

Exploring alternative approaches for managing electoral injustice in Africa

The case of breast protests in Nigeria and the sex strike in Kenya

INTRODUCTION

Peace and conflict are outcomes of human relations. However, neither is a permanent condition and rarely do they occur concurrently or simultaneously in a society. Rather, their existence is intermittent and interchangeable, with peace being punctured by conflict and vice versa. Conflict is a universal phenomenon and, in essence, is a global occurrence. Equally, the present global system is not immune to conflicts. During the Cold War era, conflict in Africa focused mainly on interstate boundary wars, with intrastate wars being limited to a few states on the continent. The post-Cold War era, however, which incidentally has coincided with the period of democratisation in the region, has witnessed a surge in interstate wars, based on political and ethno-religious causes. Still, the African continent continues to be ravaged by violent conflicts.

In trying to establish the causes of the protracted communal, ethnic, regional and religious conflicts in Africa, Egwu (2007) argues that conflicts are products of four elements namely: authoritarianism; centralisation of power and resources; weak state structure; and the central role of the state in the construction of political identity, rights and citizenship.¹ According to Egwu, each of these key elements of the African state overlaps and intersects with the others. Political contestations over national leadership and marginalisation in resource allocation have assumed centre stage in most conflicts since the end of the Cold War. The transition from authoritarianism and tyranny to democratic rule has not been easy. African dictators and tyrannical leaders have resisted the transition before succumbing to both internal and external pressures. However, the electoral process has often turned to warfare in many of the states, as it has sometimes been difficult to remove incumbents

through the ballot box. Furthermore, by manipulating the electoral process and rigging the elections against opposition candidates, incumbents have ensured that the people's votes have not counted.

This study deals with three main issues. The first is the role of traditional and urban women's movements in managing the protracted electoral crises in Nigeria and Kenya. The second is the impact of customary and orthodox repercussions of the public display of half-naked bodies and bare breasts by women and their sex-denying strategies for attaining electoral justice in Nigeria and Kenya, respectively. The third is the possibility of converting these strategies to regional tools for achieving electoral justice, peace and political stability.

ELECTORAL CONFLICTS AND SUCCESSION CRISES IN NIGERIA AND KENYA

Political leadership succession and electoral crisis in Nigeria

Nigeria attained independence from Britain in 1960 with the transfer of power to the elected civilian administration of Tafawa Balewa as prime minister. Between 1960 and 1966, the nation became deeply embroiled in political instability arising from electoral fraud with regard to leadership succession at both the federal and regional levels. Thus Nigeria was faced with a legitimacy crisis while it tried to construct an integrated and united nation. In this unstable political situation the military struck and overthrew the governing authorities at all levels. However, Nigeria did not attain political stability under the respective military regimes that followed, as it experienced a bloody civil war between 1966 and 1970 and a series of countercoups. Between 1966 and 1999,

the military ruled for a period of about 30 years, with eight different military heads of state. All the elections organised by the military were marred by irregularities, including the one that brought Olusegun Obasanjo to power as president in 1999.

The 2007 election was the first to see a civilian-to-civilian power transfer in Nigeria. However, as with previous elections, it was marred by widespread fraud and violence.² Opposition candidates, civil society pro-democracy groups, and local and international poll monitors condemned the election for not meeting the basic minimum international standards for conducting elections. Arising from the complaints and grievances regarding the election by opposition candidates, more than 2 000 election petitions were filed at various election tribunals.³ The tribunals overturned the results of some of the state governorship and parliamentary elections, cancelling the elections either completely or in part and ordering a rerun in some cases. Many of the petitions are still pending three years later and about one year before the next election. The political implication of the judicial pronouncements is that election verdicts and victories are no longer determined at polling stations but rather in courtrooms.

