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CONFLICT POLICING IN THE PASTORAL COMMUNITIES IN ISIOLO COUNTY

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Abstract

Purpose: Isiolo is among north Eastern part of Kenya that has consistently experienced fatal conflicted clashes since 1990s. The effort to reduce these conflicts has remained unsustainable over years. Therefore, this study sought to assess the effectiveness of policing intervention in reducing armed violent conflict in Isiolo County.

Materials and Methods: This study was guided by two objectives seeking to assess effectiveness of policing interventions in reducing violent conflict in Isiolo boarder and investigate the factors for success or failure of policing intervention in address violent conflict in Isiolo. The study used content analysis research approach targeting, publication, police and security committee reports and secondary data from Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project. Data was analysed using quantitative research approach.

Findings: The study found that the armed conflict/clashes in the region have not significantly reduced over the last three decade. The clashes are mainly caused by power struggle among the elites, weak social agreements; exclusion and marginalisation; Resource and environmental factors. The study concludes that use of conflict policing has low potential in reduction of crime in Isiolo region. The political interference, Kenya criminal justice, ethnic relations, Ethnic culture, corruption in the police sector and poor conditions and terms of service remain the major problem in the success of conflict policing in the region.

Recommendations: The study recommends integration of programmes such as economic empowerment, control of illegal firearm trade in the region, disarming program to reduce weapons from civilians, reconciliation program among communities involved and cracking down gang leaders. Also, good remuneration of police officers manning the area will improve service delivery in the region.

Key words: Violent Conflict, Policing Intervention, Community clashes, Community Militia



INTRODUCTION

In recent years, conflicts have gotten more complex and lengthy. Conflict-affected nations are home to around 2 billion people, or nearly a third of the world's population. Conflict is often linked to global problems for instance change of climate and human trafficking, and current violent conflicts are no longer defined by national borders. Conflicts are estimated to cost \$13.6 trillion per year, according to Pleggenkuhle and Schafer (2018), and they pose a significant threat to the 2030 Agenda (Pleggenkuhle & Schafer, 2018). As a consequence, it's clear that players need to understand and manage dispute causes, particularly the critical moments that push vulnerability to aggression.

Conflict Policing analyses the police behaviour during times of conflict and the various concerns that surround it. Although that focuses on preventing crime during a war, it demands research into the interactions of numerous levels of policing, both national and international, as well as the interactions of different styles of policing, both formal and informal (Holm, 2012). Since the mid-twentieth century, wars have shifted from being predominantly inter-state to being mainly intra-state. This has far-reaching implications for the global community overall, and raises concerns about who is responsible in not only preventing, but also controlling conflicts in a way that minimizes loss of human life and harm to the entire system (Serafino, 2004; Jackson & Lyon, 2001).

Conflict may bring the police to a halt, but it does not put an end to policing. 'Government agencies' of one kind or another continue to organize social system, comprising the maintenance of policing (Macdonald & Allen 2015). Yet if the state has deserted them or has never 'shown up,' local people are extremely driven to minimize risk and ensuring order, even in conflict areas (Menkhaus 2006). Local communities feel encouraged to persist when government forces retreat policing solutions in dispute (e.g., by flight in Sierra Leone; by policy in northern Mali), and use possible forms when both nation and common tools to protect violently response, as this paper illustrates.

Violent confrontations frequently occur in developing nations, resulting in deaths and impairments. Fear of violent conflict also stifles these countries' social and economic progress. In developing and underdeveloped nations, there is a variety of causes for conflict violence, as well as a variety of remedies. For more than three decades, communal confrontations have been regular in this region. Confined resources and ethno-political disputes are the fundamental causes of these conflicts. Inter-communal fighting, livestock robbery, store burglary, and several killings have arisen from a bitter feud between the communities of Isiolo and neighbouring nations. Ethno-political conflicts have resulted in deadly fights between residents of Isiolo and its neighbours. Throughout election seasons, when politicians need to form coalitions to win a majority, tensions rise. In most instances, this has resulted in the involvement of police forces as a means of putting an end to the violence.

