

CAUSES AND IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO 2007/2008 POST ELECTION CRISIS IN KENYA

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Abstract

On 27 December 2007, Kenya went to the polls to elect their leaders in a national election. The election however turned out to be violent prior, during and after the elections. This paper seeks to unravel the causes of the crisis and the impact of the international intervention in quelling the violent crisis. Secondary sources of data were used in this work. The paper found that random violence towards specific ethnic groups and perceived rigging of the election results caused the 2007/2008 post election violence in Kenya. Restoration of peace, security of lives and property among others were impacts of the international community's response. As a way forward, international community is urged to be more vigilant towards dictating signs of crisis and intervening more urgently to prevent enormous loss of lives and property.

Keywords: Ethnic groups, post-election violence (PEV), international community, Electoral process, Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

Electoral process is a means of achieving governance peacefully and therefore an alternative to violence. It is when an electoral process is perceived as unfair, unresponsive or corrupt, that its political legitimacy is compromised and stakeholders are motivated to go outside the established norms to achieve their objectives. In that line, electoral conflict and violence become tactics in political competition (Fisher, 2002). When an electoral process is manipulated and abused, the legitimacy of the governance outcome is questionable and the premium placed on choice undermined. Choice matters in an electoral process and abuse of the electoral system and process necessarily invite alternative means of achieving legitimate government (Murunga, 2011:8).

Since the collapse of socialist governments, democratic governance has come to be accepted as a trend all over the world. African countries are not left out. Since the 1990s, many African autocracies have engaged or at least pretended to engage in various efforts towards democratization, Kenya not being the exception. Support for democratization has primarily being used as an instrument to achieve accountability, install broadly legitimate governments and help in mediating disputes among the diverse ethnic groups in Kenya. These institutional efforts are expected to improve economic performance and reduce proneness to political violence (Fearon

and Laitin, 2003; Carothers, 2007; Soudriette and Pilon, 2007). However, with a few exceptions, the recent record of African elections has raised concerns that in ethnically divided societies, competitive electoral processes could in fact be destabilizing by widening existing divisions and deepening divisions between winners and losers (Bardhan, 1997; Syder, 2000; Wilkinson, 2004; Mansfield and Snyder, 2005; Eiffert, Miguel and Posner, 2007). Accordingly, Collier and Rohner (2008) asserted that elections in poor African countries such as Kenya have tended to significantly increase proneness to civil war and various other manifestations of violence. These acrimonies are most times attributed to the political class. In that regard, Murunga (2011) suggested that leaders not only undermined nation-building by sowing discord among citizens, but also pitted communities against each other in the struggles for political supremacy. Kaimenyi and Ndunga (2005) categorically stated in that regard also that ethnic groups are permanent interest groups that compete in the market for wealth transfer and they employ violence to take control of the government to redistribute benefits to their members.

This competition led to the impunity and abuse of electoral process in Kenya in 2007 which culminated in electoral violence, a violence that led to the death of at least 1,133 people and the displacement of over 350,000 (CIPEV, 2008). At the height of the violence, international community intervened to bring about peace, harmony, reconciliation and stability especially when national efforts and internal mechanisms at quelling the crisis failed.

Statement of the Problem

Most Kenyans invested their faith in the electoral process prior to the 2007 general elections. They not only expected a transparent process and fair outcome, but also assume the incumbent would, at the very least, respect their choice (Murunga, 2011:7). Elections should be about choice and majority of the citizens believed that continuity or change of political leaders rest with the people through a free and fair election.

Eligible Kenyan voters registered to vote in record numbers, braved long voting queues, the hot sun or rainy conditions, and cast their votes in a relatively peaceful process (Murunga, 2011). Following the election, results were declared. People who were not satisfied with the election results resorted to violence and attacks, targeted certain ethnic groups; resulting in over two months of civil unrest throughout Kenya (Yamano et al, 2010:2).

