

# THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

## Peace Building Strategies in the Management of Electoral Conflicts in Nairobi County, Kenya

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### **Abstract:**

*In Kenya, a number of elections have always been marred with violent and tension-packed reactions. With each occurrence, there have been peace building measures taken to end the looming tension. However, the strategies seem not to be effective as some level of violence is still experienced in the subsequent elections. The overall objective of this study was to evaluate peace building strategies in the management of electoral conflicts in Nairobi County, Kenya. The study found out that the main peace building strategies used in Kenya include power sharing/grand coalition government, the 2010 Constitution, the civil society, and the 2018 Raila-Uhuru political reconciliation. To strengthen peace building strategies, the government, in collaboration with the civil society, and local and international peace organizations should conduct civic education. The government should also put in place effective measures that will help harness the strengths of the current peace building strategies. The study was motivated by the need to have effective peace building strategies in the management of recurring electoral conflicts in Kenya.*

**Keywords:** Peace building strategies, electoral conflicts, Nairobi County

### **1. Introduction**

Electoral violence is gradually becoming a norm in most African countries (Blum, 2005; Boege, 2006). However, it can be contained through effective peace building strategies. Johan Galtung coined the term peace building from his three perspectives of peace: peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peace building (Collins, 2000). According to Galtung (1996), the three forms of violence, that is, cultural, structural and direct can be minimized by changing attitudes, eliminating structural injustices and contradictions and changing conflict behaviour respectively.

In order to transform from an unstable peace to a durable peace, it is necessary to change the way society operates, and the patterns of interaction of the involved parties. As Noland Paris observes, peace building missions focus on four main interrelated areas: security, governance, relief and development, and reconciliation. Security entails ending violence, protecting those affected by violence, and enforcing human rights (Elfversson, 2013). Governance in peacebuilding designs requires the development of institutional capacities such as the judiciary, the electoral system, and other agencies that work to advance policy reforms, enhance transparency, and increase representation and accountability (Ewig, 1999). Relief and development policies are considered an integral part of the broader peace building process because where poverty and inequality endure after internal conflict, they serve to undermine peace by breeding further discontent and anger (Fodeba & Sahr, 2010). Reconciliation is also necessary to help achieve positive peace through policies which are hinged on reconstitution and compassion, psychological and social healing, forgiveness; and which are designed to help communities live and work together (Galtung, 1996).

Each peace building strategy in managing electoral conflicts should naturally contain conflict analysis tools. To comprehend various types of conflict dynamics in a particular country, there are different, forms of analysis which can be adopted to highlight how they affect the electoral process (Annette & Dawn, 2017). Before strains and actions leading to electoral violence, relevant partners can strategically place themselves by contemplating the causes and absolute examples of violence during electoral processes in their nation. In any transitional nation, an assortment of evaluations is frequently attempted by different policy developers to meet different goals. These are frequently all around tried and confided in strategies for achieving those goals (Adebayo, 2016).

In Kenya, a number of elections have always been marred with violent and tension-packed reactions. With each occurrence, there have been peacebuilding measures taken to end the looming tension. However, the strategies seem not to be effective as some level of violence is still experienced in the subsequent elections. In the aftermath of the 2007 elections, the Kofi Annan-led team initiated a power sharing deal or a grand coalition government to try and end the widespread violence. Although the grand-coalition government helped ease the violence and tension in the country at that time, it was not a long-term peace building tool. Some historical conflicts continued, such as land squabbles and border conflicts.

In 2010, a new constitution was promulgated, in the hope that it could ensure peace in the forthcoming elections. The constitution increased the number of constituencies and introduced devolved governments to ensure that power was decentralized, as a way of curbing violence that used to accompany power struggle (Cho, Connors, Fatima, & Yalim, 2015). However, the 2013 elections were still marred by irregularities, although there was minimum violence (European Union Election Observation Mission, 2018). With the new constitution and the devolved units, Kenya still experienced a number of conflicts such as ethnicity clashes along border lines and electoral conflicts as exhibited through the party nominations. In the 2017 General election, violence was experienced as a number of lives were lost and property destroyed in the two polls that took place (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2018). Besides, there was a prolonged stalemate in a number of activities as the opposition vowed to paralyze government activities. In what was dubbed as a “Golden Handshake” Kenya’s Opposition leader Raila Odinga, met with President Uhuru Kenyatta on 9 March 2018 to initiate dialogue (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2018). As a political truce, Kenyans hoped that the handshake would bear hope amid social tension, economic strife and political division that have characterized Kenyan politics since 2007 post-election violence.

