

Kenya's Role in Promoting Peace and State (Re) building in Somalia

By

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Abstract

Kenya had an intricate role in promoting peace and state (re) building efforts in Somalia. Kenya's intervention was driven by a combination of regional stability concerns and the need to address the spillover effects of insecurity and terrorism. The analysis explored Kenya's contributions through military intervention as part of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), diplomatic efforts aimed at fostering a Somali-led peace process, and the provision of humanitarian assistance. There were acknowledgements on the achievements of Kenya's intervention, including territorial gains against al-Shabaab and the creation of space for the Somali Federal Government to establish its authority. However, there were challenges associated with Kenya's military presence, including accusations of human rights abuses and potential destabilization of local communities. The study delved into the importance of diplomacy and political engagement in fostering sustainable peace. Kenya's role in hosting peace talks and advocating for inclusivity was highlighted. The analysis explored the crucial role of humanitarian assistance in addressing immediate needs while simultaneously strengthening local governance structures and promoting state legitimacy. Drawing on insights from existing literature on the effectiveness of military intervention, diplomacy, and humanitarian assistance in state (re) building, the study emphasized on the need for a nuanced approach. The study employed a combination of cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys alongside descriptive research. Data collection included surveys, interviews, document analysis, and observation of diplomatic meetings, military operations, and peace negotiations. The target population included representatives from various stakeholder groups in Kenya and Somalia (n=291). The study found that Kenya played an intricate role in Somalia's state (re)building efforts. This included diplomatic initiatives, military engagement through AMISOM, humanitarian aid provision, and economic cooperation. Kenya's diplomatic efforts facilitated dialogue and political solutions. Military intervention addressed security challenges and created space for reconstruction. Humanitarian aid alleviated suffering and bolstered resilience. Economic cooperation projects fostered regional integration and development. The study concludes that Kenya's contributions were significant but highlights the need for long-term solutions. It recommends a focus on political reconciliation, economic development, and transparency in economic cooperation alongside continued security measures. By implementing these recommendations, Kenya can further strengthen its positive contributions to lasting peace and stability in Somalia.

Key Words: Kenya, Somalia, Diplomacy, Governance, Intervention, Security, Stability & State (Re) building

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Introduction

Somalia has been plagued by civil war and instability since the early 1990s. The collapse of the central government created a power vacuum that armed groups, including the militant Islamist organization al-Shabaab, readily filled (Menkhaus, 2019). In response to the deteriorating security situation in Somalia and the spillover effects into Kenya, Kenya has played a central role in peacebuilding efforts. This involvement has been multifaceted, encompassing military intervention, political mediation, and humanitarian assistance.

Kenya's most visible contribution has been its military presence in Somalia. In 2011, Kenya joined the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), a multinational peacekeeping force tasked with stabilizing the country and supporting the Somali Federal Government (SFG) (Obi, 2020). The Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) have made significant territorial gains against al-Shabaab, creating space for the SFG to establish its authority. However, Kenya's military intervention has also come with challenges, including accusations of human rights abuses and friction with local communities (Vaughn, 2022).

Beyond military engagement, Kenya has also been a key player in diplomatic efforts to bring about a lasting peace in Somalia. Kenya has hosted numerous peace talks between Somali factions and continues to advocate for a Somali-led and Somali-owned peace process (Menkhaus, 2019). Additionally, Kenya has provided significant humanitarian assistance to Somalia, addressing the needs of refugees fleeing the conflict and internally displaced persons within Somalia.

Assumptions

Kenya's role in promoting peace and state (re)building in Somalia was driven by both regional stability interests and the need to curb the spillover effects of insecurity and terrorism.

Statement of Problem

Kenya's efforts to promote peace and state (re)building in Somalia have been intricate, with Kenya being a major contributor to the AMISOM since 2011. The KDF have played a crucial role in territorial gains against the militant group al-Shabaab, creating space for the SFG to establish its authority. Beyond military action, Kenya has been a key diplomatic player. Through hosting peace talks and advocating for a Somali-led peace process, Kenya has aimed to foster long-term solutions. Additionally, Kenya has provided substantial humanitarian assistance, addressing the needs of refugees fleeing the conflict and those internally displaced within Somalia. This humanitarian aid helps to stabilize communities and create conditions conducive to rebuilding the war-torn nation. Despite Kenya's long-standing involvement in Somalia's peacebuilding efforts, the country's stability remains precarious. Al-Shabaab, though weakened, continues to launch deadly attacks, hindering the establishment of lasting peace. Furthermore, Kenya's military intervention has faced criticism for civilian casualties and potential destabilization of local Somali communities, raising questions about the long-term effectiveness of this approach. These factors complicate Kenya's efforts and highlight the need for a more nuanced strategy that addresses the root causes of conflict alongside military action.