Political violence has indeed been treated as an integrated and normalized element in Kenya and Kenyans have learned to live with it as part of politics (Anderson and Lochery, 2008). Consequently, the political class encourages citizens to take violent action, since they depend on violence to build electoral influence. By so doing, they limit the ability of the state to govern effectively (Murunga, 2011:10).

With the onset of violence, Kenya once viewed as a relative haven of political stability in the Horn of Africa, faced ethnic violence, a growing humanitarian crisis, economic disruption, and unresolved questions about future political direction (Langer, 2011:1). Accepted that many observers had anticipated election-related ethnic conflicts would occur in Kenya because ethnic clashes have become a common phenomenon during and after presidential elections since 1992 when the first election under the multi-party system was held but none expected it at the scale it occurred in 2007/08 presidential election. In view of the foregoing, this paper seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What were the causes of 2007/08 post-election violence in Kenya.
2. What were the impacts of international community's intervention to the post-election crisis that occurred in Kenya in 2007/08.
- 3.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To examine the causes of 2007/08 post election violence in Kenya.
- ii. To evaluate the impacts of international community's intervention to the post election crisis in Kenya in 2007/08.

Research Hypotheses

In order to provide empirical analysis that will achieve the objectives of the study and ultimately provide solutions to the problem of the study, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

1. Random violence towards specific ethnic groups was the cause of 2007/08 post election violence in Kenya.
2. International Community's response brought peace and economic stability to Kenya.

Literature Review

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study adopts primordial theory of ethnicity as our theoretical framework. This theory was propounded by an American sociologist, David Riesman who maintained that every society is bound by ethnic or kinship connection.

Eriksen (2002) clarified further that under the primordial theory of ethnicity, one is bound to his/her kinsmen, her neighbour, other family members and one's fellow believer. Opondo (2014) opined that primordial theory of ethnicity is a categorical ascription which classifies a person in terms of his basic, most general identity, determined by his origin and background. Primordialism is a concept that entails ethnicity which is rooted in the belief of common identity and common ancestry. Weber in Malesevic (2004) described it as those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical types or of customs or both.

Primordial theory of ethnicity therefore refers to minority issues versus the majority or race relations. It also means aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves and are regarded by others, as being culturally distinctive. It is perceived also as relationship between groups whose members consider themselves distinctive and these groups may be ranked hierarchically within society (Opondo, 2014).

Bath (1969) in Eriksen (2002) stated that we give primary emphasis to the fact that ethnic groups are categories of ascription and identification by actors themselves. He continued by stating that ethnic identity entails criteria for determining membership and ways of signaling membership and exclusion. Primordial theory of ethnicity therefore entails Kinship contiguity in our social existence.

Empirical Review of Related Literature

Causes of 2007/08 Post Election Violence in Kenya

Violent conflict engulfed Kenya after the 27th December 2007, presidential election results were announced. More than 1000 people were killed and 600,000 were displaced from their homes (Kanyinga & Walker, 2013). Politics in Kenya has an ethnic dimension and political violence in the country also has an ethnic dimension much of which can be attributed to the fact that in rural areas, the population is relatively homogenous, which fuels thinking in ethno-geographic terms (CIPEV, 2008). Thus Langer (2011) postulated that Kenyan politics is largely influenced by ethnicity; the ethnic connection therefore and not the political program determined political struggle in Kenya.

Political leaders concentrated development strides on their tribes creating tension among other tribes. Analyzing this further, Langer (2011) wrote that Kenya was vulnerable to ethnic clashes because leaders like president Kibaki was not able to live up his promises to all Kenyans, but rather delivered for his own ethnicity. Ethnicity therefore was rooted in Kenya polity even before the 2007 presidential election. This truism was confirmed by Githongo (2010) when he asserted that during the election campaign, language comparable to that heard before the Rwanda genocide was used, describing outsiders as madodoa, a Swahili expression for 'spots' that have to be removed or cleansed. Murunga (2011) collaborated this by stating that the primary reason for Kenya's 2007/08 post election violence was the long term historical grievances that had been simmering in the country.