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Election and leadership succession crisis in Kenya

Kenya attained independence in 1963 after a Mau-Mau led rebellion against colonial Britain. Jomo Kenyatta, the leader of the movement, assumed the leadership of the country as president. From the start he initiated the ethnicisation of governance by favouring his Kikuyu ethnic group in all spheres of the state. Other ethnic groups and political parties were isolated and marginalised in the allocation of national resources. This isolation and marginalisation of the other ethnic groups triggered opposition against the Kenyatta government politically and economically. In 1978 Daniel Arap Moi eventually succeeded Kenyatta as the president. Moi embarked on

a policy of reverse discrimination by trying to reduce the established inequalities forged by his predecessor. Rather than focusing on the previously favoured Kikuyu ethnic group, he embarked on the empowerment of his Kalenjins ethnic group politically, economically and educationally. His rule was characterised by repression, which exacerbated his one-party dictatorship to a level of state terrorism that saw the banning of opposition groups, including students' unions. The divisive attitudes of Kenyatta and Moi promoted ethnic politics in the country and led to elections becoming a battleground.

Moi was unable to resist a new wave of democracy of the 1990s: opposition pro-democracy groups and marginalised ethnic groups exerted concerted pressure on the regime for democratic reforms. Although Moi opposed democratic multiparty politics, the withdrawal of aid funds by Western donors induced him to conduct the first multiparty elections in Kenya in 1992.⁴ The elections were marred by allegations of intimidation, fraud and various strong-arm tactics by the ruling party.⁵

NEGOTIATING ELECTORAL JUSTICE: THE ANATOMY AND MORPHOLOGY OF BREAST PROTESTS IN NIGERIA AND THE SEX STRIKE IN KENYA

Electoral crisis in Nigeria and naked breast protests

As stated earlier, the 2007 general elections in Nigeria were marred by irregularities and fraud. The election tribunals established in accordance with the 2006 Electoral Act reversed some of the electoral verdicts by proclaiming the earlier losers as winners, while in other cases the tribunals ordered the elections to be rerun in some states, senatorial districts, constituencies and wards. The governorship of Ekiti State was one of the contested election results. This election, as in the other 35 states of the Federation, was held on 14 April 2007. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) declared Mr Segun Oni of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) as winner. However, Dr Kayode Fayemi, the Action Congress (AC) candidate, disagreed with the verdict and alleged fraud and malpractices in the election. He consequently filed a petition with the tribunal, which later adjudged the INEC's verdict as valid and consequently upheld the victory of Segun Oni as the governor of Ekiti State. Kayode Fayemi appealed the lower tribunal's judgement. The Appeal Court overturned the lower tribunal's judgement. It cancelled the local government election results in ten of the 16 states on the grounds of proven irregularities and ordered the INEC to rerun the elections in the affected local governments and wards.

The rerun elections were conducted by the INEC on 25 April 2009. The Appeal Court confirmed the validity of the votes of the two candidates in the remaining local governments where rerun elections did not take place. The rerun election was, however, crucial to both parties and candidates since the partial results confirmed by the court showed that Fayemi was leading by as many as 10 000 votes, thus placing much pressure on Oni, who belonged to the ruling party at the federal level, to cancel out the 10 000-vote lead held by Fayemi. Fayemi and the AC also needed to consolidate their lead in order to claim overall victory. As expected, the political situation became tense and charged. Violence and thuggery were anticipated. Consequently, 10 000 policemen were deployed to the affected local governments to ensure security and law and order. The elections were eventually held.

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A huge drama developed at the election collation centre where results were announced, leading eventually to the intervention of traditional women. The Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) for Ekiti State, Ayoka Adebayo, a 74-year-old woman, announced the results of all the local government and ward elections except for the Ido-Osi local government area, the home of Segun Oni. She rejected those results on the grounds that they had not been duly accredited by party agents and not collated at designated centres.⁶ She later resigned her position as REC. In her resignation letter she claimed that she had resigned because of her frustration at attempts to force her to announce the unauthenticated results of Ido-Osi.⁷ The president, however, rejected her resignation. The situation developed into a stalemate since the election was inconclusive. This created a space for intervention by noted individuals and groups to resolve the electoral crisis. One of the groups that intervened

was the Ekiti Women for Peace (EWP) organisation led by Ronke Okusanya. This women's group mobilised and organised other women from the 16 local government areas in the state to embark on street protests in Ado-Ekiti, the state capital.

The women were senior citizens ranging in age from about 55 to 80. They appeared in the streets, naked from their waists to their heads, with their flaccid breasts exposed to the gaze of passers-by in the streets. Their grey-haired heads were also exposed as they wore no headgear or scarves. Their lower bodies were wrapped in white cloth. As they trekked along the streets, they stopped intermittently, knelt down, touched the ground with their breasts and cursed whoever would rig the elections against Fayemi, whom they believed had won the election.

