

## Debating on Success of the Kenya Counter Insurgency on the Shifta War: Between Double Success and Little Consolation

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### Abstract

Military operations are undertaken to attain specific political and military objectives. However, what amounts to success in military operations remains unclear. Traditionally, operation success was narrowly defined in terms of objectives of the intervention. To 'end human suffering', 'regime change,' 'capture a city,' and 'rescue captured troops.' Modern definition of military success is human centric, based on tenets of just war principle of 'do-more-good than harm.' In this regards, operation success is achieved when and if in the intervention some people who would have died if no military assistance was granted, fail to die because the military intervened. Further, the restorative justice approach evaluates success of military operation in terms of state ability to repair harm committed by the military in the course of the war. The assumption is that military operations result in human rights violation. Using critical discourse analysis, this article interrogates the success of Kenya's political and military objectives in the *Shifta* war against the four possible outcomes in war. First diplomatic and military success. Second, diplomatic and military failure. Third, diplomatic failure but military success and fourth, diplomatic success with military failure. The *Shifta* war having been resolved through a ceasefire, we conclude that decisive military victory was untenable for Kenya without diplomatic efforts. Kenya's double victory and Somalia little consolation was majorly a result of Kenya's successful diplomatic manoeuvre over Somalia's failed international charm.

**Keywords:** Counter insurgency, diplomatic manoeuvre, military operations, *Shifta* war.

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### Introduction

In 1964, a month after independence, the Kenya Armed Forces waged a war against an irredentist movement in the then Northern Frontier District (NFD). This was the *Shifta* war. Kenya first and only irredentist war since independence. Lasting four years with probable over ten thousand deaths. This was one of Kenya's bloodiest war. Over fifty five years later, tales of survivors of the war still attract tremendous scholarly attention, while documentaries on the war make big media headlines. Further, historical accounts and writings of the war speak volumes and illustrate horrors of the military strategy. Some of the most significant writings on the *Shifta* war include works by Hannah Whittaker, Iona M. Lewis, and Nene Mburu among others. There is no doubt that predecessors to this article did commendable work. However, these writings approach the *Shifta* war in terms of causes of the war and military atrocities committed in the course of war as opposed to factors that warranted the military intervention, as well the stated success of the military operation that we attempt to interrogate.

### Causes of the *Shifta* War

The historical development and causes of the *Shifta* war is beyond the scope of this article. We mention, albeit briefly the socio-political agitation between the residents of the Northern Frontier District (NFD), Kenya and Somalia that triggered the war warranting military intervention. The first cause of the *Shifta* war can be deciphered from two opposing perspectives of secession and counter-secession. Throughout history, secessionist's and counter-secessionist's actors have clashed over the internal legitimacy of unilateral declaration of independence. (Muro & Woertz, 2018) The *Shifta* war, was primarily an irredentist's attempts by members of the Somali community living in the NFD, who expressed wish to join their fellow kinsmen in the republic of Somalia. Though Kenyan authorities adopted the term *Shifta* an *Amhaaric* word for bandits in order to depoliticize the irredentist movement and to conceal violence used to suppress the military campaign. (Whittaker, 2012) By irredentism we mean, a type of secession where members of an ethnic group seek to annex part of a territory of one state to the territory of another state because of common ethnicity or prior historical links. Irredentism is distinguished from secession. Secession refers to a process by which a particular group seeks to separate its self from the state to which it belongs and to create a new state. (Buchan, 2007) In the case of the NFD, the Kenyan Somalis owing to shared culture demanded to annex the NFD as 5<sup>th</sup> regional state of the republic of Somalia. The *Shifta* war is therefore irredentist claim as opposed to secession as commonly referred to.

Irredentism and secession is a global tendency of state formation. Since 1945, there have been numerous attempts to secession by groups. These include: Tibet (China); Kashmir (India); East Punjab (India); The Karen

and Shan states (Burma); Turkish Federated State of Cyprus (Cyprus); and Tamil Elam (Sri Lanka) among many more. (Crawford, 1997) Africa is not immune to secessionism. In the 1960s, there was the Katanga province that proclaimed its independence from the republic of Congo in July 11, 1960 under Moise Tshombe. (Mockler, 1987) The state of Biafra attempted to secede from Nigeria in 1967. (Tamuno, 1970) Other secession attempts in Africa include South Sudan (Sudan) and Somaliland (Somalia). In all these cases, the governments in question have opposed the decision to secede warranting military interventions. (Crawford, 1997)

There are theoretical explanations of secession. A glimpse at any two theories will illustrate the justification of the people of NFD to demand secession from Kenya. The first school is the rational choice theory. The rational choice theory assumes that people make mathematical decision whether to secede or not. Through mathematical analysis, they estimate the value of secession in terms of individual and group preferences. (Buchan, 2006) This may be a promise of inclusion, economic development and provision of civil liberties. If the benefits are more than the risks, secession is worth undertaking. Hence the groups demand secession at all costs. The second school of thought, the rights only theory, emphasizes that secession is just and considered as the only recourse to rectify grave historical injustices a community faces. (Buchan, 2006) Under the rights only theories, Buchan argues that groups have a general right to secede if and only if, it has suffered certain injustices, for which secession is the best cause of action and last resort to address the past injustices. (Buchan, 1997) The case of the NFD can be demonstrated along these theoretical underpinnings as follows.

In the eve to Kenya's independence, the Somalis living in Kenya had chosen to separate and to join the larger Republic of Somalia. They were prodded by Somalia government to secede but Kenyan authorities would hear none of it. The desire to secede was informed by a cultural feelings. The Somali living in the then Northern Frontier District (NFD) of Kenya exhibit the social cultural characteristics as their brothers living in the Somali republic or Ethiopia. They speak the same language with very little dialectal variation. The Somali further share a history that cannot be altered by the artificial state boundaries created by the colonialists. They also belong to the same clan. They are further united by the bond of Islam.

The *Shifita* war was also a result of failure to implement the report of the Commission of Inquiry set up to carry out a referendum to verify the desire of the Somali community in NFD. The commission established that five out of the six sub-districts: Garissa, Wajir, Mandera, Moyale and Isiolo favoured Secession. This was approximately 86 percent of all the people in NFD. The British administration failed to recognize the results of the referendum. Britain argued that the wishes of the people of NFD went against the international practice of states. In that the positive international law outlawed the right of groups to separate unilaterally from the state of which they form a part by simple expression of wish. (Crawford, 1997) For this reason, irredentist claims were thwarted both diplomatically and militarily against the wishes of the people of NFD.

