

Book Review

Author:	Kenya Defence Forces
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War for Peace: Kenya's Military in the Mission in Somalia, 2012-2020, is a book that takes the reader through the different phases of Kenya-Somali relations, the Somalia conflict and the involvement of the Kenya Defense Forces (KDF) and African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces in the war against terrorism in Somalia. Thematically, the book is divided into three phases; the age of war, the age of war and peace and the age of extremism. It begins with a historical view of the past, present and future of Kenyan troops' engagement in Africa's response to violent extremism in the context of the ever-changing geopolitical environment in the Horn of Africa.

The author puts into perspective the progress made over time, from when the KDF was established to its evolution from a small army into a modern, credible and professional force. The troops defend the country, and their contributions regionally in peace restoration cannot be gainsaid. Chronologically, the author highlights Kenya's historical relations with Somalia through the 'shifta' campaign, the Somali Civil war after 1989, and the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. Finally, the author identifies the key players in internal conflict across the different phases.

As documented in the book, the KDF operations in Somalia started with ‘*Operation Linda Nchi*’, which was the reason for its deployment to degrade Al-Shabaab and its asymmetric warfare. The Kenyan military in Somalia was later placed under AMISOM, the continent’s boldest and riskiest collective security to respond to Jihadi Islamism. The author notes that the forces aim to route the Al-Shabaab, secure and support the internationally recognized government and create an enabling environment for peace and reconciliation. However, it is pointed out that Kenya’s interest was not just to achieve peace through routing the Al-Shabaab. Still, it was meant to curtail cross-border incursion, piracy and robbery at sea, smuggling of contraband and trafficking of humans and weapons, disappearance, torture, murder and other crimes.

The author observes that working under AMISOM, the troops applied smart power, combining hard and soft power. The successful humanitarian development and peace nexus changed the image and perception of the force among the Somali community. The soft strategy deployed was through de-weaponizing water, securing humanitarian support inflow, infrastructural reconstruction, sport and peace-building.

Besides the troops’ successes, the mission in Somalia faces numerous challenges. Through the ‘war on truth’, the author sheds light on the limited or negative reporting that the mission received. The swarming tactic of the al-Shabaab and the negative reporting by Al-Shabaab as a ‘Post-truth era’ strategy of perfecting propaganda war and its tactics of instilling fear to get support. The author also takes a spike at reports by the 2014 UN monitoring Group Report that was not just biased but maliciously painted the KDF forces negatively regarding their involvement in sugar smuggling and charcoal export networks. It also claimed that the report dismissed the KDF’s contribution to the Somali peace as not amounting to anything.

The author concludes by recommending that, with AMISOM’s exit from Somalia, there is need to come up with a post-AMISOM security order and security visions in the Horn of Africa. Comprehensive consultation with clear timelines and

milestones should inform the decision to exit to avoid situations witnessed in Iraq and Afghanistan following the withdrawal of foreign troops. Hurriedly exiting will erode all the achievements and lead to a resurgence of violent extremism and conflict in Somalia.

War for Peace is a well-researched book that is easy to read and informative. It is an invaluable read for students, experts and practitioners of military history, regional security strategy, and peace and conflict studies. Though a few editing errors are noted in some sections, the author provides a different perspective on the inside dynamics of battling terror groups, a subject where very little has been reported or known. It has clear and organized content, and the layout makes the book an interesting read. It is an insightful reflection on the Kenyan's struggle to safeguard its territory and pacify its borders for a meaningful achievement of human security. It demonstrated how as a country, Kenya's success in utilizing a well-designed, coordinated and broad alliance, together with strict training and discipline, responsiveness to technological solutions, and constant modernization of the military. Moving forward, Kenya finds itself in charge of future efforts to stabilize the Horn of Africa for the sake of her own and the interest of the larger region.