Their leader, Mrs Okusanya, informed the public that the women had decided to protest half naked to press home the demand for the sanctity of their votes. She stressed that 'there cannot be peace without justice', and warned that election riggers and manipulators of the electoral will of the people would no longer get away with fraud.⁸

Kenyan women and the sex strike option

The proclamation of a sex strike by some groups of women in Kenya was brought about by the electoral crisis that emerged following the disputed December 2007 presidential election. Local and international observers and monitors judged the election to be deeply flawed. The two candidates in the presidential election, Mwai Kibaki and his challenger Raila Odinga, were both determined to win the election at all costs. The two men represent the two major ethnic groups in the country, which, since the Kenyatta era and the establishment of ethnic politics, have been engaged in inter-ethnic contestations.

Before the election it was common knowledge that the country's electoral commission was incompetent and lacked neutrality. Hence, the declaration of President Kibaki as the winner of the discredited election ignited widespread inter-ethnic violence started by the opposition. This violence claimed about 1 300 casualties, displaced about 300 000 people and caused more than 500 000 people to be in need of humanitarian assistance.⁹ In January 2008, the African Union (AU) mandated a peace mediation process to end the violence and constituted a panel of 'Eminent African Personalities' chaired by former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan. After 41 days of mediation, the panel achieved a negotiated power-sharing agreement between Kibaki and Odinga. This agreement, which was signed by the two major actors, Kibaki and Odinga, is officially called the 'National Accord and Reconciliation Act'. It established the office

of the prime minister in addition to the presidency, and, while Kibaki remained the president, Odinga became the prime minister. A power-sharing cabinet headed by Odinga was eventually inaugurated on 17 April 2008. This coalition agreement seemingly put an end to the political catastrophe that had resulted from electoral injustice. Unfortunately, however, this agreement did not last very long, resulting in another round of political squabbles, with the opposition calling for new elections.

The call for new elections aroused the concern and fear of the entire public because of the recent post-election political violence which had claimed hundreds of lives in addition to causing other losses and hardship. It was these unpalatable experiences and irreparable losses that prompted the coalition of some women's groups called 'Women's Development Organisation' (WDO), led by Rukia Subow, to call a week-long sex strike by Kenyan women as a way of forcing the president and the prime minister to resolve their differences. Women were asked to abstain from having sex with their husbands for a week.

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REPERCUSSIONS OF THE ALTERNATIVE TRADITIONAL PEACE AND JUSTICE NEGOTIATIONS

Implications of a display of naked breasts by old women

It is a taboo in the African culture for a woman to be seen in public with naked breasts. In some African cultural settings, for instance, the traditional importance of breasts is so strong that if a child offends the mother so that he or she inflicts injury on the mother, the mother may go naked, hold her two breasts and cursing the child. It is believed that such a curse is irreversible. Obviously, then, breasts in the African traditional setting are more than providers of nursing nourishment.

They are also considered to nourish the emotional and spiritual development of both the mother and her baby. It is on this premise that some cultures believe that, whenever there is crisis in the land, the exposure of their breasts by the women is a sign of their displeasure and consequently their opposition to the relevant occurrence. It is believed that acknowledging the implications of such an act will sensitise the people or authorities concerned and spur them on to make all the necessary corrections. The inability to effect the necessary correction may bring a curse on the land. It is on the basis of this belief that we need to examine the traditional implications of the display of naked breasts by the women protesters as an alternative approach to electoral crisis management.

This study undertook surveyed interrogations by way of oral interviews and group discussions with aged rural and urban women and also elderly traditional men, and some of the participants in the protest. Responses revealed that it is considered a taboo or abomination for elderly women to expose the upper parts of their bodies, including their breasts and heads. The Yoruba people refer to taboo as *eewo*. Their society generally forbids the displaying of naked breasts, and disapproves of women that do this, especially elderly women, except under special circumstances such as during an intractable crisis. So, when this does occur, it portends a bad omen for the individuals or group of people against whom the women are protesting.