These historical grievances arose mainly from the fact that Kenya is a country made up with over 70 distinct ethnic groups, the five largest being Kikuyu (20%), Luhya (14%), Luo (13%), Kalenjin (11%), and Kamba (11%) (ICRP, 2014). This ethnic distinction made Kenya's elections since gaining independence in 1963 to be dominated by ethnic affiliation that has resulted in exclusion and discrimination of those affiliated with the opposition (ICRP, 2014). In that regard, the two main political parties that vied for elections in 2007-the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) and Party of National Unity (PNU) were strongly supported by ethnically-rooted political constituencies. The ODM was backed by Luo, Luyha and the Kalenjin, present in the Nyanza, Western Provinces and the Rift Valley while the PNU was backed by Kikuyu tribe present in the Central and Eastern Provinces, Nairobi, the Coast Province and the Rift Valley (ICRP, 2014).

The election took place on 27 December 2007, and the results announced on 30 December, 2007. Against all expectations and opinion polls prior to the election, the party of National Unity (PNU), the government party won. The Orange Democratic Party (ODM) rejected the election results and that was the beginning of the mayhem.

Agreed that the perceived rigged election result was a factor in the ensuing violence, the bottled up historical ethnic animosity that have seen targeted violence and killings of various politicians and other innocent citizens of perceived opposition tribes was the major reason for the crisis (Opondo, 2014). Brown and Sriram (2012:248) supported this assertion by noting that random violence targeted against specific ethnic groups was a major factor that caused the 2007/08 electoral crisis. They supported this claim with factual evidence that there were premeditated attacks in the Rift Valley on Kikuyus through the use of private armies, largely recruited from the Kalenjin community. There were also ensuing revenge attacks mainly in Nairobi, Central Province and the Rift Valley by members of Kikuyu (Brown & Sriram, 2012). Elhawary (2008) was also emphatic on the fact that ethnic rivalry was the cause of the violence. He stated that the violence started with the murder of over 50 unarmed Kikuyu women and children, some as young as a month old, by locking them in church and burning them alive in Kiambas village near Eldoret in Nairobi. This act elicited revenge attacks by the Kikuyu.

The crisis that enveloped Kenya in 2008 therefore was not mainly a reaction to the rigged election as noted earlier but was rooted in long-term, foundational issues that had remained unaddressed since Kenya's independence in 1963 (Kanyinga & Walker, 2013). The root cause of the political crisis and post election violence of 2007/08 in Kenya can be laid squarely therefore on negative ethnicity and ethnic wars in the country (Opondo, 2014).

Impacts of International Community's Responses to the 2007/08 Post Election Crisis in Kenya.

There were outstanding impacts of the mediation efforts of international community towards quelling the crisis in Kenya in 2008. The first impact was the coming together of the two political rivals contesting the election results, president Kibaki and the opposition, Odinga, to sign a National Accord based on power sharing principles which led to the formation of a Government of National Unity, including the creation of the post of Prime Minister for Odinga. This reconciliation was made possible by the Former United Nations Secretary General (UNSG), Kofi Annan (Brown, 2011).

Again, as part of the impact of the international response to the crisis, peace was restored to the country. Brown (2011) stated in that regards that violence ceased six weeks after donor countries and agencies intervened in the crisis and made politicians to agree on a composition of a new cabinet. This onerous effort by the international community prevented according to Kofi Annan Foundation (2009) intensification of civil war.

Another major impact of international intervention to the crisis was the reaching of a negotiated settlement through the National Accord and Reconciliation Act to address the roots of the post election violence (Langer, 2011). Consequently, the Act consisted of four agenda items which include the implementation of constitutional reforms; the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission; the establishment of an independent review committee to improve the electoral process; and a commission of inquiry on the post election violence, meant to identify and prosecute perpetrators (Langer, 2011).

International Criminal Court (ICC) also intervened in the 2007/08 post election crisis in Kenya with multifarious impacts. Firstly, its accountability efforts contributed in stabilizing Kenya. Secondly, it impacted positively on Kenya's inter-ethnic relations and put a stop to hate speeches among contending ethnic groups (Dunaiski, 2014).