The irredentist claims in NFD were also closely linked to the pan-Somalia nationalism. Pan-Somalia nationalism refers to the notion that the Somali people shared a common language, religion, culture and ethnicity, and as such constitute a nation unto themselves. The ideology was based on the concept of 'Greater Somalia'. The vision of reunifying all Somali living in different areas outside the republic of Somalia into a single Somali nation. The ideology can be traced back to the Dervish movement. An armed resistance against institutionalization of colonialism in Somalia from 1989 to 1920 founded by the *Salihyya Sufi* Muslim poet and militant leader, Mohammed Abdullah Hassan. (Metz, 1993). The first Somali nationalist political organization founded based on this ideology was the Somali National Society (SNS) established in 1935 in the former British Somaliland. The SNS was reorganized into a political party in 1957 as renamed Somali National League. (Touval, 1964) Another movement that championed similar ideology, was the Somali Youth Club (SYC) founded in 1943 in the neighbouring Italian Somaliland. The SYC was later renamed the Somali Youth League (SYL) in 1947. (Abdulahi, 2001) According to Schraender (1998), Somalia was an icon of the nationalism in Africa in the 1960s. The rise of Somalia nationalism was due to two major factors. First, the rise of new generation of political leaders determined to emancipate Somalia from foreign control after independence. (Zarman, 1995) Secondly, the rise of self-interest among post-independence political leaders who despite being divided along clans, used the rhetoric of nation-building to guarantee their quest for power. (Schraender, 1998) These political organizations therefore advocated for unity under 'Greater Somalia'. Their earlier demands for secession were defeated by the colonial forces in 1948.

The pan-Somalia nationalist movements in mainland Somalia inspired the people of NFD. They in return founded several Pan-Somalism organizations in 1960s, when it became apparent that Britain and Italian Somaliland were to be jointly granted independence to form the republic of Somalia. Led by the National Province Peoples Progressive Party (NPPPP), these groups made numerous petitions to the British administration seeking to secede from Kenya. Their petitions were popular in the NFD, but opposed by other regions in Kenya. The NPPPP leaders were also motivated by the political propaganda that the flag of the Republic of Somalia had five stars. The first three stars represented Somaliland, Puntland and Jubaland. The other two stars represented the NFD and the Ogaden in Ethiopia. Inspired by this propaganda, nothing including war could stop Somalis in NFD from seceding into the republic of Somalia.

Thinking of the *Shifita* war as irredentism obscures the role of colonial legacy in the creation of the arbitrary boundaries. During the struggle and partition of Africa, the Somali, largely Cushites and pastoralist were lumped together with Bantu agricultural communities despite cultural differences. The genealogical distinction between these groups were racialized under the British colonial rule. The British authorities treated the Somali as culturally and biologically distinct from the other Kenyan communities called native population, (Bestman, 1969)

The colonial government had prior to the independence of Kenya expressed fear that the arbitrary boundaries will lead to disputes among communities. According to the Lords debate of 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1963, lumping Somali communities and other Kenyan tribes amounted to serious territorial absurdity. The Earl of Lytton, claimed that if the (British) government put Somalis under the Kenya administration then the British Secretary of colony was leaving Kenya in a terrible legacy. For there was bound to rise of dragons who would put Kenya in an impossible position. For fear of altering disputed boundary as require by the principle of inviolability of state boundaries, the matter was never adjudicated by Britain. Instead, Britain chose to remain neutral and allow the two states to solve the boundary dispute. (HL Deb, 1963)

Another factor that contributed to the *Shifita* war was marginalization of the NFD under colonialism. The NFD was an expansive arid area. To ascertain how expansive and marginalized the region was, it is important to conceptualize the region called NFD. The region known hereunder as NFD of Kenya, was alongside Jubaland incorporated into the East African protectorate in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century after the British Foreign Office took over the running of the Imperial British East African Company. Since the region was arid and expanse, the IBAC considered the region non profitable to govern. It therefore exercised a “hands off” policy towards northern Kenya. This policy did not however, live for long. In 1909, the British administration under Governor Sir Percy Girouard took effective control of the region beyond the mere policing of “red line”. It declared the hitherto nameless territory as the Northern Frontier District of Kenya. The boundaries of NFD then extended from Lake Rudolf (Turkana) on the West, Abyssinia on the north, and Uaso Nyiro River and Meru on the South. (Waweru, 2006) This boundary delimitation was accentuated by Mburu, who argues that the NFD originally composed of all the region stretching from Lake Turkana in the west to the Somali border in East. (Mburu, 1999)

In 1925, the British colonial government in Kenya placed NFD under civilian control and declared it as closed district. Meaning that movement in and out of the region was restricted to all. Except for a few licensed traders and visitors with special passes. As closed district the NFD did not have political representation. The colonial government also marginalized the area by establishing inadequate infrastructure. The area was also sparsely populated to be policed by the few colonial administrators. Due to lack of political representation, the area did present its memoranda to the 1945 Lyttleton constitution. Which recommended for multi-racial government in Kenya. Where Africans were to have a significant voice.

### **Political and Military Motives of the Counter Insurgency**

Secession demands do not always lead to armed violence. Governments sometimes respond to separatism with negotiations and political concessions. (Butt, 2017) However, sovereign states in most cases respond to secession claims with force. Butt, argues that states respond violently to secessionist movements if the potential state would pose a greater threat. Further, states perceive future war as likely if the potential new state is made of ethnic group with deep identity division with the central state. War is also likely if the country in which secession is sought falls in a region experiencing general state of violence or instability. (Butt, 2017) As in the case of the NFD, the Horn of Africa was experiencing instability due to perennial banditry.

