

International Journal of **Conflict Management** (IJCM)

**Ethical Conflict and National Security
A Critical Literature Review**



**CARI
Journals**

Ethnical Conflict and National Security a Critical Literature Review

By Marita Jones

The University of Nairobi, School of Arts and Social Sciences

Corresponding author's email: journals@carijournal.org

Abstract

Purpose: Ethnic conflict and national security are topics of great concern to policy makers. Kenya, like many states in the world is multi-ethnic and ethnic groups in such states are mobilized by political elites in order to take up political control and the governance of a country as a way of ensuring control of state resources for the benefit of the ethnic group. The general objectives of the study are to examine the historical background, actors and issues in ethnic conflict in Kenya. To investigate Kenya's national security challenges and concerns and its effects on national security in Kenya.

Methodology: The paper used a desk study review methodology where relevant empirical literature was reviewed to identify main themes and to extract knowledge gaps.

Conclusion: As this study has shown, Kenya has a long way to go to realize an acceptable standard of living for most of its people. Its present and future crop of leaders is faced with formidable challenges that call for exceptional and extraordinary leadership based on solid character. This study is a humble contribution towards the recognition of the needs of the country as Kenya stands at the threshold of the 21st century characterized by globalization and other challenges.

Recommendation: The study focuses on the politicization of ethnicity by individual politicians or individual party members. As such, it does not analyze party politics. Therefore, it recommends an exclusive study of ethnic politics within and between political parties in the struggle for party positions and state power in Kenya respectively

Keywords: *Ethnic conflict, national security*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The scramble for Africa in the 1880s by the European powers and the resultant subdivision of Africa into spheres of influence created territories that did not take into account the settlement patterns of the various ethnic groups in Africa. The territories that emerged from the scramble placed communities which were otherwise independent nations, under one country and thus under one administration and state structures (Stavenhagen, 2016).

During the struggle for independence, the ethnic groups in the territory that became Kenya at independence, formed ethnic based parties and movements for the liberation struggle (Oucho, 2021). Although the movements had the common goal of attaining independence, the independence they had in mind was that of the ethnic group. However, with some exceptions, as Horowitz notes, ethnic differences tended to be muted until independence was achieved.

At independence the goals changed and as some ethnic groups took over political power from the colonialists, others felt that their independence had not been achieved (Rex, 2015). This set-in motion the wheels of ethnic conflict which accelerated and became more violent in the post-Cold War era. Quite often the ethnic conflicts have threatened Kenya's national security. The central issues and questions to be examined in this study include ethnic conflicts in Kenya and its national security concerns (Owoaje, 2015). Further the study examined the challenges, risks and threats posed by ethnic conflict to Kenya's national security.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Ethnic conflict and national security are topics of great concern to policy makers. Kenya, like many states in the world is multi-ethnic and ethnic groups in such states are mobilized by political elites in order to take up political control and the governance of a country as a way of ensuring control of state resources for the benefit of the ethnic group. The result of such ethnic political mobilization is ethnic competition which often ends in ethnic conflicts. The conflicts have devastating outcomes ranging from violence that may lead to injuries, destruction of property and mass displacement of populations and sometimes deaths.

It is the responsibility of the state to protect its citizens both from internal and external aggression. However, in the process of protecting one ethnic group from the aggression of another, the state finds itself participating in the conflict as the decision makers are themselves

members of ethnic groups in the state. Looked at from the point of view that violent ethnic conflict can disrupt life, cause deaths and displacement of persons and destruction of property, ethnic conflict can be classified as a major threat to Kenya's national security. Such conflicts may spill over to neighboring states thereby taking an international dimension and threatening regional and international security.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objectives of the study are to examine the historical background, actors and issues in ethnic conflict in Kenya. To investigate Kenya's national security challenges and concerns and its effects on national security in Kenya.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The results from this study will benefit local ethnic communities, local authorities and the government in understanding and addressing ethnic conflict.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Ethnic conflict and national security in Kenya

The paramount purpose of Kenya as a modern state is to protect its inhabitants from both internal and external threats (Mutongwa, 2020). Accordingly, the primacy of national security among the responsibilities of government is commonly considered axiomatic. State security is complex and is two sided (Bel I Queral, 2016). On one hand the state must sustain security against external threats such as other states and other international actors. On the other hand, the state must also maintain security against internal threats to its character, rule, or territorial and demographic integrity. While acknowledging the fact that states are mainly concerned about their security and survival, state security contains four basic and important elements which he enumerates as "physical safety, autonomy, development and rule (Mallozzi, 2019)