The most far reaching impacts of international community's responses to the 2007/08 post election crisis in Kenya include the adoption of a new constitution in 2010; implementation of internal reforms and preventative steps; and, police and security sector reform (ICRP, 2014).

Methodology

This research is qualitative, documentary and evaluative in nature. In that line, secondary sources of data formed our main sources of data. These include library research, review of news papers, books and journals on Kenya and its politics, internet downloads, etc. These secondary sources were critically assessed and corroborated to attain authenticity and make informed judgments.

To further ensure validity of our instrument, the researchers sourced data from different authors on the same issue which is the causes and impact of international response to 2007/08 post election crisis in Kenya. These documentary sources of data collected by the researcher and for the purpose of the research exhibited a relative high degree of validity because of the data's consistency.

Furthermore, this research will involve the use of documentary analysis. Nze (2009) describes the technique used in documentary analysis as including summarizing and re-summarizing of data until a compact summary emerges, reflecting the researcher's perceptions on the subject.

Findings and Discussion

The research has made some findings from the analysis of our qualitative data and they include:

Firstly, that random violence towards specific ethnic groups was the major cause of the 2007/08 post election violence in Kenya.

Secondly, international community responded swiftly with mediation/reconciliation efforts and brought in the process peace and economic stability to Kenya.

Discussing the above findings, one will start by stating that the presidential election took place on the 27 December, 2007. Prior to the election, opinion polls showed a narrow lead by the opposition party-the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) candidate, Raila Odinga.

The election result was announced on 30 December 2007, and against all expectations, Kenya's Electoral Commission Chairman Samuel Kiviutu declared the incumbent president Mwai Kibaki of Party of National Unity (PNU) the winner. Raila Odinga and his party the ODM immediately rejected the election result, a position agreed with by foreign election observer missions, in particular the European Union (EU) election monitors (ICRP, 2014).

The rigged election result was a factor in the ensuing violence. However, the bottled up historical ethnic animosity that has seen targeted violence and killings of various politicians and other innocent citizens of perceived opposition tribes was the major reason for the crisis. If the violence was mainly because of falsification of election result, it would not have been ethnically based. The assumed rigging was a catalyst to the ethnically based political animosity in Kenya that dated back to immediately after independence.

According to Opondo (2014), in the days of the first president of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta (1963-1978), he targeted eminent persons from ethnic groups that he felt were a threat to his leadership and his Kikuyu tribe. Many people were assassinated including Pio Gama Pinto (Kenyan Indian), J.M. Karinki (Kikuyu), Tom Mboya, D.O. Makasembo, Arwings Kodhek (all Luo), Ronald Ngala (Mijikenda of Coast), Sernoney (Kalenjin) among others. Opondo 2014 also noted that the former president Arab Mio (1978-2002) adopted Kenyatta's selected ethnic cleansing strategy. In the height of his reign, Moi, a Kalenjin, embarked on taming other ethnic groups. In that regard, prominent persons were assassinated or died in mysterious circumstances. They include Robert Ouko, Owiti Ongile, Otieno Ambala, Hezekiah Oyugi (all Luo), Bishop Kipsang Muge (Kalenjin), Adungosi and Muliro (all Luhya), many students, journalists, lecturers and politicians such as Raila Odinga, Charles Rubia, Kenneth Matiba, Martin Shikuku, among others were also detained and tortured (Ong'ayo, 2008). The last president before the 2007/2008 crisis, Mwai Kibaki did not do much better in quelling ethnic tensions. What rather were obtainable were political parties based on ethnic affiliation which created political and ethnic animosities and tensions.