Threats to internal security was one of the reason that warranted Kenya military intervention in the *Shifita* war. The new post-colonial government viewed the irredentist claims as threat to national security. Article 238 (1) of the Constitution of Kenya defines national security as the protection against internal and external threats to Kenya’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, its people, their rights, freedoms, property, peace, stability and prosperity, and other national interests. The first element of national security is territorial integrity. As nation, Kenya had to ensure the permanent inviolability of her national territory through effective control by the state. This included the preservation of the country’s geographic territory, economic endowment and defence from both external and internal incursions. In the traditional security, threats to national security ought to be suppressed militarily. (Treinovskis & Jefimovsm, 2012)

The second motive of the intervention was to halt the state of lawlessness in the NFD that hindered the provision of political goods in the region. To this, the government described the secessionist claims as criminal acts of banditry. Banditry and cattle rustling were forbidden. The New English Dictionary (NED) defines bandit as “one who is proscribed or outlawed; hence, a lawless desperate marauder, and organized gangs. According to Mburu, banditry had pervasive and devastating effect on an already politically fragile NFD. (Mburu, 1999). Security agencies therefore intervened because crime control was difficult and complicated. Furthermore, each sovereign state is the central repository of all legal power and law enforcement agencies capable of crime control. (Lambard, 1968)

The third motive of the Kenya military intervention was to deter future irredentist and secession claims.

Secession claims over NFD were dangerous if grunted. It would have set precedence for neighbouring states like Uganda and Tanzania that had boundary dispute with Kenya. (Okoth, 2010) The irredentism also coincided with the continental debate in Africa over legitimacy of colonial borders. Leaders from African countries experiencing boundary disputes came to a common agreement over the need to keep colonial boundaries intact. Julius Nyerere, the first president of Tanzania said, "The borders of African states are so absurd, there is no choice but consider them sacrosanct." (Laitin, 1998) In the OAU meeting held in Congo, the leaders condemned the irredentist claims over NFD. They gave Kenya the mandated to implement the OAU proclamation on the principle on inviolability of its territory.

The fourth factor that warranted the military intervention in NFD was the securitization of the secession demands by "winners" of independence of Kenya. The NFD was estimated to be a half of Kenya and twice the size of England. Though the region was virtually a desert and inhabited by one-thirtieth of the population of Kenya, the new post-independence regime was not willing to lose an inch of her land to any country. The process of securitization was fortified in the words of President Jomo Kenyatta when he said: "We will covet no inch of our neighbour's territory. We will yield no inch of ours. We stand loyal to OAU and its solemn decision that all African states shall adhere to the boundaries inherited at independence." (Orwa, 1990) The presidential proclamation securitized the secession claims triggering the military into action.

According to securitization theory, issues that become securitized represent issues where someone was successful in constructing an issue into an existential problem. (Buzan, 1998) Securitization theorists assert that successfully securitized subjects receive disproportionate amounts of attention and resources compared to unsuccessfully securitized subjects. Securitization as a process involves three components: first, a securitizing actor or agent: an entity that makes the securitizing move or statement or speech. Two, a referent object: an object or ideal that is being threatened and needs to be protected. Third, an audience: the target of the securitization act that needs to be persuaded and accept the issue as a security threat. (Williams, 2003) Power structures in securitization process play an important role in determining its success. Likely securitizing agents of national security include, the Presidents and Defence Minister or other military elites. As the Commander-in-Chief, the presidential decree on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1963 was sufficient to commandeer the army into action.

The military also intervened for purely political and prestige reasons of the country owning a vast territory. Since the NFD region was considered valueless, the government sought to protect the expansive region in order to preserve state power rather than for economic gain. According to Hansard of the Lords' debate in 1963, it was difficult to ascertain why Jomo Kenyatta, and the other politicians in the Lancaster Conference were so keen to retain NFD despite its unviability. Compared to Katanga province seeking secession from Congo, NFD in Kenya was economically valueless. (HL Deb, 1963) In denying Katanga secessionist claims, the British authorities argued that if Katanga was permitted to secede, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for a Congolese government to manage its affairs since Katanga was the richest province of the Congo. Economic reasons being not part of the Kenya argument against secession, left prestige of owning an extra territory as the only reason why Kenyan leaders opposed secession of the NFD.

Kenyan leaders' feared loss of territory would diminish the country's power. Hans Morgenthau as quoted by Faris defines international politics as a struggle for power. (Faris, 1995) Power therefore played a central role in Kenya-Somalia boundary dispute. Political scientist principally use 'power' in terms of an actor's ability to exercise influence over other actors within the international system. This influence can be coercive, attractive, cooperative or competitive. Mechanisms to influence power include the threat or use of force, economic sanctions, and diplomacy. According to Keohane and Nye, military force is an effective instrument of power. (Faris, 1995) There are different types of power in international politics, namely, material, military, reputational and motivational power. Material power is the first and most important. In material power, economic power is the most vital followed by nation's territorial asset which includes: its geography, size, location, climate and physical features as its natural resources. Population is the yet another factor that determines material power of a nation. Therefore, loss of substantial part of Kenya's territory and population meant loss of the country's material power.

The second type of power is military power. It refers to the size of the state armed forces. The quantity and quality of weaponry, the training, morale, organization and leadership of the military. It thus consist both of hardware and software. A state may have considerable material assets, but if it cannot successfully convert them into armed might, or any other instrument of foreign policy, then its ability to act in foreign affairs is limited. Military operations and success in such operation is one of the way the state utilizes her military to achieve her interest. The *Shifita* war provided the opportune to exercise and test the Kenya's military power.

Motivational power refers to the willingness of a government to take an active part in world politics. Especially its determination to resolve conflicts in its favour. Reputation refers to the country's track record in world affairs, its persevered ability to accomplish the goals it sets for itself. Reputation of power, is power because it draws with it the adherence of those who need protection. Reputational powers reassures citizens that the state is capable to provide protection. It also reassures neighbouring states. Inability to protect the country

against claims of cessation would have been detrimental to Kenya's reputation as regional power. Kenya was a regional industrial and economic hub created by colonialism. Cessation would mean that Kenya's ability to exert a strategic degree of influence as regional power was bound to diminish. A reputation of military success highly influences state power in international affairs. States can also gain reputation from peaceful efforts.