For the women to display their breasts and touch the bare ground with their breasts one after the other and curse anyone rigging or manipulating the results of the rerun election would be inviting great calamities to befall any such persons. Such election riggers could risk becoming critically ill; losing societal relevance; and later being entirely forgotten socially and politically, and, ultimately, experiencing an untimely death. Furthermore, these outcomes would not be limited to the immediate perpetrators of the electoral crisis only. The curse would have a generational effect as it would snowball and spill over from one generation to the next, including those yet unborn.

The exposure of the hair on their heads by the women is a sign of mourning a dead husband; it is a kind of burial rite by a widow. The implication, therefore, for electoral officials that may have rigged the election in favour of an unpopular candidate is that they would experience mourning in their homes and families owing to untimely deaths. The displaying of their naked breasts and the uncovering of their heads were a double approach meant to defer, pre-empt and punish election result manipulators during the Ekiti State rerun election. The Ekiti State REC eventually announced the results, including those that she had initially claimed were not validly endorsed. The PDP candidate was pronounced

the winner. The result has been challenged by the opposition AC candidate and the case is still pending before the state's electoral tribunal.

Synergising sex values and implications of the sex strike

In the same vein, one may ask: what are the repercussions of the sex ban on the husbands of the Kenyan women strikers? The effects are best evaluated by first examining the functions of sexual intercourse in human beings. The important question that may be asked at this junction is: why was sex singled out by the women for negotiating political peace? A meaningful response to this question should begin with an attempt to operationalise the concept of 'sex' or, as it is better understood, 'sexual intercourse'. Vasudevan maintains that the strict biological definition of sexual intercourse is aimed at reproduction.¹⁰ Humans practise sexual intercourse to produce children. However, they also engage in sexual intercourse for reasons beyond the need for procreation and perpetuation of the human race. Sex serves a wide range of other functions and has social, emotional, psychological, physical and medicinal roles. Socially, it engenders intimate communication between two people: the two partners involved engage themselves in all forms of communication both verbal and non-verbal, before and also after sexual intercourse. In the prelude to, during and after intercourse many issues are often discussed. The Kenyan women's group, the WDO, quite understood this value of sex when it asked the wives of the president and prime minister to request they 'do something for Kenya', which was to give peace a chance, during their 'pillow talk' with their husbands.

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Sex is politically valued. It can be used as a determining influence on who gets what, when and how. To men, it is so important that they will often do anything to secure it from women. Some men buy cars or houses or other

valued goods for women in order to satisfy their carnal needs. Women, on the other hand, use sex to influence very powerful men in government or other positions of authority, to influence executive office holders in their favour and to acquire wealth or be allocated resources. According to York, sex 'clouds our judgment and forces us to ignore obvious flaws in the women we pursue'.¹¹

The politics of a sex strike therefore entails pressurising all men in power – from the local government councillor at grass-roots level, to commissioners, national ministers, parliamentarians, all judges, even to the prime minister and his deputies, the vice-president and the president at the apex – to make promises relating to ways of resolving the nation's lingering political crisis by their wives denying them sex. This approach was effective because of the acknowledged fact that Kenya is a 'macho country', implying that Kenyan men like sex and cannot do without it.¹²

At another level, sex is psycho-medicinal and is psychologically enriching in two senses: firstly, the mere fact that a person is sexually attractive to another person arouses a kind of emotional happiness; and, secondly, it is an expression of love.¹³ It makes both parties feel desired by each other. Lytle argues that sexual intercourse is a positive experience for the wholeness of the body.¹⁴ A study by Scott found that sex enhances normal blood pressure.¹⁵ She maintains that people who have recently had intercourse tend to have either lower baseline blood pressures, a lower blood pressure rise during stressful events, or both. Sex promotes the physical and emotional stability of the two sex partners. The Kenyan women's realisation of the power of sex must have informed their application of the sex weapon to negotiate peace in the country.

In effect, the seven-day sex strike would deprive the men of the benefits of enjoying the vital social, psycho-medical and physical advantages of sex for that period. The sexually isolated and deprived men would miss the opportunities of socially communicating and interacting with their wives at bedtime and at other leisure times. The normal intimacy between the couple would be denied and the psychological and medicinal benefits of sex would not be enjoyed by either party. The psychological and emotional feelings of being loved would be suspended for the period for both sexes.