1.2. Problem statement

Basedau, Pfeiffer, & Vüllers (2016) found that armed conflict is a prominent cause of death among adolescents' males in developing nations and a serious impediment to growth. Kenya's North Eastern region has seen a significant increase in violence (Lind, 2018). Since the 1970s, conflicts in this area have claimed the lives of innocent individuals. A dispute



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between Turkana and Isiolo villages in 2012 resulted in the relocation of 5000 people and the damage of over 150 homes (UNHCR, 2012). In 2011, at least ten individuals were murdered and over 2000 were evacuated from their residence in Isiolo North, with roads barricaded, preventing people and animals from moving (UNHCR, 2011). Recent clashes involving Boran and Meru communities led to death of 7 people in 2015, 10 people in 2017 and 5 people in 2019 and 19 people in 2021. Despite police reforms such as Kenya police Reservist (KPR) and introduction of community policing, the security situation in Isiolo remains a main concern and a major impendent to economic growth. This study sought to analyse the effectiveness of conflict policing in Isiolo County.

The conflict policing examines the police behaviour during conflict. The role police play in peace keeping remains unclear. Previous studies have more inclined in community policing or post conflict policing. This body of literature is convincing, evaluating a variety of police innovations or reform initiatives (Hood, 2006; Jones, Wilson, Rathmell, & Riley, 2005; Lacher, 2007; Murray, 2007; Phelps, 2008), with mixed outcomes in case of achievement. Nevertheless, one thing remains unclear, the role of police in keeping peace in conflict-torn regions. This study seeks to the effectiveness of policing interventions in reducing violent conflict in Isiolo and the factors responsible for the success or failure.

1.3. Objectives of the study

- i. To assess the effectiveness of policing interventions in reducing violent conflict in Isiolo,
- ii. To investigate the factors for success or failure of policing intervention in address violent conflict in Isiolo.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The first corpus of research on urban violence and organized crime examines a wide variety of initiatives, the majority of which are implemented at the local community level. Three high- and moderate publications suggest that newly-elected mayors and governorship' public security agendas in Colombia and Brazil were effective in lowering urban violence (Gutierrez et al 2013; Hoelscher & Nussio 2015; Ratton et al 2014). Improvements to policing techniques, public knowledge programs, and outcome police administration, as well as enhanced integration and control of law enforcement and communication with affected areas.

Additional three publication look at influence of police activity in Brazil are substandard and lacked consistency in their conclusions regarding efficacy. The remaining papers examine forceful policing methods in Nairobi's poor neighbourhoods (Ruteere 2013), a disarming legislation in Brazil (Nascimento Filho & Morais 2014), and modifications in the criminal responsibility age in Brazil (Nascimento Filho & Morais 2014).

Militarized pacification of favelas in Brazil has reduced conflict in the short term, but has also increased marginalization, which risks perpetuating rather than diminishing causes of armed confrontation in the longterm, including driving the weakest out of the favela (Friggeri, Lambiotte, Kosinski & Fleury 2012). The inadequacy of mano dura tactics in El Salvador stimulated the seeking of a diplomatic resolution in 2012, when warring gangs agreed to a state bargained truce. However this resulted in a significant drop in homicides, it also aided the spread of gangs control and a 'criminalized' peace (Whitfield 2013). Decision-makers face considerable ethical challenges as a result of this trade-offs.



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In Sierra Leone, a research of reasonable quality revealed that organizing soccer matches between former combatants inside Disarming Demobilization Restorative justice camps and representatives of the surrounding community could help reduce violence amongst male youngsters (Dyck 2011). Another study of reasonable quality showed that financial support for DDR and SSR in the DRC was excessively "technical," ignoring political determinants of conflicts and including low integration between executing units (Labda, 2011). Even though approach used in the research is not utilized to determine the project's effectiveness in a scientifically robust manner, these strategy and design flaws ultimately reduced the project's benefit to former combatant reconciliation and SSR. Similarly, a research of multidonor assistance in southern Sudan discovered that security measures were planned without regard for the greater perspective or parallel donor-funded activities One important finding is that shrinking and reorganizing the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) while simultaneously developing a competent police force lead to a safety gap that both the police and the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) has addressed (Bennett et al 2010).