The fifth factor that warranted military action in the *Shifita* war was the subversive influence of the Somalia republic in the conflict. During the *Shifita* war 1963-1967, Somalia openly backed the *shifita* secessionist movements. Radio Mogadishu and Somali based newspapers carried stories and commentaries extolling the efforts of the *Shifita* (bandits) and called on the rest of the Somali population in Kenya to rise against their own government. Somalia also printed and distributed maps of 'Greater Somalia' as propaganda to front the need to unify all the Somalis in the Horn of Africa. Dr. Abdirashid Ali Sharmarky, Somalia's Prime Minister, 1960-1964, expressed dissatisfaction that the Ogaden and NFD were in Ethiopia and Kenya respectively. He aspired to reclaim back these territories. A call that was embraced by the people of NFD. Resident therefore, volunteered conscription into army to champion this course. According to Mohammed Guyo, the then regional representative for Isiolo South, about 4, 000 males aged between 18 and 40 years voluntarily trooped to Bells Qoqane and Ras Kamboni for military training. They travelled on board Somalia vehicles. They trained to ensure that Kenya gave up the control of the NFD. The first group of trainee graduates returned back in 1961 to wage war. The timing of the military onslaught was well calculated to coincide with Kenya preoccupation for negotiations for independence. (The Standard, 2011)

Ethnic mobilization to violence and boycott the 1963 general election was yet another factor that warranted military operation in the region. As stipulated in the Lancaster Conference, Legislative election were to be held in British Kenya from 18<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> May, 1963. Whereas many parts of the country geared towards the very first General election, the opinion of the Somali inhabitants of the NFD was divided as far as the election were concerned. Some leaders especially pro-secessionist called for boycott of the elections while others were opposed. As the May 1963 elections approached, the pro-secession chiefs, elders and politicians increasingly responded negatively towards the forthcoming elections. The NPPP indicated its intention to boycott the election if their demands for secession were not granted. The national treasurer of the NPPP Abdi Rashid Khalif warned that if secession claims were prevented, the people of NFD would "die in order to achieve their aims" Other leaders in the region also publically expressed their solidarity with the party. (Whittaker, 2012)

Though the boycott of election was not criminal, it was yet another political reason that prompted military intervention in NFD. The call for election boycott ushered violent criminal activities. It is argued that the general state of insecurity and violence witnessed immediately after the boycott of elections was sufficient enough to warrant military intervention. The hardliners were unwilling to compromise. They engaged in riots and violent demonstrations in Wajir and Garissa. Such riots spread fear among citizen in NFD. The riots also intensified in the eve to the election. On the polling day, approximately one thousand, Somali youths wielding knives, machetes, and spears, rocks and slings allegedly raided a polling station. They also ordered people on the queues waiting to vote to leave the polling stations. Election related violence also increased after elections culminating to the assassination of District Commissioner (DC) Wabera and Senior Chief Haji Galm Deda. (Whittaker, 2012)

The assassination of political leaders such as the first NFD DC was another factor linked to military intervention. After 70 years of colonial domination, Kenya attained independence under Mzee Jomo Kenyatta in 1963. The mood of the country was euphoric in most parts of the republic except in NFD. Whereas, most parts of the country eagerly waited for the new crop of young African to steer the leadership of the country, residents of NFD were nervous, unsure of what the new state would have for them. A few months prior to independence in 1962, their desire to break away from Kenya to join Somalia had been defeated in the referendum. The British colonial office had also not accented to their demands. The new political leadership in Kenya would hear none of their wishes. (The Standard, 2011) Despite all these, many residents of NFD were still determined to defy the government and secede.

In order to deal with the resentment among the pro-secessionist group after elections, Jomo Kenyatta, then the designated Prime Minister, on January 15, 1963 authorized the posting of Daudi Dabasso Wabera, a native of NFD, as the DC of Isiolo. It was hoped that the appointment of a local as the DC would foster peace and harmony. As well as go a long way in winning the hearts and minds of the people in the region. The new DC, was tasked to hold a series of meetings to convince as many Kenyan Somalis as possible, that all would be well under the new independent Kenya. He was also to assure the residents, that they would not be molested if they chose to remain in Kenya. However, the government's wish did not go well with the residents. Disgruntled conspirators began to hatch plans to assassinate the DC. A few days after Kenya marked its first *Madaraka* (self-internal rule) celebrations, Wabera visited Sericho for a meeting. In his company was the area Chief, Galma Dido. As the government agents wound up their speeches, three assassins patiently lay in wait. When the DC entourage left, the three gun men, believed to have been on the orders of the then Somali Prime Minister Abdirahid Ali Sharmarke, singled out the two administrators and shot them. The security aide attached to the slain DC escaped unhurt. The assassins then drove towards the Kenya-Somalia border. The news of Wabera and

Chief Dido's assassination reached Isiolo the following day. The killing of the two civil servants caused panic and a chain of reaction from the government. The police begun to massive security operations to bring to book the assassins. The security situation worsened forcing the government to declare a state of emergency. (The Standard, 2011)

### **The *Shifita* Campaigns**

The *Shifita* campaigns commenced soon after the declaration of Kenya's independence from British on 12<sup>th</sup> December, 1963. Throughout the period between 1964 and 1967 there were serious armed skirmishes between the irredentist movement and the Kenya army. The attacks translated into massive loss of life on both sides. The forward operational bases of the irredentist movement were in Dolo, Lugh Gonana, Baydhabo, and Baidoa. The Kenya army battalions established operation bases in the major towns of the area. These areas acted as the battle field of the *Shifita* campaigns. The *shifitas* strategically operated in small groups of 20 to 100, and were also divided into pockets and raiding squads of 15 to 45 armed militia. (Biwot, 1992) The militia engaged in ambushes and laying mines. Key roads like the Isiolo-Modogashe-Wajir were heavily mined. The *shifita* also attacked regular and administration police posts in the area. They also raided homes and shops. They also destroyed infrastructure including bridges and other equipment using bazookas to hamper the motorised military operation.