A much greater repercussion of the seven days of sex abstinence would be the effect on the demographic growth of Kenya. Sexual intercourse's major utility value is its function as a means of procreation for sustaining the human race and increasing the population. Without sexual intercourse, human perpetuity would be in danger as, certainly, sex strike greatly reduced possibilities of conceptions. Whichever way one looks at the sex ban, individuals and the nation as a whole would be adversely affected.

REGIONAL ADAPTABILITY OF A TRADITIONALIST ENGENDERED PARADIGM FOR ELECTORAL JUSTICE

The adaptability value of the breast protests and sex strike by the Nigerian and Kenyan women, respectively, can best be evaluated by assessing the power of modern techniques of conflict resolution, constitutionalism and respect for the rule of law by African leaders. Most African leaders have no respect for the law: they constantly tamper with and manipulate the constitutions that are supposed to provide the foundation of and direction for democracy. These same constitutions, which are meant to serve the needs of the entire population, have often been devalued to serve only the greedy interests of African rulers. In most emerging African democracies, the judiciary has become politicised and therefore can no longer be impartial and neutral in mediating and arbitrating cases between the people and their decadent leaders. The executive appoints the judges and allocates funds to this third arm of government. All these facts make it easy for the presidents of most states to control, manipulate and dictate to the judiciary. And when judges are under political control and financially dependent, it is quite clear that they cannot arbitrate objectively and determine electoral cases that would be to the disadvantage of the ruling party. When this situation arises, the populace undoubtedly loses confidence in the judicial system and consequently looks elsewhere for justice.

In most emerging African democracies, the judiciary has become politicised and therefore can no longer be impartial and neutral in mediating and arbitrating cases between the people and their decadent leaders

It was under such conditions that the breast protest became imperative in the Ekiti State of Nigeria and the sex strike took place in Kenya. Both Nigeria and Kenya are considered very corrupt nations where the entire governance system, including the judiciary, are often ranked as most corrupt. Ordinarily, in Nigeria, curses inflicted by naked-breasted women are sufficient to make the hard-headed tremble and afraid. The fear of possible

premature death, rampaging attacks by strange and incurable illnesses, and future hardship for themselves and members of their families could induce recalcitrant and unjust leaders to toe the line of peace and justice. Notwithstanding the fearsomeness of the traditional conflict management approach of naked breasts, the approach has both natural and regional limitations with regard to adaptability.

Firstly, at a cultural level, the displaying of naked breasts by elderly women for the purpose of resolving conflict is not national traditional behaviour in Nigeria. While it is a widely accepted cultural practice in the Yorubaland area of Nigeria, it is strange to many other cultural segments of the Nigerian polity. Nigeria has over 250 ethnic groups speaking more than 500 languages. Each cultural grouping in the country has its own traditional practices for managing local conflicts, which differ from breast showing. In the same vein, Africa is a multicultural and multilingual region with about 2 000 languages. Thus Africa is definitely a continent with extensively diverse trado-cultural contexts. Naked breast protests by women may therefore be strange to many of the cultures. Although cases of breast exposure do occur in some cultures, including some in Nigeria, these take place mostly during traditional festivals and special ceremonies and are performed by young teenage girls and not married and elderly women. The major obstacle to the regional acceptance of the breast-showing approach by elderly women, therefore, is that it is geographically confined and its possible spread to other cultural climes is constrained by increasing modernity.

Another problem associated with the breast paradigm is its unscientific nature and the extended period prior to the manifestation of its effects on the targeted individuals responsible for perpetrating conflict and obstructing justice. It takes a long time for traditional curses, like oath taking, to have an effect on the actors concerned. Therefore, the main goal of deterring political actors from committing evil and violating the laws of the land with impunity while in government may not be achieved until long after they have left and the consequent negative outcomes of the traditional curse-induced taboos may not be linked to the violations committed by a particular government once it is no longer in power. Similarly, the occurrence of strange diseases and ultimately deaths may not be tied to the curses as the linkages cannot be scientifically proved. Furthermore, modern medical practice has made it possible to determine biological or natural causes of diseases and deaths.