In this connection states either defend themselves against threats or they threaten others as a way of determining or limiting any threats directed at their survival. While trying to link ethnic conflict and national security. Human beings live in divided societies and alienated mental communes (Wong, A., 2017). While such ethnicity may have its violent overtures, it is the simmering discontent of the divided human that invokes national security studies springs up from all that contributes to the human divide that threaten the integrity of a nation. The human divide in this case includes issues based on communal, cultural, national religious, and racial

and origin. The outcome of ethnic violence is private armies, militant leaders and violent political groups that may cause additional harm. Such violence will cause additional political groups that may cause additional harm. Such violence will be cause for separation, fragmentation and destabilization of a country in the long run. Ethnic violence can turn to secessionist wars.

2.2 Empirical Review

Mutuku (2017), conducted a study on the inter-ethnic conflict management in the Horn of Africa: the case study of the Borana and Rendile of Kenya. Inter-community conflict has been a major problem among communities in the IGAD region. This study sought to examine the question of inter-community conflict management in the IGAD region focusing on the Borana and Rendile. This study was based on conflict transformation theory founded in the work of Galtung. The study used both primary and secondary data and targeted a sample size of 43 respondents which included key experts and practitioners on matters conflict management in the study communities. The results of the study showed that conflict between Boran and Rendille are predominantly caused by resource related issues and culture. The findings also suggested that conflict has both direct and indirect effect on warring communities. The study findings also showed that conflict in the region have historical causes linked to the region and institutions. Finally, the findings indicated that a number of conflict management measures are in place, both top- down and bottom-up initiatives.

Leley (2015), conducted a study on the factors influencing inter-ethnic conflicts in Kuresoi North Sub- County in Nakuru, Kenya. Inter-ethnic conflicts refer to a state marked by deficiency of communication, or lack of peaceful coexistence that hampers interaction between members of different ethnic groups. This study sought to investigate factors influencing inter-ethnic conflicts among the inhabitants of Kuresoi North Sub- County, Nakuru county. It focused on how economic, political and socio-cultural factors influence inter-ethnic conflicts in the sub-county. Descriptive survey research design was used. Two out of the four administrative wards in the sub-county were purposively sampled out for the study. A total of 120 respondents; who included the youth, politicians, religious leaders, chiefs and assistant chiefs, women representatives, primary and secondary school teachers formed the study's sample population. The results of the study showed that agriculture, which is an economic activity, has influenced inter-ethnic conflicts in the sub-county; in that it has led to residents' desire to have more land for farming and grazing. The political factors which were found out

to influence inter-ethnic conflicts encompassed political incitements and negative ethnic stereotypes. The socio- cultural factors which influenced inter-ethnic conflicts included traditional war songs and poems, cattle rustling, use of traditional war weapons and rites of passage such as circumcision.

Menyi (2009), conducted a study on the impact of inter-ethnic conflicts on women's participation in livelihood activities: a case study of Molo, Nakuru county. Kenyans have been experiencing inter-ethnic conflicts for the past few years. Ever since cases of inter-ethnic conflicts that have led to loss of lives, displacement of people, destruction of properties, hundreds of people being injured, children orphaned and women widowed continue to be reported in various parts of the country. Women have contributed significantly to the economy and development of the country through working together in self-help groups. However, their efforts have gone to waste following the eruption of inter-ethnic conflicts. This project focused on the impact of inter-ethnic conflicts in participation of women in livelihood activities in Molo, Nakuru district. Probability sampling was used to select the respondents from the affected areas while non probability sampling was employed to select women's group leaders, church leaders and government officials who served as key informants. Non probability sampling was also employed to select community leaders and displaced women in the internally displaced persons' camps for focus group discussions. A structured questionnaire was used for personal interviews, a focus group discussion guideline was used for focus group discussions, listed discussion topics guide was used for an in-depth interview with key informants, a check list was used for observation and a case study was conducted. A total of 90 respondents participated in the research. The results of the study showed that women had been working together in groups and had made significant achievements in improvement of their individual standards of living and in development of Molo area 77% of the respondents were actively involved in self-help groups work. They cited, tangible results and achievements of their work. For example, construction of permanent water tanks and permanent houses were some of the many achievements realized through self-help groups. The study found out that the inter-ethnic conflicts in the area had negatively affected participation of women in livelihood activities. 100% of the respondents had experienced inter-ethnic conflicts and were unanimous that no livelihood activities could take place in times of conflicts. People were displaced from their homes and lost their properties. The findings indicated that time taken before restoration of peace was long leading to permanent dissolution of self-help groups. The