In the initial stages of the campaign, Kenya's young army and government did not have the necessary infrastructure and manpower to suppress the insurgency. The military therefore, suffered serious setbacks in the early phases of the operation. The military impediments was occasioned by a host of factors. First and foremost, the army lacked local support and adequate intelligence network. Secondly, the army was not tactically prepared for conflict. Third, the army encountered a challenge of staging a two-pronged attack by the Somalis in Ogaden, Ethiopia, and those from Somalia who had formed a strong irredentist's force to fight Kenya. (Biwot, 1992)

Another set of drawback for the Kenya army was the adverse weather conditions and terrain constraints. The temperatures during the day were sometimes very high and unbearable. It made it almost impossible to operate during the day. During the rainy seasons, road transport was brought to a complete stand still. Floods literary engulfed the battle fields. There was also challenge of lack of adequate geographical knowledge about the vast semi-arid NFD. The military did not have updated maps, as well as the partial inability to read and interpret them, added to the existing difficulties. Further the command structure and particularly the top military cadre was composed of the remnants of the British officer corps, whose level of patriotism and commitment to the conflict was below par. The immediate 'Kenyanization' of the army, that included the replacement of top command British elements by Africans, improved the situation significantly. In the Kenyanization process, experienced section commanders and platoon sergeants were promoted to platoon commanders. The warrant officers were also elevated as fully-fledged officers. These newly promoted platoon commanders led men into triumphant battles against the scattered pro-secessionist fighting forces. (Biwot, 1992)

Whereas the Kenya military suffered operational challenges in early phase of the counter-insurgency, the Somalis irredentist were shrewder in their tactics and approach throughout this period. They had the advantage of local support from the people and the ability to adapt to the environment. They had sufficient geographical knowledge about the area and did not experience any problems with the climate, since they all grew up in the same climatic conditions. The *shifita* also benefited from the support it received from the central government of Somalia as well as from some former colonialists and Arab sympathizers. (Biwot, 1992) The *shifita* also benefited from the members of the Somali dissenting the Kenya Armed Forces to back the quest of secession.

The *shifita* advance and fighting party was very much organized and flawless. It demonstrated advance training and coordination. The convoys were transported using camels. The logistic camels would move in tactical waves. The first wave would be composed of spies, followed by the deception party of a well-armed squad, then a small element as an early warning squad moving in column of route. Finally the main body followed with armed guards on the flanks. The basic composition of the convoys was logistics, fighters and families.

Any attack against the *shifita* convoys would be met fiercely with the beating of tins by the families. This alerted the main fighting elements who would then either engaging from the rear or envelope the Kenya security forces. All these activities were concurrent and were intended to confuse the Kenyan forces. The drumming was also strategic deceptive move intended to commit the Kenyan side into action. The cries accompanying the drumming would sometimes create confusion and throw the Kenya army into total disarray. This provided time for the main irredentist movement force to move as fast as possible away from the scene of attack. During extremely difficult situations, they would use the rear guard to engage the Kenyan forces while their main force was disengaging from the main battle ground. The *shifita* never engaged in decisive battles, but instead preferred to hit hard, inflict heavy casualties, and retreat into thick bushes. Their main focus of effort was the capture of heavy weapons, and the destruction of trucks, as well as armoured fighting vehicles, used by Kenyan troops.

The movement of logistics and families was confined to evenings, moonlit nights, and pre-dawn hours.

Based on their intelligence, they had learned the habits of the Kenyan fighting forces. Kenyan forces confined operational activities to 8.00 a.m. through to 5.00 p.m. in the afternoon. The Kenyan troops never operated at night other than conducting limited ambush activities at specific areas reported to be the main irredentist routes. In most cases, the ambushes were laid near bore holes where they would bring their camels to drink water at night. This created enormous problems for the Kenyan troops because there was no distinct difference between the *Shiftas* and the indigenous people from the region. However, these problems were eventually overcome through liaison and coordination with loyal administrative personnel employed by the government. (Biwot, 1992)

Oral interviews with retired Kenya army soldiers who participated in the Wagalla war revealed that the *shifita* used military tactics that resonated well with the locality. The use of camels as troop carrier was sophisticated. The *shifita* tactically strapped marksmen on camels from where they engaged Kenyan forces. The camels shielded the bandits from fire. The camels were also a perfect concealment. (Biwot, 1992) Intelligence on these weird tactics was discovered long after. When the government employed locals as home guards to fight alongside the Kenya army.

The main weapons carried by these secessionist forces were the AK 47 rifle, the G3 Heckler and Koch, the AK 47 machine gun, and bazookas. Other weapons were old Second World War rifles such as the Mark 3 and Mark 4. The bazookas were mainly used to immobilize the trucks while the machine guns were used for fire suppression. At later stages in the campaign, they began using three-fused, high explosive anti-tank mines made in Italy. There were two different types of mines used by the *shifita*. One with three fuses, and the other with four fuses. These mines were mainly obtained from the Italians sympathizing with secession and from the Arab world. The Somali irredentist fighters also obtained assault weapons from Arab nations and Eastern European countries such as Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Soviet Union.

The mines devastated the Kenyan transport assets, thus forcing them to change the mode of operation from mounted troops to cross country-foot operations. This had a tremendous drawback on the overall fighting effectiveness, the motivation, and in the general morale of the troops. The shortage of vehicles and breakdowns, exacerbated by bad weather conditions, together with the anti-tank mine dilemma made it almost impossible for operations to be conducted deep in enemy areas.

The Somali irredentists would never attack without adequate intelligence. The militia initial effort was geared to the gathering of sufficient intelligence from sympathetic locals at least one week in advance. The same locals were also used to carry out a disinformation activity aimed at misleading the Kenyan forces regarding their intentions and their disposition. Sometimes they would use their agents to lead Kenyan forces into a pre-planned ambush areas.

Occasionally, the bandits planned raids in homes and shopping centres to try and obtain food for their troops. The secessionist fighters would not break or steal from shops of fellow Somalis but mainly the Boran and the Gurreh's shops. These two communities were not considered as Somalis though the Gurrehs spoke both languages, Boran and Somali. This development contributed to another dimension of serious animosity between the secessionist fighters and the local people who manifestly supported them. Subsequently, support slowly shifted from total support of the secessionist activity to supporting Kenyan troops.