Several studies have highlighted the role of political considerations in explaining variability in the efficacy of identical approaches. In Colombia and Brazil, the two high-quality case studies cited above examine the differing efficiency of city or state civil protection initiatives in lowering urban crime (Gutierrez et al 2013; Hoelscher & Nussio 2015). Even though the concurrent transformation in a series of programs makes it difficult to attribute changes in outcomes to particular interventions, these research findings are beneficial in that they emphasize the impact of 'outsider' partnerships in shielding policy enterprises from vested interests inside the police and perhaps other powerful centres, as well as official communications initiatives in creating public approval for otherwise divisive policy initiatives. Finally, an assessment on disarming, demobilization, and reconciliation in Nepal shows that a reliance on community ownership is foolish when important political players lack a unified view of what constitutes successful results and transform program execution into a battleground for political manoeuvring (Subedi 2014). These researches, taken together, refute some common wisdom about inclusiveness and local responsibility: while change with too little buys-in will fail, the largest inclusiveness often leads to no progress at all. Pro-reform alliances, such as those formed by elected figures, a segment of the police hierarchy, and members of the public, is perhaps the most successful change agents.

The study was guided by conflict theory. Conflict resolution is a strategy-driven process (Chen & Cheung, 2005; Levine & Sheaman, 2005). The guiding principle behind gaming theory is strategies. The engagement in a conflict is viewed as a game in gaming theory (Murphy & Dee, 1992; Steinfatt, Seibold, & Frye, 1974). The game evolves through time as a result of various encounters, leading to the construction and maintenance of rules and conventions that regulate the game's play (Murphy, 1991).

Game theory stresses the incidence of strategy-based decision-making, which can result in either positive or bad outcomes. Each player has a certain amount of control on the activities of the other players in the game. Gaming theory, like reciprocity theory, has been widely used to the understanding of conflict in global relations. Furthermore, gaming theory provides a description of on-going interaction that leads to the establishment of game rules and conventions that are widespread in dispute resolution. In Conflict policing approach police must understand and the actions and strategies used by opposing parties and intervene as mediators.



METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive study design. The study used secondary data from Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) on issues of clashes in Isiolo from 1997 to the year 2021. The researcher also analysed empirical data from 63 academic papers, police reports, journals, news from mainstream Media in Kenya to obtain data on conflict in Isiolo, police response and challenges faced by police in addressing the growing armed clashes in the region.

Thematic analysis approach was used in summarising the constructs obtained from the reviewed journals. Descriptive analysis was used to analyse data obtained from the ACLED. The study results are presented through tables and figures.

RESULTS

The study found analysed various aspect of violence in the region on basis of location where clashes have been reported over the last three decades. The researcher also analysed annual number of cases of clashes reported in the region, the study also took into consideration the parties to conflicts and frequency of involvement in clashes over the last three decades and finally, the fatalities recorded from clashes each year.

Table 1 present finding on the locations where the clashes have been reported over the last three decades and their frequency. Majority of report clashes took place in Bula Pesa (42.4%), Garbatulla (18.6%) and Cherab (11.9%). This implies that the patterns of crimes are predictable.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Bula Pesa	25	42.4
Burat	3	5.1
Chari	4	6.8
Cherab	7	11.9
Garbatulla	11	18.6
Kinna	4	6.8
Ngare Mara	3	5.1
Oldonyiro	1	1.7
Sericho	1	1.7
Total	59	100.0

Table 1: Frequency of clashes by the region

Figure 1 show the percentage of clashes recorded each year; it was observed that most clashes were recorded in the year 1999, 2009 and 2018. Though these clashes may not predictable trend shows, the effort has not yielded fruitful solution over the years. This implies that there is need for more proactive approaches in management of these criminal activities.

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Figure 1: Trends of clashes in Isiolo region

Table 2 presents the findings on the parties to clashes in the region over the last three decades. Most of clashes had the Borana Ethnic Militia involved (20.0%), followed by Somali Ethnic Militia (11.6%) and Samburu Ethnic Militia (10.5%) among others as show in the table 2.

The dispute between the Borana and Gabra tribes should be viewed in the same way as the conflict between the communities: a competition for resources exacerbated by local politics. Marsabit is home to the Borana, Burji, Gabra, Rendile, Samburu, and Turkana peoples.

The Borana detest the Gabra and other populations who have lived and invested in the highlands of Saku parliamentary seat, the most productive area of a mostly arid district. The Borana feel targeted, and instability is one of the factors that lead to war. The ethnic groups of Borana and Gabra live on both countries of the Kenyan-Ethiopian border, significantly complicating the situation. Boran has been known to seek assistance from Ethiopian relatives. Conflicts over water and pasture, as well as cattle rustling, are the leading reasons of these confrontations.