Objective

To evaluate Kenya's role in promoting peace and state (re)building in Somalia, with a focus on its strategic interventions, diplomatic efforts, and security initiatives.

Review of Related Literature

The Effectiveness of Military Intervention in State (Re) building

The debate over the effectiveness of military intervention in state rebuilding is marked by divergent perspectives. Proponents, such as Call (2020), argue that military intervention offers a critical security framework essential for initiating and sustaining reconstruction efforts. This perspective posits that without such a security umbrella, reconstruction efforts are vulnerable to disruption by residual conflict and instability. However, critics, including Söderberg (2019), contend that military interventions often exacerbate existing tensions, undermining long-term stability and peace. Case studies reveal that while military interventions can provide short-term security gains, they frequently fail to address the underlying political and social issues, potentially leading to renewed conflict. Thus, while military interventions may offer immediate benefits, their long-term effectiveness remains questionable, necessitating a more nuanced approach that integrates security with political and social solutions to ensure sustainable state rebuilding.

Military intervention can create the necessary space for rebuilding shattered institutions, as evidenced by historical precedents in Kosovo and Sierra Leone. The 1999 NATO intervention in Kosovo successfully halted ethnic cleansing, leading to the establishment of a UN administration that managed the initial reconstruction efforts (Bevan, 2016). Similarly, the combined military intervention in Sierra Leone in 2000 ended a brutal civil war, enabling the deployment of a peacekeeping force that helped restore some normalcy (Jarstad, 2022). These examples highlight that military intervention, when strategically executed, can provide the essential security conditions needed for the rebuilding of institutions. This highlights the argument that while military interventions are often contentious, they can be instrumental in creating a foundation for peace and stability in post-conflict societies, thus facilitating long-term reconstruction and development.

However, intervention can also sow the seeds for future instability. The 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq serves as a cautionary tale. While the initial toppling of Saddam Hussein removed a repressive regime, the subsequent power vacuum fueled sectarian violence and created fertile ground for the rise of ISIS (Rashid, 2021). Similarly, the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya, while successful in removing Muammar Gaddafi, plunged the country into a state of chaos marked by militia rule and ongoing civil war (Lindsay, 2016). These cases highlight the dangers of intervention without a well-defined exit strategy and a nuanced understanding of local political dynamics. Rashid (2021) and Lindsay (2016) underscore that while interventions may achieve short-term objectives, the lack of long-term planning can destabilize regions, exacerbating violence and creating new threats. Therefore, it is imperative that any intervention be accompanied by a comprehensive strategy that considers the complex sociopolitical landscape to ensure sustainable peace and stability.

Diplomacy, Mediation, and Political Engagement in State (Re) building

State (re)building is a complex process following conflict or societal collapse. Re-establishing a functioning government, fostering economic growth, and ensuring security are crucial yet daunting tasks. Diplomacy fosters communication and trust between stakeholders, a premise robustly supported by Call (2020) and Murshed (2019). The study by Call (2020) on post-conflict reconstruction in Nepal, demonstrates that sustained diplomatic engagement

with neighboring countries facilitated regional cooperation and resource sharing, essential for rebuilding infrastructure and basic services. This example underscores diplomacy's role in creating a collaborative environment necessary for long-term recovery. Similarly, Murshed (2019) analysis of Liberia highlights how proactive diplomacy by the United Nations (UN) and regional actors established a dialogue platform between warring factions, leading to a power-sharing agreement and the formation of a transitional government. Both studies emphasize that diplomacy is not merely about negotiation but is crucial for building trust and fostering cooperation among diverse stakeholders. Therefore, these works collectively argue that effective diplomacy is indispensable for conflict resolution and sustainable development, making it a critical tool for policymakers aiming to stabilize and rebuild post-conflict societies.