findings also indicated that women initiated smaller activities after the inter-ethnic conflicts due to fear of losing more properties. The findings proved that participation of women in livelihood activities has positive impact in development of the country and that inter-ethnic conflicts has negative impact on women's work in groups. It was evident that the conflicts brought about divisions and, enmity between women making it impossible for them to work together.

2.3 Research gaps

A knowledge gap occurs when desired research findings provide a different perspective on the issue discussed. For instance, Menyi (2009) who conducted a case study of Molo, Nakuru county on the impacts of inter-ethnic conflicts on women participation in livelihood activities. Women have contributed significantly to the economy and development of the country through working together in self-help groups. However, their efforts have gone to waste following the eruption of inter-ethnic conflicts. This project focused on the impact of inter-ethnic conflicts in participation of women in livelihood activities in Molo, Nakuru district. Probability sampling was used to select the respondents from the affected areas while non probability sampling was employed to select women's group leaders, church leaders and government officials who served as key informants. Non probability sampling was also employed to select community leaders and displaced women in the internally displaced persons' camps for focus group discussions. A structured questionnaire was used for personal interviews, a focus group discussion guideline was used for focus group discussions, listed discussion topics guide was used for an in-depth interview with key informants, a check list was used for observation and a case study was conducted. A total of 90 respondents participated in the research. The results of the study showed that women had been working together in groups and had made significant achievements in improvement of their individual standards of living and in development of Molo area 77% of the respondents were actively involved in self-help groups work. They cited, tangible results and achievements of their work. On the other hand, our current study focuses on general ethnic conflict and national security.

In addition to that, a methodological gap can be identified from the research, for example, Leley (2015), conducted a study on the factors influencing inter-ethnic conflicts in Kuresoi North Sub- County in Nakuru, Kenya. The research was conducted using a descriptive research design. Two out of the four administrative wards in the sub-county were purposively sampled out for the study. A total of 120 respondents; who included the youth, politicians, religious

leaders, chiefs and assistant chiefs, women representatives, primary and secondary school teachers formed the study's sample population. The results of the study showed that agriculture, which is an economic activity, has influenced inter-ethnic conflicts in the sub-county; in that it has led to residents' desire to have more land for farming and grazing. The political factors which were found out to influence inter-ethnic conflicts encompassed political incitements and negative ethnic stereotypes. The socio-cultural factors which influenced inter-ethnic conflicts included traditional war songs and poems, cattle rustling, use of traditional war weapons and rites of passage such as circumcision. Our current study adopted a desk study review methodology where relevant empirical literature was reviewed to identify main themes.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a desktop literature review method (desk study). This involved an in-depth review of studies related to ethnic conflict and national security. Three sorting stages were implemented on the subject under study in order to determine the viability of the subject for research. This is the first stage that comprised the initial identification of all articles that were based on ethnic conflict and national security. The search was done generally by searching the articles in the article title, abstract, keywords. A second search involved fully available publications on the subject ethnic conflict and national security. The third step involved the selection of fully accessible publications. Reduction of the literature to only fully accessible publications yielded specificity and allowed the researcher to focus on the articles that related to ethnic conflict and national security which was split into top key words. After an in-depth search into the top key words (ethnic security, national security), the researcher arrived at 3 articles that were suitable for analysis.

Mutuku (2017), who conducted a study on the inter-ethnic conflict management in the Horn of Africa: the case study of the Borana and Rendile of Kenya. The study used both primary and secondary data and targeted a sample size of 43 respondents which included key experts and practitioners on matters conflict management in the study communities. The results of the study showed that conflict between Boran and Rendille are predominantly caused by resource related issues and culture. The study findings also showed that conflict in the region have historical causes linked to the region and institutions. Finally, the findings indicated that a number of conflict management measures are in place, both top-down and bottom-up initiatives.