Table 2: Parties to clashes in the region

Parties to armed clashes in the region	Frequency	%
Borana Ethnic Militia (Kenya)	19	20.0
Somali Ethnic Militia (Kenya)	11	11.6
Samburu Ethnic Militia (Kenya)	10	10.5
Unidentified Communal Militia (Kenya)	8	8.4
Unidentified Armed Group (Kenya)	8	8.4
Turkana Ethnic Militia (Kenya)	8	8.4
Auliyan Ethnic Militia (Kenya)	6	6.3
Unidentified Communal Militia (Kenya)	4	4.2
Degodia Ethnic Militia (Kenya)	3	3.2
Al Shabaab	3	3.2
Ajuran Ethnic Militia (Kenya)	3	3.2
Unidentified Ethnic Militia (Kenya)	2	2.1
Lagdera Communal Militia (Kenya)	2	2.1
Isiolo Communal Militia (Kenya)	2	2.1
Unidentified Tribal Militia (Kenya)	1	1.1
Toposa Ethnic Militia (Sudan)	1	1.1
Pokot Ethnic Militia (Kenya)	1	1.1
Ndorobo Ethnic Militia (Kenya)	1	1.1
Banana Political Militia	1	1.1
Auliyan Clan Militia (Somalia)	1	1.1
	95	100.0

The study further analysed the number of fatalities reported every year for the last three decades. The researcher found that in the year 2000, there were the 32 cases of deaths from community clashes, 22 in 2009, 27 in the year 2017 and 19 in the year 2021. This implies that the issues of clashes in Isiolo County continue to take place despite the issues of police





Causes of armed conflict in the region

The study further using empirical evidence for work published between 2011 to the year 2021. Various issues were identified as the major causes of armed conflicts/clashes within the region. Among identified cases include: power struggle among the elites, weak social agreements; exclusion and marginalisation; Resource and environmental factors. These are discussed below.

Elite power struggles, identity politics and political exclusion

The continuance of a set of political sponsorship, frequently along tribal lines, is amongst most powerful drivers of violence in Kenya. Political inclination at the heart of Kenya-Somalia border clashes in the north east of the country. In their quest of influence and domination of resources, prominent Somali clans and political elites, frequently use Somali clan memberships and underlying social inequalities. At the county level, devolution has led to institutionalisation of 'winner-take-all' ethnic politics. Population concerns in Kenya's north east currently revolve around minor clans inside counties, as opposed to the previous centralized arrangement.

Weak social agreements

Threats to peace and security in the North East arise in part from a long trajectory of problematic state-society (or state-citizen) relations between the Kenyan state and ethnic Somalis. The state has not only neglected the region, it has also 2 committed atrocities in the North East, which has made relationships between the communities and state deeply problematic. How the Kenyan state has historically viewed and treated the ethnic Somali population has contributed to the 'othering' of Kenyan Somali citizens, putting their lived experience of citizenship and equality of rights at risk.



Regional inequality, exclusion and marginalisation

The Northern region vulnerability to peace and stability is closely linked to entrenched patterns of politically and economically marginalization, discrimination, and inequalities. The region has historically been plagued by the country's greatest rates of poverty and lack of development, which has fuelled crime and instability. The Northern region has the nation's highest number of pastoralist societies, and these people feel the state has handled them unjustly, indicating high levels of community detachment from the state. North Kenyan regions score near the bottom of almost each ranking in the nation, lagging behind the rest of the regions in infrastructures, educational, and healthcare.

Resource and environmental factors

Competing politically and economically for resources in Northern Kenya – as well as inadequate access to land resources; these are major drivers of conflict and safety problems. Because these arid and semi-arid Northern areas have a poor socio - economic status, climatic disruptions and stresses, particularly drought, have more severe implications, such as severe food crisis. Pastoral disputes are more often and unexpected, aggravated by a shortage of resources, and have become more armed. Furthermore, deep-seated disparities exist in places wherever oil and hydrocarbon resources are found, making the manner in that projected income are distributed a possible driver of conflict or persistence.