## 2. Literature Review

Since the UN peace building intervention in Namibia in 1989, the literature concerning peace building strategies has grown significantly. In 2001 in Kosovo, power-sharing was used to prevent the country from plunging into chaos (Biggar, 2001; Binaifer, 2003). The elections for an elected Kosovo Assembly brought about an elected provisional government, with a Presidency, a Prime Minister and cabinet appointed based on a proportional party system, and a power-sharing formula determined by UNMIK to ensure inclusion by the major political parties within the Kosovo Assembly” (UNDP, 2017:31).

In 2005, Kyrgyzstan through Electoral Violence and Resolution Program (also known as EVER), came up with a methodology which would ensure prevention and reporting violence resulting from election processes. In Macedonia, the Ohrid Framework in peace building which involved local democracy building via power decentralization was initiated by the International community and embraced as a proper measure in agreements with the disputing parties (Rosset & Pfister, 2013). The Ohrid Framework Agreement which is a peace plan -which was signed on 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2001, in order to reduce tension between the ethnic Macedonians(Slavic) whom following the dissolution of Yugoslav federation have dominated the country since her independence in 1990 and the restive Albanians, devolved from the central government in Skopje (Rosset and Pfister, 2013).

In Lebanon, a design was formulated by the IFES and the various local partners to holistically reinforce capability for risk assessment in the lead-up to the elections in the year 2009 and it was sustained during the process (Annette & Dawn, 2017). The Lebanon Election Violence Risk Assessment (LEVRA) program brought together different technocrats to assess political, conventional and electoral violence. Every constituency was assigned their level of risks as per the assessment plan using medium, high and low to indicate the level of concern.

In Zimbabwe, after the 2008 electoral violence, negotiations held by the political rivals resulted in institution building (UNDP, 2017). Despite comprising of representatives from both political formations, the institutions faced so many hiccups along the transition. The formation of institutions was the first attempt to ensure democracy and peace prevails in the highly polarized country (UNDP, 2017). In Nigeria, IDASA tracked election-related conflict and violence during the 2007 election cycle (Collier & Vicente, 2014). While the 2007 election can generally be regarded as seriously flawed, the level of participation and expression of interest and involvement to reduce levels of conflict and violence was remarkable (Collier & Vicente, 2014:17).

In Sierra Leone, a well-designed and well-managed support system ensured peaceful elections whereby the 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections represented both a milestone and a giant leap forward in the consolidation of the peace process and of democracy in a country that was emerging from a decade-long civil war, protracted instability and unrest (UNDP, 2017).

The civil society also plays a crucial role in the peace building process. By creating a forum for citizens to peacefully pursue a variety of shared interests, civil society contributes to the solidification and dissemination of democratic values, prevents abuses by the state, and enables economic vitality (McQuins, 2013). Additionally, civil society can promote post-conflict reconciliation through a variety of mechanisms. Because it functions separately from the state, civic groups can promote alternative ways of attaining justice even when the official policy emphasizes punishment—which may not be the most appropriate mechanism for achieving long-term healing (Miranda, 2007).

In Kenya, insufficient or ineffective conflict analysis tools led to repeated electoral violence, although to a minimum level, in 2013 and in 2017 after the intense violence in 2007. In 2007, Kenya underwent one of the longest stalemates in its history, after the disputed election. Although the Kofi Anan-led team initiated a dialogue that led to a grand-coalition/power sharing government, the measure was not sufficient to build long-lasting peace (Annette & Dawn, 2007). Just like in 2007, the 2013 and 2017 political conflict in Kenya was driven essentially by competition for political power and its benefits, principally between different political elites. Competition generated in-groups preoccupied with retaining, and out-groups plotting to acquire political power. This struggle relied on mobilizing ethnic identity to achieve political objectives. Due to these historical trends in political campaigns and quest for power, some level of violence and tensions were also experienced in 2013 and 2017 ((UNDP, 2017).

### 3. Methodology

This study used a descriptive survey design based on mixed methods of data collection and analysis. According to Creswell (2014), descriptive design enables the researcher to formulate crucial knowledge principles as well as solutions to the underlying problems. Going by what Kombo and Tromp (2007) postulates, this design is also appropriate for this study because it will help to gather information on the current phenomenon and generate valid conclusions from the data collected. To effectively achieve this objective, the researcher administered both interviews and questionnaires to gather as much information as possible.