The analysis by Chau (2022) on the peace process in Afghanistan highlights the pivotal role of international mediation in addressing persistent conflicts and grievances, emphasizing that mediation serves as a critical mechanism for facilitating dialogue between conflicting parties, such as the Taliban and the former Afghan government. This mediation not only creates opportunities for negotiation but also fosters the establishment of power-sharing frameworks essential for sustainable peace and state rebuilding efforts. Despite the fragility of the current process, the study findings highlight the relevance of neutral third-party interventions in navigating complex political landscapes and fostering conditions conducive to long-term stability. The study is particularly pertinent in demonstrating how international mediation can mitigate deep-seated hostilities and pave the way for inclusive governance structures, thereby contributing significantly to global efforts aimed at conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Broad-based political engagement plays a pivotal role in fostering inclusivity and legitimacy during rebuilding processes. A study by Jones, Randell and Rolandsen (2021) on South Sudan, highlights that excluding crucial political stakeholders from peace negotiations can severely undermine the sustainability of peace agreements. Their findings highlight how marginalizing certain groups can lead to renewed conflict and instability, thereby questioning the efficacy of exclusive peace processes. In contrast, an analysis by Ottaway (2019) of Tunisia, presents a contrasting narrative where inclusive political dialogues, facilitated by international intervention, facilitated a smoother transition towards stability and democracy. Through involving diverse societal factions in decision-making, Tunisia managed to mitigate internal divisions and strengthen democratic institutions. These studies collectively emphasize that inclusive political engagement not only enhances the legitimacy of governance structures but also diminishes the likelihood of relapse into conflict, offering pertinent lessons for policymakers and stakeholders involved in post-conflict reconstruction efforts worldwide.

Humanitarian Assistance and Development in State (Re) building

Humanitarian assistance and state (re)building are intertwined concepts, each influencing the other in complex ways. While immediate relief is crucial in crisis situations, sustainable development requires a functioning state apparatus. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and World Food Programme (WFP) (2023) report on South Sudan highlights on the delicate balance between short-term humanitarian aid and long-term state-building efforts. It reveals that while immediate aid is crucial for addressing urgent needs, it can paradoxically weaken local governance structures by bypassing them or creating dependency dynamics. This unintended consequence often hinders the development of sustainable state institutions. Conversely, the report argues that well-designed aid initiatives

can enhance local capacity and foster trust in governmental bodies, thereby contributing to state legitimacy. This dual perspective highlights the necessity of a nuanced approach in humanitarian interventions—one that not only meets immediate humanitarian needs but also actively supports local governance and state-building processes. Through emphasizing on local ownership and legitimacy, aid programs can more effectively contribute to sustainable development and stability in fragile contexts like South Sudan. This discussion is crucial for policymakers and aid organizations seeking to navigate the complex landscape of humanitarian assistance while promoting lasting socio-political stability.

The UNDP (2023) in a study highlights the transformative potential of humanitarian aid in conflict-affected South Sudan. It emphasizes that aid programs not only address immediate humanitarian needs but also play a crucial role in fostering social cohesion and reconciliation among divided communities. Through focusing on shared needs and promoting inclusivity, these programs create opportunities for dialogue and cooperation, essential elements for sustainable peace and state stability. The study highlights the significance of targeted aid interventions in rebuilding social fabric and laying foundations for long-term peace, thereby showcasing the critical role of international assistance in post-conflict settings.

However, challenges remain. A research by the International Centre for Research on the Global Order (ICRG, 2022) on North-Eastern Nigeria draws on a critical dilemma: the prolonged reliance on aid can inadvertently perpetuate cycles of dependency, undermining efforts by the state to foster self-reliance. The study reveals that while emergency assistance is vital in immediate crises, its long-term provision without a transition to sustainable development initiatives can stymie local empowerment and hinder state-building endeavors. This finding resonates globally, emphasizing the necessity for strategic shifts towards development programs that empower communities economically and enhance state capabilities in vital sectors such as food security and infrastructure. Advocating for a balanced approach that combines emergency relief with sustainable development frameworks, is essential and relevant in challenging conventional aid paradigms and advocating for policies that foster resilience and autonomy in conflict-affected regions.

Methodology

A mixed-method approach, combining cross-sectional and longitudinal survey designs alongside descriptive research was used in the study. This provided an understanding of regional engagement and state (re) building efforts in Somalia and Kenya over a 20-year period. Data collection included both quantitative and qualitative methods like surveys, interviews, and document analysis. The target population included diplomats, representatives from international organizations (UN, AU), local communities, civil society organizations, regional leaders, and businesses affected by regional engagement and state (re) building. Purposive sampling was used to select a sample of n=291 participants from Kenya and Somalia.

Questionnaires, observation guides, key informant interview guides, and collection of secondary data were used for data collection. Questionnaires included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The researcher observed diplomatic meetings, military operations, and peace negotiations. Interviews were conducted with key informants and representatives from UN and AU. Secondary data was collected from academic journals, policy documents, and news sources. Data analysis involved cleaning, preparing, and summarizing the data using descriptive statistics and data visualization techniques. Inferential statistics were used to draw conclusions about the population based on the sample data. Qualitative data analysis involved coding, categorization, and thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes within the data.

The research received ethical approval from relevant authorities to conduct the study. Participants were informed about the voluntary nature of the study and their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality of their responses was ensured.