Challenges of policing on community clashes in Isiolo

Looking on the empirical evidence with aim of analysing obstacles police have in minimizing armed confrontations in the region. It was observed Kenya's Criminal Justice System, Political Interferences, Culture And ethnicity and Conflict, and Poor Terms and Conditions of Service amongst police and policy executing officers are among the concerns cited.

Kenya's Criminal Justice System

Kenyan police are an important part of the wider judicial system, which also comprises courts that oversee the judicial procedure and correctional institutions like prisons. In the judicial system, the job of the police is to examine and bring individuals to the courts with substantiation for conviction. One of the difficulties stems from provisions of the new constitution, which was adopted on August 27, 2010, particularly Article 49 section f (i) of the Bill of Rights chapter. This clause enumerates and guarantees the rights of an arrested person. A police officer is mandated by the law to take a defendant to court within 24 hours of being detained. Officers claim that 24 hours is not enough time to gather and provide evidence for a court case. The consequence is that, in some cases, criminals who have been rushed to trial can be released due to a lack of evidence.

Political Interferences

According to the majority of the questioned police and civil society representatives, the Kenyan police officers were subjected to intervention in their work by the country's senior political class. This can be partially outlined by the broad powers that the executive arm of the state, particularly the President, had under the former constitutional provision. Formerly, the President held sole responsibility over the appointment and dismissal of the Police Chief, who worked for him at his discretion. In effect, this implied that prior office bearers had to toe the government's line or face dismissal. Political meddling, that has not been greatly



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reduced by the adoption of a new constitutional provision, impedes the rule of law and police officers, among many other issues. This is especially true when it comes to drug smuggling as well as other high-profile offenses.

Ethnic Relations and Violence

Whenever it concerns to ethnic diversity and conflict, the Kenyan police face enormous challenges. This can be partly explained by the character of the nation's volatile politics. In campaign season, ethnic tensions are very common (prior to and after elections). That's what Ajulu refers to as "political ethnicity," that he describes as "a political class' predisposition to organize ethnic group for political objectives." Campaign season violence is not a new occurrence in Kenya; it has occurred frequently throughout the country's contemporary history. Ethnic tensions resurfaced in the Rift Valley Province with the reinstatement of multi-party democracy in 1991. The high level of coordination of the conflicts, that state security agents seemed to be unable to overcome, fueled speculations about the country's and certain key legislators' engagement in the disturbances. The electoral unrest in 2007/2008 was especially overpowering for the police, who seemed powerless to stop it.

The rise of militia gangs and vigilante groups in Kenya, like the *Borana Ethnic Militia*, *Somalia Ethnic Militia*, *Samburu Ethnic Militia*, *Turkana Ethnic Militia*, *and Auliyan Ethnic Militia*, among many others, tends to increase ethnic violence. Proponents believe that these militia groups are created for economic wellbeing and organized around cultural communities. Another factor driving the emergence and evolution of these militant groups is indeed the state's increasing inability to guarantee safety.

Poor Terms and Conditions of Service

Considering the existence threats they face in their police operations and struggle against criminality, the police often lack proper medical insurance. Their operational and logistical infrastructure reflects their low service standards. They have a limited IT architecture and must rely on human data recording and processing in several cases. Every one of these circumstances contributes to their relatively low enthusiasm and lead many personnel to indulge in unethical professional conduct. Empirical evidence provides that low pay compels most law officers to engage in bribery to make ends meet.

Conclusion

The study concludes that use of conflict policing has low potential in reduction of crime in Isiolo region. The political interference, Kenya criminal justice, ethnic relations, Ethnic culture, corruption in the police sector and poor conditions and terms of service remain the major problem in the success of conflict policing in the region. Due the above challenges, the armed conflicts/clashes in the region remain high; the issue appears more historical and deeper intervention may be required to improve tolerance among the communities living in the region.

Recommendations

The police intervention adopted in region affected by clashes has been more reactive and less proactive. Consequently, the issue of culture, resource conflict, and political influence has made the policing of conflict more strenuous and unproductive. Therefore, the study recommends integration of programmes such as economic empowerment, control of illegal firearm trade in the region, disarming program to reduce weapons from civilians,



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reconciliation program among communities involved and cracking down gang leaders. Also, good remuneration of police officers manning the area will improve service delivery in the region. There is also need to adopt more approaches that will promote dialogue between the rival groups and promotion of regular engaging approaches to maintain lasting peace.

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