This study was conducted in Nairobi County of Kenya because it is a hotspot to various forms of conflict, especially electoral violence. The study focused on household heads from the populous areas of Nairobi County, peace organizations, area leaders, relevant governmental institutions, and church leaders. In total, there were 289 questionnaires distributed among the household heads, 19 interviews conducted, and 10 FGDs. The study used systematic sampling technique to select the households. Chiefs, assistant chiefs, senior police officers, local peace organizations leaders, international peace organizations leaders, and senior disaster management staff, were selected using purposive sampling. Lastly, snowballing was used to select religious leaders.

This study measured the validity of the instrument using content and factorial validity. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for internal consistency of the research instruments was validated at  $\alpha = 0.84$ . According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2009), instruments are considered to be acceptable and reliable if  $\alpha \geq 0.8$  hence  $\alpha \geq 0.84$  was good and reliable for the study. Reliability was tested using the test-retest correlation, which normally provides a sign of stability in the long run. The instrument scored Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) value  $\alpha \geq 0.74$ , therefore, was considered reliable.

The International Business Machines (IBM) Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 22) was used to analyze quantitative data. Under SPSS, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used and data presented in frequencies, tabulation and percentage. Qualitative data was coded and analysed thematically and in verbatim, which helped to highlight the emerging themes. All the ethical requirements were considered, including consent from the respondents and permission from the relevant institutions.

### 4. Results

Out of the 289 respondents, 56.1% (164) were male while 43.9% (125) were female. In terms of age, the respondents were divided into six categories, ranging from 18-27 to 68-77. To find out the impact of the power-sharing initiative as a peace building strategy, the study sought to know if the Kofi Annan led power sharing deal was an effective strategy in preventing further conflict between warring parties in 2007. From the findings, 80.7% of the respondents agreed that the Kofi Annan led power sharing deal was an effective strategy in preventing further conflict between warring parties in 2007. However, some respondents felt that power sharing was not a permanent solution to electoral violence, but rather temporary measure to poll chaos.

To assess the effectiveness of a grand coalition government in preventing future electoral violence, the study sought to know if forming a grand coalition government is the best way to ensure everlasting peace. From the findings, 58.9% of the respondents felt that forming a grand coalition government is the best way to ensure everlasting peace while 35.2% disagreed.

The study also sought to find out if the constitution had helped prevent future electoral conflict. While 48.3% of the total respondents disagreed, 43.3% agreed to this. The study also sought to discover the impact of the civil society initiatives such as 'Mkenya Daima' in preventing electoral violence, especially the 2013 elections. Cumulatively, 65.7% of the respondents agreed that peace message spread by the civil society helped ensure reconciliation among warring communities after the 2013 electoral conflict while only 25% disagreed.

To assess the role of political reconciliation as a peace building strategy, the study sought to find out if the 2018 Raila-Uhuru handshake had helped ease the rising post-election tension among Kenyans. From the findings, 86.9% of the respondents overwhelmingly agreed while 8% disagreed.

### 5. Discussions

From the findings, the Kofi Anan led power sharing deal helped to prevent further conflict between the warring factions. According to Galtung (1996), the first step towards achieving coherent peace within the society should be to stop ongoing violence. The Kofi Anan led power sharing deal can be regarded as an initiative that resulted in positive peace, for it did not just stop the ongoing conflict, but it helped avoid further feuds by including the aggrieved factions in the running of the government. In both 2013 and 2017 elections, the winning party has always included people from the opposition in government to help quell any uprising tension. Through sharing power, leaders allow their people to reconcile, heal, and forgive one another in bid to restore sanity in the society. As Ghai and Regan (2006) further point out, mechanisms for pursuing reconciliation include dialogue between former adversaries, story sharing, compiling records of human rights violations and Truth Commissions.

The current findings are also supported by a study conducted by International Dialogue on Peace building and State Building (2010) in Guyana. It revealed that the merger of different and opposing religious organizations helped to ensure a long-lasting peace solution. However, Elder et al. (2014) postulate that although power sharing helps to calm violence, it by itself is just a short-term strategy that cannot result in perpetual peace. It needs to have more appendages, such as, how to resolve historical injustices.

As a peace building strategy, the 2010 Constitution has not yet fully achieved its mission of preventing Kenya from relapsing into violence during elections. From the previous studies (for example, European Union Election Observation

Mission, 2018; Kiplagat, 2008), power fights among politicians is one of the major causes of political instabilities in any country. The 2010 constitution created many elective posts to decentralize power. It increased the number of constituencies, created gubernatorial positions to devolve governance, created senate positions, and also created member of county assembly positions. One of the main aims of creating such position was to reduce power fights among politicians. The reason why some people have little faith in the constitution is because of the way it is mutilated by some leaders for their own interests. In as much as the 2010 promulgated document spelled out clear functions that can help maintain peace in Kenya, politicians still twist it to fight for their interests. As evidenced, both the 2013 and 2017 elections still experienced heightened power struggles as politicians used all means to win elections. According to the European Union Election Observation Mission (2018) report, politicians went to the extent of inciting their supporters, which was one of the causes of electoral disputes in 2013 and 2017. Currently, there are plans to amend the constitution, and such plans are not driven by the need to serve Kenyans but the desire to satisfy the interests of some politicians. The constitution can only be a permanent peace building strategy if politicians desist from twisting it to suit their selfish ambitions.