Brown and Srirain (2012: 248) were emphatic that "random targeting of violence towards specific ethnic groups was a major factor that caused the 2007/08 electoral crisis". They opined that there were premeditated attacks in the Rift Valley on Kikuyus through the use of private Militias, largely recruited from the Kalenjin community. There were also according to them ensuing revenge attacks, mainly in Nairobi, Central Province and the Rift Valley, by members of the Kikuyu (especially the cult-like Mungiki Militias) against communities perceived to be in favour of the ODM. In fact, Elhawary (2008) was more emphatic when he stated that the violence started with the murder of over 50 unarmed Kikuyu women and children some as young as a month old, by locking them in church and burning them alive in Kiambaa village near Eldoret. This according to them prompted the Kikuyu to start defending themselves.

Ethnicity was also visible in public appointments, political party formations and resource allocation. Senior government positions were appropriated on ethnic affiliations rather than merit leading to discontent and other ethnic tensions across Kenya (Opondo, 2014). The crisis that engulfed Kenya in early 2008 therefore was not solely a reaction of the dispute over the election result, but was rooted in long-term, foundational issues that had remained unaddressed since Kenya gained independence in 1963 (Kanyinga & Walker, 2013). Accordingly, Branch and Cheeseman (2008); Human Right Watch (1995); MacArthur (2008); Mueller (2008) all agreed that Kenya's politics is deeply rooted in neo-patrimonial politics and that powerful political elites have

established support across ethnic lines using state resources since independence; causing therefore widespread grievances over inequalities and long standing perceptions of exclusion in the distribution of resources. This patronage according to Mueller (2008), weakened state institutions. Following the violence that occurred after the results of the 2007 elections were announced, international community moved in swiftly to quell the imbroglio. The severity of the crisis led French Foreign and European Affairs Minister, Bernard Kouchner, to appeal to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in January 2008, to react “in the name of the responsibility to protect” before Kenya plunged into a deadly ethnic conflict. In 31 December 27, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon issued a statement expressing concern for the ongoing violence, calling for the population to remain calm and for restraint to be shown by Kenyan Security forces. On the same day, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, called on the Kenyan government to abide by its international human rights obligations (ICRP, 2014).

There were efforts to peacefully resolve the crisis through dialogue. Those efforts began in the first week of January, 2008, firstly by South Africa’s Archbishop, Desmond Tutu on 2 January, and quickly followed by US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Jendayi Frazer on 5 January. On 8 January 2008, Former African Presidents Benjamin Mkapa (Tanzania), Joaquim Chissano (Mozambique), Ketumile Masire (Botswana), and Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia) arrived in Kenya for talks with president Kibaki (ICRP, 2014).

Langer (2011) also reports that concerned by the prospect of heightened fragmentation, the African Union (AU) launched mediation efforts to stem the tide of violence. This mediation effort was supported by the United Nations (UN), Kenya’s neighbours, key donors, and the civil society. The mediation process was initiated by Former Ghanaian president and African Union Chairman, John Kufuor (Barasa & Ombaka, 2008). It involved a three day direct dialogue from January 8-10 involving Kufuor and the two contesting presidential candidates, the incumbent Kibaki and the opposition Raila Odinga (CBS News, 2008).

African Union’s Chairman, John Kufuor also sent out a negotiation team known as AU’s panel of Eminent Africans led by former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan to further negotiate with the political actors in Kenya and find a solution to the crisis (Langer, 2011).

International donors in a bid to restore peace agreed that urgent measures needed to be taken to end the violence. In that regards, they rejected any scenario involving a recount, a forensic analysis of the results or any other form of action that would help determine the legitimate winner according to democratic rules in place. Rather, they were in favour of a politically expedient ad hoc compromise that eventually ended the political crisis and violent conflict (Langer, 2011).

The response by the international community brought many impacts on the Kenyan nation. Firstly and according to Brown (2011), at the end of February 2008, two months after the contested elections, Annan got Kibaki and Odinga to sign a National Accord based on power sharing principles and the formation of a Government of National Unity, including the creation of the post of Prime Minister for Odinga. Dercon and Romero (2010) collaborated by stating that based on international pressure, the key political actors in Kenya finally reached a compromise. Kibaki was to remain the elected president; Kalonzo the Vice-President and Odinga was to be appointed Prime Minister- a post which did not exist then under the Kenyan constitution.