Presentation and Discussion of Findings

The study evaluated Kenya's role in promoting peace and state (re)building in Somalia, with a focus on its strategic interventions, diplomatic efforts, and security initiatives. The study found that diplomatic efforts, military engagement, humanitarian assistance and economic cooperation were roles played by Kenya in Somalia state (re) building. Kenya demonstrated proactive engagement in regional and international diplomacy through supporting Somalia, exemplified by its active participation in peace conferences, negotiations, and discussions aimed at resolving the conflict. Notably, Kenya's pivotal role in hosting peace talks and facilitating dialogue among diverse stakeholders was instrumental in fostering a conducive environment for political solutions to emerge. Through leveraging its diplomatic influence, Kenya contributed significantly to regional stability and security efforts in Somalia, underlining its commitment to promoting peace and stability in the Horn of Africa region through constructive diplomatic initiatives.

Kenya's military engagement in Somalia, primarily through its participation in the AMISOM, was pivotal in addressing security challenges posed by extremist groups such as Al-Shabaab. Since its involvement, Kenyan forces played a crucial role in combating these insurgents, contributing significantly to the overall security landscape in Somalia. AMISOM, supported by Kenya, focused on stabilizing key regions, protecting civilians, and supporting the Somali government's efforts to establish governance and security structures. Kenya's intervention not only helped weaken Al-Shabaab's operational capabilities but facilitated humanitarian aid delivery and reconstruction efforts in affected areas. Despite facing challenges such as asymmetrical warfare and logistical complexities, Kenya's military commitment highlighted its strategic role in regional security and its dedication to fostering stability in Somalia. However, the operation raised concerns about prolonged military involvement, the sustainability of peace efforts, and the need for comprehensive political solutions to address underlying grievances and ensure long-term stability in the region.

Kenya was a key provider of humanitarian aid to Somalia, particularly during periods of severe crises such as droughts, famines, and displacement. This assistance played a crucial role in alleviating immediate suffering among Somali communities and bolstered their resilience in the face of recurring humanitarian emergencies. Through coordinated efforts by government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and international partners, Kenya delivered essential supplies including food, water, shelter, and medical aid to vulnerable populations across Somalia's regions. Such humanitarian interventions not only addressed immediate needs but also contributed to long-term stability by preventing further deterioration of living conditions and mitigating the risk of humanitarian catastrophes. Kenya's commitment to humanitarian assistance in Somalia reflected its solidarity with the Somali people and highlighted its role as a regional leader in responding to complex humanitarian challenges. Through leveraging its logistical capabilities and diplomatic relations, Kenya demonstrated a proactive approach in delivering timely aid and advocating for sustained international support to mitigate the impacts of crises in Somalia, thereby contributing to efforts aimed at building resilience and fostering sustainable development in the region.

Kenya's strategic engagement in economic cooperation with Somalia has been pivotal in fostering regional stability and economic development. Through initiatives focused

on trade facilitation and infrastructure development, Kenya enhances connectivity and promotes regional integration, thereby creating conducive conditions for economic growth. Key projects include the construction and improvement of transportation networks such as roads and ports, which not only facilitate the movement of goods and people but also strengthen economic ties between the two nations. Through investing in joint infrastructure projects, Kenya leverages on shared economic interests to bolster stability and prosperity in Somalia, acknowledging that economic cooperation is fundamental to addressing underlying challenges and promoting sustainable development. Moreover, these efforts underline Kenya's commitment to playing a constructive role in the region's economic landscape, fostering mutual benefit and reinforcing diplomatic ties through tangible economic engagements. As Kenya continues to prioritize economic cooperation with Somalia, it remains essential to ensure that these initiatives are inclusive, transparent, and aligned with both nations' long-term development goals, thus laying a foundation for enduring peace and prosperity in the Horn of Africa region.

Conclusion

The study concludes in a confirmation that Kenya had an intricate role in fostering peace and state (re) building in Somalia. Kenya's diplomatic efforts played a significant role in creating a platform for dialogue and political solutions. Military intervention through AMISOM helped improve security and create space for reconstruction. Humanitarian aid delivery and economic cooperation projects further bolstered stability and long-term development.

Recommendations

The study recommends on areas for improvement. The long-term sustainability of peace efforts requires addressing the root causes of conflict and finding political solutions. Military intervention alone cannot guarantee lasting peace. Kenya's continued involvement in Somalia should prioritize supporting political reconciliation and economic development alongside security measures. Additionally, ensuring transparency and inclusivity in economic cooperation projects is crucial for fostering trust and shared prosperity. Through implementing these recommendations, Kenya can further strengthen its positive contributions to Somalia's peace and state (re) building process.

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