Leley (2015), who conducted a study on the factors influencing inter-ethnic conflicts in Kuresoi North Sub- County in Nakuru, Kenya. Descriptive survey research design was used. Two out of the four administrative wards in the sub-county were purposively sampled out for the study. A total of 120 respondents; who included the youth, politicians, religious leaders, chiefs and assistant chiefs, women representatives, primary and secondary school teachers formed the study's sample population. The results of the study showed that agriculture, which is an economic activity, has influenced inter-ethnic conflicts in the sub-county; in that it has led to residents' desire to have more land for farming and grazing. The political factors which were found out to influence inter-ethnic conflicts encompassed political incitements and negative ethnic stereotypes. The socio- cultural factors which influenced inter-ethnic conflicts included traditional war songs and poems, cattle rustling, use of traditional war weapons and rites of passage such as circumcision.

Menyi (2009), who conducted a study on the impact of inter-ethnic conflicts on women's participation in livelihood activities: a case study of Molo, Nakuru county. Probability sampling was used to select the respondents from the affected areas while non probability sampling was employed to select women's group leaders, church leaders and government officials who served as key informants. Non probability sampling was also employed to select community leaders and displaced women in the internally displaced persons' camps for focus group discussions. A structured questionnaire was used for personal interviews, a focus group discussion guideline was used for focus group discussions, listed discussion topics guide was used for an in-depth interview with key informants, a check list was used for observation and a case study was conducted. A total of 90 respondents participated in the research. The results of the study showed that women had been working together in groups and had made significant achievements in improvement of their individual standards of living and in development of Molo area 77% of the respondents were actively involved in self-help groups work. They cited, tangible results and achievements of their work.

4.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

As this study has shown, Kenya has a long way to go to realize an acceptable standard of living for most of its people. Its present and future crop of leaders is faced with formidable challenges that call for exceptional and extraordinary leadership based on solid character. National unity

and integration are one such challenge that will preoccupy Kenyan leadership in the future. While ethnic conflict has not threatened the country in the manner it has in Rwanda, Somalia and Brurundi among others nations in the region, there is need to manage it more effectively and efficiently if Kenya is going to be a shining hegemonic example in Eastern Africa and the Great Lakes region. Kenyans in general are willing and the country, therefore, capable of becoming one large family. With abated breath until then, the country awaits leadership that will right the wrongs of the past, take up challenges with zest and vigor, bridge the gap between expectations and government performance and birth a true politico-economic and social liberation and transformation. This study is a humble contribution towards the recognition of the needs of the country as Kenya stands at the threshold of the 21st century characterized by globalization and other challenges.

4.2 Recommendations

The study focuses on the politicization of ethnicity by individual politicians or individual party members. As such, it does not analyze party politics. Therefore, it recommends an exclusive study of ethnic politics within and between political parties in the struggle for party positions and state power in Kenya respectively.

As far as government policy is concerned, this study supports the legal and administrative changes proposed in the Draft Constitution of Kenya (2004), for example, devolution of government with the district as the principal level of devolution. It is encouraging that policy measures are being taken to establish laws and institutions to check against corruption, for example, the Kenya Anti-Corruption Act and the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission. If implemented effectively, such laws, constitutional provisions and institutions will check against the abuse of office by political leaders and also remedy ethno-regional disparities.

REFERENCES

- Bel I Queralt, G., & Holst, M. (2016). A two-sided coin: Disentangling the economic effects of the ‘War on drugs’ in Mexico”. *IREA–Working Papers*, 2016, IR16/11.
- Mallozzi, P., Pelliccione, P., Knauss, A., Berger, C., & Mohammadiha, N. (2019). Autonomous vehicles: state of the art, future trends, and challenges. *Automotive Systems and Software Engineering*, 347-367.
- Mutongwa, S. M., & Rodrigues, A. J. (2020). Determinants of Computerized System for Execution of Maritime Security Systems.

Owoaje, E. T., Uchendu, O. C., Ajayi, T. O., & Cadmus, E. O. (2016). A review of the health problems of the internally displaced persons in Africa. *Nigerian postgraduate medical journal*, 23(4), 161.

Oucho, J. (2021). *Undercurrents of ethnic conflict in Kenya*. Brill.

Rex, J. (2013). *Race, colonialism and the city*. Routledge.

Stavenhagen, R. (2016). *Ethnic conflicts and the nation-state*. Springer.

Wong, A., Chau, A. K., Fang, Y., & Woo, J. (2017). Illuminating the psychological experience of elderly loneliness from a societal perspective: A qualitative study of alienation between older people and society. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 14(7), 824.