which collectively derail the intended purposes of such operations.

Furthermore, KDF's military culture embeds a visible, moral, in addition to a vocational component. All of these contain aspects of discipline, teamwork, self-sacrifice, spirit, ethics and values that provide commanders of a unit with the implicit understanding of military challenges not just in Kenya but also in the wider East African region, the continent as well as a global outlook. This enables soldiers regardless of the above challenges to perform well.

State-Centric Security Policy Environment

Generally speaking, Kenya like most other countries in Africa have relied allot on the state itself to define and execute the response to security through policy. Kenya has seen a rise of terrorist related attacks within its border largely because of its involvement in Somalia. The volatile and changing nature of the security environment has made it difficult to achieve much within the defence diplomacy strategy. This combined with the notion that coercive methods, as traditionally used, have bone little fruits in counterinsurgency strategies.

Mitigation Measures in Defence Diplomacy

There is need to avail objective funding to sustain defence diplomacy operations. Though Kenya still leads in the East Africa region in terms of military expenditure with a budget of 1.28 billion USD; technically, Kenya faces more security challenges due to its geostrategic dynamic hence defence diplomacy needs to be enhanced and sustained. The challenge of command and control can be addressed by encouraging joint training among regional forces, common standing operating procedures and common planning for all joint tasks.

CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of this study has been to establish the role of defence diplomacy in promoting security in Kenya. It was driven by the three research objectives that focused on the role of defence diplomacy in promoting Kenya's national security in Kenya; whilst examining the influence of regional and international organizations on Kenya's defence diplomacy; and last but not least the study also explored future challenges and opportunities that defence diplomacy is likely to experience in the course of its activities.

The study concludes that Kenya has achieved significant progress in terms of its defense diplomacy. The figures drawn from fieldwork confirm the study's three hypotheses that; Kenya's defense diplomacy has promoted security in Kenya; and Kenya's membership in international and regional organizations plays a major role in shaping the country's defence diplomacy and security policy framework; as well as Kenya's defence budget is expected to increase to accommodate its future defence diplomacy engagements.

All respondent pointed out that joint military training and peace enforcement operations were Kenya's most prominent defence diplomacy activities. This was followed by peacekeeping operations and joint regional exercises as well as military secondments in international and regional bodies. Diplomatic engagement had the least support as an activity compared to the

other sets of activities.

Overall data from the research suggests that there is overwhelming support for defense diplomacy and its activities. At the same time, statistics also suggests that Kenya cannot wholesomely rely on defence diplomacy for its national security. In other words, more needs to done to enhance defence diplomacy in relation to Kenya's national security goals. Procurement challenges, procurement processes as well as budgetary deficits, stronger legal and policy frameworks were cited as some of the reasons that hamper the progress of defence diplomacy.

RECOMMENDATION

The Study Recommends the following:

1. **Enhancement of Diplomatic Capacity.** Kenya can enhance its diplomatic capacity by investing in training and resources for its diplomats. This can include training in negotiation, conflict resolution,

and public diplomacy. With stronger diplomatic capacity, Kenya can more effectively communicate its defense and security objectives to other countries and build stronger partnerships.

2. **Increases in Funding to Prevent Budgetary Shortages for Defence Diplomacy Activities.** Data from the study has identified diplomatic engagements as receiving the least attention in defence diplomacy activities. This will prevent critical activities such as peace-building, peacekeeping and mediation in addition to other such as early identification monitoring to be actualized and not compromised upon based on budgetary constraints and dependency on external sources.
3. **Prioritises Defense Diplomacy in Kenya's National Strategy.** This should involve integrating defense diplomacy into broader national security objectives and ensuring that resources and personnel are allocated to support these objectives. By prioritizing defense diplomacy, Kenya can better position itself to address its security challenges and achieve its strategic goals.

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