Secondly, based on various international intervention efforts, peace was restored to the country and to the polity. Agreeing, Brown (2011) wrote that violence ceased six weeks after donor cajoling and the politicians also agreed on the composition of the cabinet. In fact, the impact of international intervention on the 2007/08 PEV lies in the fact that they were able to avert the

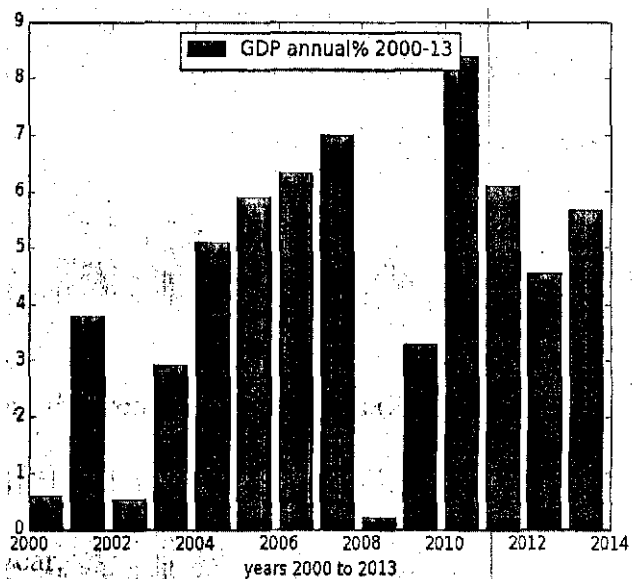
intensification of civil war and possible state collapse and brought about peace (Kofi Annan Foundation, 2009).

International community's intervention also brought economic stability to Kenya. The economy of Kenya is dependent upon export trade and tourism and this crisis adversely affected them both. Ksoll et al (2009) estimate that flowers exports were reduced by 38% during the first quarter of 2008 directly because of electoral violence.

The violence occurred during what is regarded as holiday peak period in Kenya and that affected adversely the tourism industry, a major foreign exchange earner for the country. Foreign offices advised their citizens not to travel to Kenya unless absolutely essential, leading to a steep fall in number of tourists visiting the country and reduction in tourism earnings (Dercon & Romero, 2010). This affected the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) because it more than halved from 6% before the election to 2% because of the electoral violence (Crilly, 2008).

The economic downturn also affected government spending (Peoples Daily Online, 2009); Induced food crisis through lower agricultural production manifested in shortages and high prices and placement of heavy demand on the budgetary resources of government (Peoples Daily Online, 2009). It also affected the stock market. Writing on the impact of the political crisis on the stock market, Yvan (2012) noted that the post election violence had a significant negative impact on the market returns on Kenya.

However, with mediation efforts of international community and the restoration of peace in Kenya, economic stability returned. Going from the diagram in Figure 1, the GDP of Kenya in 2009 upwards (after the crisis) increased to between 5 to 8% and above (World Bank.org, 2015).



Source: <http://www.data.worldbank.org/indicators/ST.INT.RCPT.CD>

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Election is a periodic duty that guarantees choice. That duty was performed by Kenyans on 27 December 2007, on the occasion of their presidential election. The perception by the people that the election had been rigged led to orgy of violence that lasted for two months. Prior to that election however, there had been ethnic mistrust and rivalry for political and economic domination, ethnic killings and reprisal killings, campaign intimidations, hate speeches, etc that actually propelled the mayhem.

There were negative economic consequences as a result of the crisis. Following however the intervention of the international and diplomatic communities, peace and economic stability returned to the country.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are given as a way of ensuring the stabilization of the fragile peace and economic stability:

- International community should be more vigilant towards dictating signs of crisis.
- Every country prone to ethnic-political crisis should engage its citizens in political education on the ills of ethnicity.
- Donor countries and agencies should continue to use carrot and stick approach as a means of foreign relation to Kenya and indeed other third world countries prone to electoral violence. In this regard, they should use the availability of aid and the threat of economic sanctions to make these countries adhere to good and standard democratic practices.

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