The civil society also plays an important role in preventing electoral violence. The current findings are in tandem with what the Institute for Democracy and Elections Assistance (2005) found out that in Kyrgyzstan, through Electoral Violence and Resolution Program (also known as EVER), the civil society worked with other stakeholders in monitoring, coordination and reporting to identify evolving priorities and critical responses, political violence and security occurring during the election period. These findings also corroborate the study by the UNDP (2008), which also found that existing networks around peace building—such as Concerned Citizens for Peace, including PeaceNet and Partnership for Peace—were crucial in calming down the 2007 electoral violence in Kenya.

In Kenya, the civil society normally works through many platforms, where they can easily reach out to as many people as possible. These platforms majorly target youths, who are perceived to be the major perpetrators of violence. Such forums include sports, art, music, and even roads show talent display. As shown in the previous studies, carrying out campaigns to spread messages of peace is a key ingredient of peace building. However, civil societies need to work closely with the local people to develop credibility. In Nicaragua, for example, the 1987 Esquipulas Peace Accords collapsed because the civil society did not have the same credibility as the churches; therefore, local ownership and sustainability did not take hold as it should have (Bekoe, 2012).

Political reconciliations are also crucial in ensuring perpetuity of peace. According to Lederach (1997), political reconciliation takes place when leaders from opposing political camps come together in bid to try and resolve their differences in a peaceful and amicable way. The 2018 Raila-Uhuru political reconciliation can be best explained from the power theory perspective as advocated by Steven Lukes (Lukes, 2004). In Kenya, peace building strategies are determined by two things: politicians' preferences and the real issues or interests at hand. Post-electoral conflict in Kenya is borne out of the strife between rival politicians when one feels that his or her victory has been stolen. If politicians develop preferences that are not based on self-interests, they can easily help avoid conflict. For example, conceding defeat and acknowledging the victory of the opponent will help create the spirit of tolerance among rival groups of voters when they see their leaders embracing peace and other forms of restoring peace. On the other hand, peace building strategies are also based on how the real interests are approached. When politicians put their interests aside and instead focus on the real interests of the nation, it can be easy to develop strategies that will successfully unite people in times of disunity. Other studies, for example, Lewa (2013) also demonstrate that when opposing political camps unite, peace can be restored and people can once again start to live in harmony. When political leaders differ, their supporters also take sides as they follow their leaders and wait for further instructions.

Resonating the findings with Galtung's theory of peace, peace building efforts should be entrenched in finding long-lasting peace. In order to reach 'positive' peace, Galtung (1996) advocates for a strategy that integrates the whole society as opposed to just ending direct violence, which is usually the primary focus once conflict breaks out. The cessation of hostilities leads to negative peace since society cannot be peaceful unless the unjust structures and relationships are addressed and removed (Galtung, 1973).

## 6. Conclusion

The main peace building activity in the 2007 post-electoral violence was the Kofi Annan led power sharing deal that led to the coalition government. By including the warring factions, that is ODM and PNU members in the government, people from both sides of the divide calmed down. After that, the country went ahead to promulgate a new constitution that would prevent concentration of power in one seat in bid to prevent fighting over power by politicians. Other peace building strategies that were used to help restore peace in the 2013 elections were civic education and the civil society. In the 2017 elections, political reconciliation or the handshake between Rail and Uhuru helped calm down the raging tension between their supporters.

## 7. Recommendations

To strengthen peace building strategies, the government, in collaboration with the civil society, and local and international peace organizations should conduct civic education. Through civic education, people are educated on the importance of maintaining peace and the consequences of engaging in violent activities. The government should also put in place effective measures that will help harness the strengths of the current peace building strategies. From the findings, the main peace building strategies in Kenya include powers-sharing, the Constitution, political reconciliation, and the civil society. Although they have been used before in calming violence, the government, together with other stakeholders should use them in long-term peace building process.

Future researchers should consider using a different research design, preferably the longitudinal research design, to see how effective it can be in establishing peace building strategies in the management of electoral conflict in Kenya. Unlike the descriptive study design, the longitudinal design allows the researcher to observe a phenomenon or subjects over a long period of time.

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