After a four years of vigorous joint effort by the Kenyan military, the para-military forces and the police, the Somali irredentist fighters were defeated. Kenya had three infantry battalions at this time. These included: the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> battalions. Kenya also had one support regiment. In addition, there were also three companies of para-military forces. The Kenya military deployed her troops in posts established in the towns of Mandera, Garissa, and Wajir. Outposts were subsequently also organized at Buna, Gurar, Moyale, and Malka-Mari. The *shifita*'s inherent problems, which contributed to Kenya's success, was their long lines of communication aggravated by their inability to resupply their fighting forces with ammunition and arms. They were forced to withdraw back to Somalia in order to reorganize, replenish, and regroup with a view to striking again. The bandits further suffered from withdrawal of external support. While the reduction in outside support (by Somalia) also helped, a coordinated military, political, psychological and diplomatic campaign was necessary to counter the insurgency. The secessionist movement finally conceded defeat in 1967. Since there were no indicators of total peace in the area, the Kenyan forces remained in region until 1980s awaiting the possible re-launching of the irredentist activity.

### **Kenya's Military and Diplomatic Success in the anti-Shifta Campaigns**

In this section we debate success of Kenya's political and military strategy in *Shifita* war against the four possible outcomes in war as outlined by Bakich, (2014). These include: first diplomatic and military success also referred to as double success. Second, diplomatic and military failure regarded as double failure. Third, diplomatic failure but military success. This is phrased as "win the battle, lose the war". Finally, diplomatic success with military failure also known as little consolation. We commence by affirming that the *Shifita* campaign was a full blown out war that needed a multifaceted approach encompassing of Kenya army's tactical offensive, political economic handling of the NFD as well as exercise of shuttle diplomacy to win.

Kenya's first president, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta therefore declared a two fold front anti-*Shifita* campaign in order to tame wanton insecurity in the region. First, the government reacted by declaring a state of emergency. The declaration of the state of emergency in December 1963 was followed by a joint police-military operation. The motive of the operation was to contain the situation and particularly to protect the inhabitants of the region from attack by the *Shifita*. The government of Kenya undertook several military operations against the *shifita*. The military initiatives included Operation *Maliza Shifita* (destroy bandits), Operation *Fagia Shifita* (clear the bandits) and Operation *Shambulia Sana* (reinforce the effort). The operations by the military took the shape of search and destroy where troops specifically hunted down the rebels and their sympathizers. Routine use of personal automatic rifles was often replaced by explosives like mortars, grenades and landmines. Besides, the Kenya Armed Forces, Britain, Kenya's ally used more than 4,000 British soldiers to secure its interests in post-independent Kenya through a military exercise dubbed "*Operation Sharp Panga*" (sharp machete) in NFD.

The *anti-Shifita* campaign was the most sustained and biggest military campaign exercise undertaken by Kenya since independence. The operation was also dangerous since the army had to fight an armed guerrillas who were in a familiar territory and who enjoyed sanctuary in the neighbouring country. The operation was also demanding, because Somalia did not only supply the necessary arms and logistics to the militia but received military support from the Soviet Union and by extension from the Communist China.

There was also massive propaganda during the war. Much of the propaganda centred on reporting of casualties. Both Somalia and Kenya distorted facts about the toll of the war. Excerpts from the Kessing's Contemporary Archives indicate that both sides exaggerated and equally denied the casualties. For instance, on 7<sup>th</sup> March 1967, the Somali authorities claimed that twenty four Kenyan soldiers had been killed by the *shifitas* and nineteen others wounded in two separate engagements. On the Somalia side, three Somali nationalists and four Somali soldiers had died. Kenya denied the reports arguing that twenty seven members of the National Liberation Front had been killed. On 8<sup>th</sup> May 1967, the Kenyan Ministry of Defence announced that nineteen *shifitas* were killed. Several leaders had also surrendered. On 14<sup>th</sup> May 1967, Kenyan authorities further reported death of thirty two *shifitas* and many others wounded.

In addition, the Kenya government on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1967 repudiated a statement by the Somali Minister of Defence claiming that eighteen Somali citizens were murdered by Kenyan forces inside Somalia. Three months later, on 18<sup>th</sup> August 1967 the Kenyan Ministry of Defence announced the death of forty three *shifitas* and three soldiers in a clash with more than 800 *shifitas* at Rhamu. Dr. Njoroge Mungai, the Kenyan Minister of Defence, said that Kenya could account for 3,000 *shifitas*, of whom 1,200 had been killed in spell of four years. (Kessing, 1967) Despite the propaganda accompanying casualty reporting, sources indicate that the casualty on the Kenya side was also considerate. Most of the deaths on the Kenyan side were sustained from the explosion of the landmines laid by the *Shifita* along the major transport routes than actual combat with the insurgents.

The second counter-insurgency approach adopted by Kenya was non-military. It had to do with winning the hearts and minds of the people in and outside Kenya. Inside Kenya, the most important effort was to appease the people of NFD. The first strategy for Kenya was to counter media propaganda by Radio Mogadishu. The Somali national radio station led media campaign aimed at fomenting disaffection among the Somali in Kenya. Secondly, the Kenya government acknowledged from the beginning that the people of north eastern province had been marginalised during colonialism. As the leader of Kenya African National Union (KANU), Kenyatta visited Mogadishu as early as July 1962 to brief the Somalia government on the views of Kenya leaders in regard the people of NFD upon independence. While stressing that there would be no secession, Kenyatta made it clear that Kenya was out to cooperate with NFD to undertake joint development projects. Kenyatta's sentiments were also echoed by the then Minister of Defence of Kenya Dr. Njoroge Mungai, who told parliament in March 1965 that, "The solution of the problem in the north eastern province did not lie in fighting. Kenya believes in peace and we are going to emphasize development in the area. The troops and armament was a temporary measure." (Weekly Review, 1980)

To win the hearts and minds, the government rolled out several development programmes in the area. Water projects for nomadic people were started. Kenyatta also appointed Somalis into senior government positions. The government albeit reluctantly also recruited locals as home guards to assist the security forces track the bandits. The development projects and employment into the civil service were meant to counter the propaganda spread by the Somali based radio station widely listened in the area. In due course, Kenya strategic initiatives paid off.

There were also hearts and souls to be won outside Kenya. In the international diplomatic front, Kenyatta reached out to USA. As long-time friend to Kenya, the US edged the Soviet support for Somalia. The US policy of containment of communism exercised during this period also worked well for Kenya. Kenya also reached out to Britain her former colonial master and France who administered Puntland. Kenya also reached out to the Arab nations through Egypt under Colonel Gamal Abdul Nasser. In addition, Kenya made a ministerial delegation to Egypt to brief Nasser on the status of the *Shifita* war. Daniel Arap Moi the then Vice-president of Kenya also visited Cairo on 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> May, 1967. During the visit, Moi handed President Nasser an invitation from President



Kenyatta that urged him to come to Kenya in order to gain a first-hand impression of the boundary dispute. Though the invitation was declined, Kenya had luck in Egypt. Egypt decided not only, to cut off supply of defence arms including land mines, rifles and other small arms to Somalia, but also tried to convince other Arab nations withdraw support offered to Somalia. At about the same time, Dr. Mungai visited Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Persia, where he asked for a stricter check on private arms smuggling to Somalia. The shuttle diplomacy paid. As the countries withdrew their support for Somalia, Kenya was able to build up her arsenal to wedge out Somalia.

Kenya also needed the support of the leadership of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). During the Second Lancaster conference, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, had promised that Kenya would seek peaceful means to resolve the conflict. He also indicated that Kenya will subject the matter to the OAU for adjudication, if Somalia and Kenya failed resolve the conflict. Immediately after the outbreak of the war, Kenya reached out to the OAU. The 1964 OAU Heads of State meeting held in Cairo reiterated the principles of inviolability of territorial boundaries in Africa. This vindicated Kenya's position. The OAU also termed Somalia's action as violation of territorial integrity of Kenya. On 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 1967, Dr. Nyoro Mungai, also promised that Kenya would re-establish normal bilateral relations with Somalia as soon as Somalia renounced all claims of NFD. Three months later, President Kenyatta of Kenya and Mr. Mohammed Ibrahim Egal, the Prime Minister of Somalia meet during the OAU Heads of State meeting in Kinshasa. President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia acted as mediator. In the meeting, the two leaders committed to end the border fighting. True to their words, the two leaders signed a ceasefire in Arusha on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1967. The Arusha memorandum was part of the implementation of the agreement reached between the governments of Kenya and Somalia at the 5<sup>th</sup> Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU held in Kinshasa.

The signing of Arusha memorandum had two diplomatic implications. On one hand, it was victory for Kenya and loss for Somalia. Mogadishu reacted to the new found relationship between Somalia and Kenya with protests. The reaction of the republic of Somalia to the signing of the Arusha memorandum demonstrated that the Somalia administration was compelled to fulfil Kenya's political will. Prime Minister Egal's return to Mogadishu from Arusha, was received by hostile protests. On 14<sup>th</sup> November 1967, the former Prime Minister of Somalia Mr. Abdirizak Hadji Hussein, speaking in his capacity as secretary-general of the ruling Somali Youth League, violently attacked the Arusha agreement. The Somali government thereupon closed down the Mogadishu branch of the Youth League, and threatened to expel Mr. Egal from the party. After ten days of debate, the Somali Parliament endorsed the Arusha memorandum on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1967. (The Weekly Review, 1975)

On the other hand, the signing of Arusha memorandum was diplomatic plus for Somalia. It affirmed Somalia intention to resolve the disputes peacefully. As sign of good gesture, Addis Ababa and Mogadishu on September 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1967 released a communiqué that the two countries had resolved to "eliminate all forms of tension" between the two states. The diplomatic goodwill taken by the Mogadishu safeguarded Somalia against international ridicule and also served to reassure the OUA over the Somalia's good intentions. It also insulated Somalia from condemnation as "anti-African" by the OAU Assembly of Heads of States.

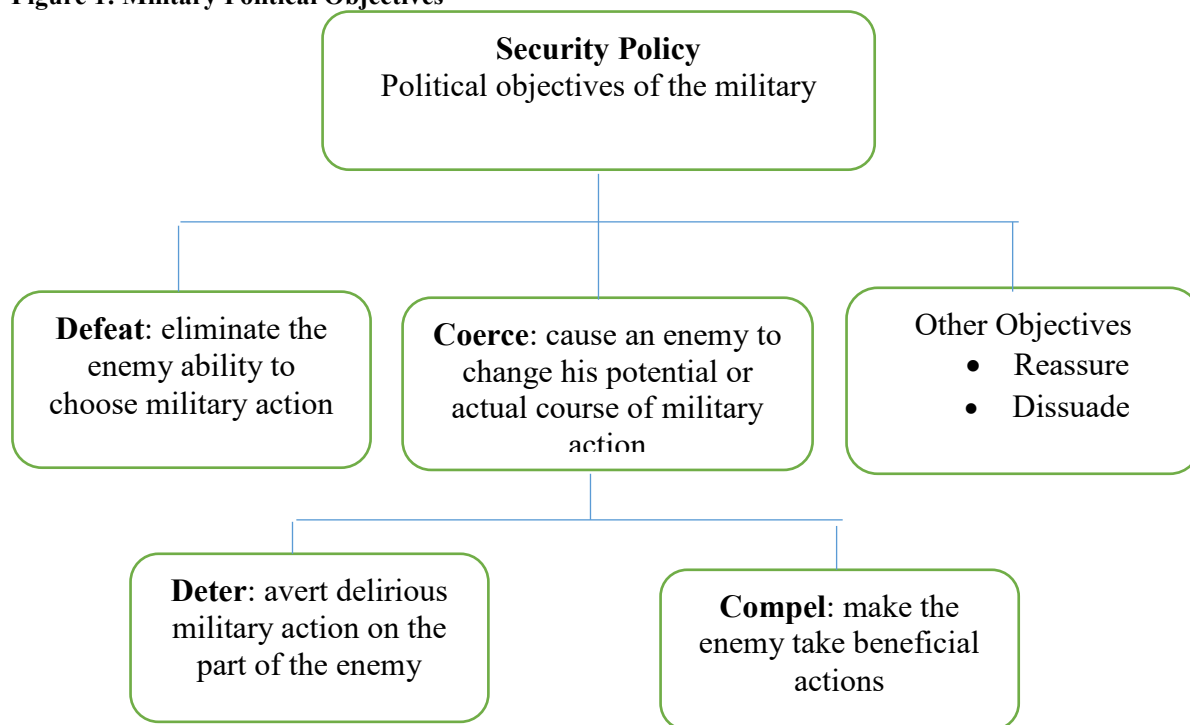
It was the two pronged, military and diplomatic, pressure which finally earned Kenya victory in the *Shifita* war. In mid-1967 after four years of gruelling, the Kenya Armed Forces took clear control of the situation. Many of the bandits had been killed. Some had surrendered. While others had escaped into Somalia. What was left for the army, was clearance of pockets of former secessionist fighters and hundreds of land mines planted by the unsuccessful bandits. By October 1967, Somalia was also convinced that her military was not able to acquire the aspired territory by force. (The Weekly Review, 1977) The conflict was therefore, ripe for resolution. Diplomatic efforts having worked in her favour, Kenya begun to push the Republic of Somalia to denounce any territorial aspiration in respect to Kenya. Somalia also disbanded the High Command of the Northern Frontier District Liberation Movement (NFDLM) which operated in Somalia. Somalia also closed the *Shifita* training camps in her territory. Kenya reciprocated by rekindling bilateral relations with Somalia. Kenya also offered market for Somalia cattle being sold to the Kenya Meat Commission.

Despite the hardship with which the soldiers and officers serving in the arid areas had to undergo during the *Shifita* war, the war experience benefited the Kenya armed forces immensely. The military was accepted as the cornerstone of the Kenya stability. It also created a professionalism army. The operation also gave the young military combat experience. Above all, success in the war had earned the military the much needed reputation. Kenya's military also made positive gains in the context of international politics. The military did not only manage to protect the nation's interests but also to influence potential competitors in the region. Kenya was able to capitalize on the political purpose of the military to her advantage. The general political purpose of the military can be deduced from Clausewitz dictum of, 'war (the application of military power) should never be thought of as something autonomous but always as an instrument of policy. War is simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means.' (Baylis & Wirtz, 2002) The army as tool of statecraft had fulfilled not one but several political objectives of the military. They included: defeat, deter, compel, and defend.

(Art, 1990) Other political objectives of the military include assurance, reassurance and dissuade as illustrated in the figure below.

Defeat is the first and fundamental purpose of military power. According to Carl von Clausewitz, the aim of all action in war, is to disarm the enemy. He further adds that if the enemy is to be defeated, it must be placed in a more oppressive situation so as to sacrifice its demands. (Clausewitz, 1989) Fighting and winning the *Shifita* war was an acid test for Kenya as newly independent state. Decisive victory of Kenya in the war translated into military and reputational power. As such, the success in the war earned the Kenya military many accolades. Although the Kenya armed forces remained confined to the barracks after the war in 1967, earning the force a name of ceremonial army, the Kenya Armed Forces regional feared and recognised as professional force.

**Figure 1: Military Political Objectives**



**Source: Adopted from John F. Troxell, Military Power and the Use of Force**

Secondly the military can be used to coerce the enemy to change its position. This can be done through deterrence or compelling. Deterrence, in its broadest sense, means persuading an opponent not to initiate a specific action because of the perceived costs and risks. Deterrence is usually in the form of threat to punish. It involves a threat to destroy the adversary. For instance, in 1967, Kenyan created a special government committee to prepare for a full-scale war with Somalia. This was aimed at deterring Somalia aiding the pro-secessionist movements.

The third political objective of the military was to compel. Compelling refers to the use of military power to change the behaviour of the enemy. Compelling and deterrence are slightly different. According to Nye and Art (1980), deterrence involves the use of passive force while compelling involves active force. Thus, deterrence is a threat measured by not having used force, but threat to do so. The success of a compelled action is measured by how used of force is closely linked with quick change of enemy's behaviour. The enemy is compelled when military action change its behaviour. Military atrocities endured by Somalia during the *Shifita* war, compelled the government of Somalia to withdraw support for the secessionist movement.

The final political objective of the military action in the *Shifita* war was to reassure and assure. These two closely associated terms refer to the extent to which the military guarantees security to friends, allies and citizen. The political objective of reassurance and assurance is achieved through success in operation and security alliances. (Troxell, 2004) The 1964, Kenya – Ethiopia Mutual Defense Treaty reassured and assured both countries. Through building alliance, Kenya and Ethiopia benefited immensely as a consequence of the *Shifita* insurgency.

Contrary to military and diplomatic achievement discussed above, there is an argument that the military achieved very minimal success in the *Shifita* war. Proponents of this view posit that, though the bandits had been eradicated in 1967, peace and stability did not return to region until late 1980s. The bandits continued with stealing and killing spree. They stole cattle, and killed government officials. The killing of Dadaab District Officer, Mr. Johnson Welimo and four other civil servants was a case in time among other incidences. The *Shifita*

menace also recurred periodically. Government security measures such as imposition of 12 hour dusk to dawn curfew over the province and sealing of the Kenya Somalia and Ethiopia border did not end the conflict. Kenya also mobilized troops to the region on several occasion without success. Out of frustrations to end the menace, Kenya not once threatened to round up about 700,000 Kenya Somalis living in the area into security villages. The strategy of villagization that was widely criticized was adopted by Kenyan authorities out of desperation. The war and violent clampdowns of citizens by the Kenyan government also caused large-scale disruption to the way of life in the north eastern province. It resulted in a shift from pastoralism to sedentary, urban lifestyles. The intervention also failed in terms of the third component of the just war tradition of *jus post bellum* (justice after war). Over fifty years after the war, the people of the NFD are yet to come in terms with the military atrocities in the *Shifita* war. The concerns justice after a war, including peace, reconstruction, war crimes trials, and reparations have not been dealt with. Though the Kenyan authorities acknowledged that human rights violation took place, reparation have never been awarded.

### Conclusion

The strategic approach to success of military intervention examines a number of issues. First is target objectives of the intervention. For instance, did the Kenya army stop the secession demands? When this was achieved then the ‘mission was accomplished hence military success. This may be true as well misleading. It is true since the ultimate purpose of military action was to subdue the Somalia backed secessionists. The *Shifita* complied through exercise of military force. The statement is however misleading because it wholly ignores the political, economic, systemic, and humanitarian consequences of intervention such as violation of human rights and destruction of property and environment. All of these issues must be part of any effort to evaluate overall success of military intervention. Success in military intervention should therefore not just focus on the immediate strategic objectives human centric needs of the missioned accomplished but rather focus on restorative justice by seeking to repair harm caused by military intervention. Military intervention is successful if interventionist uphold human rights during the operation and perform social work that enhances civil military relationship.

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