Nor is the potential of the regional applicability of the sex strike approach without hindrances. Its use as an African regional modality for troubleshooting is hampered by a number of factors. First is the almost total ban in the African society on discussing sex-related

issues openly and in the presence of children. Unlike in Euro-American culture, sex in the African context is a sacred issue and therefore it can only be secretly and confidentially discussed by adults. Any violation of this African cultural code puts paid to the regional acceptance of using sex openly for peacemaking. Second is the challenge of its implementation. How can a sex boycott be implemented and who ensures its adherence? How can the violation of the ban be detected? Practically, the implementation and/or its enforcement are impossible. Possibly, the observance of the ban would not go beyond the organisers, and then only to those that are married.

The third obstacle, which follows from the above, involves the social implications for the institution of marriage. Assuming the sex strike could be implemented, it would deprive many men of their sexual rights, particularly by their own wives, and this deprivation would be an embarrassment for the men who are neither in government nor guilty of violating their marital vows or failing in their marital responsibilities. Such a denial would result in many divorce cases and such a decision would also violate African culture: it is un-African for women to dictate to their husbands on any matter, including the issue of sex.

The third obstacle is the social implications for the institution of marriage. Assuming the sex strike could be implemented, it would deprive many men of their sexual rights. Such a denial would result in many divorce cases

Fourthly, a sex boycott would promote promiscuity among men and young girls. According to their religion, most African men are inclined towards engaging with multiple partners. So, if their wives should shun their sexual advances, it would give them just cause to seek sexual pleasure elsewhere. If one assumes that prostitutes will effectively not join the sex strike, they will be readily available for the men. The dire economic situation across the region means that parents often abandon their children, especially if these children are female. The result is that most of these young girls fend for themselves by any means, including dating men with more money than they and engaging in unofficial commercial sex. Two major

results will flow from this shift towards sex with young girls: there will be an upsurge in the cases of unwanted pregnancy, illegal abortions, unwanted children and one-parent, female-headed families, and there will be an increase in cases of HIV/AIDS. Currently, 60 per cent of all cases of the disease worldwide occur in Africa. In essence, while the sex strike option may provide a recipe for peace, it may also ultimately compound the social problems of the continent, as the spread of HIV/AIDS will deplete both its human and economic resources.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It appears that, while democratic institutions are symbolically installed, democratic culture and behaviour are yet to be imbibed by most countries. Likewise, it seems that elections are conducted mainly to satisfy electoral provisions, the international community and foreign donors, while at heart political parties lack internal democracy and therefore are not democratic. Throughout the continent of Africa, political leaders are not popularly elected, but rather they foist themselves on the populace by manipulating their constitutions and rigging elections in their own favour. Elections are neither free nor fair: voting statistics are concocted, manufactured and configured for the 'winners'. Electoral injustice arising from such rigged elections ultimately leads to violent political conflicts with dire consequences such as arson, assassination, mass killings and genocide, and humanitarian crises spawn large numbers of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs). These occurrences attest to the fact that democracy takes time to grow and be nurtured to maturity in divided and emerging societies.

It may be difficult to adapt naked breast protests and sex strikes as techniques for managing conflicts because of the identified limitations inherent in them. Nevertheless, one can trace three basic lessons being communicated by the women in Nigeria and Kenya quite clearly. The first is that the women long for genuine democracy – a democracy in which leadership is determined by the ballot box and in which the electorate's votes count. The women are opposed to election rigging, electoral injustice and the imposition of leadership.

Secondly, they aspire to good governance. Such good governance can be achieved only by democratic leaders who will fulfil their electoral promises and bring the benefits of democracy to the people. Such leaders will look after the welfare of the citizenry and be accountable to the people by utilising state resources legitimately to promote the growth and development of the state and the people. Such leaders have the welfare of the people at heart rather than their own.

The third is that the women desire justice, peace and stability for their communities, countries and the

African continent in general. The women are quite aware that only justice and good governance can bring about peace and stability. The appeal of the naked breast protest and sex strike by the women is for men and all people in power to 'give peace a chance'. The women's concern for peace and stability stems from the fact that they bear the negative consequences and the costs of war and violent conflicts more than men.

Therefore, the agitation to include women in conflict management is not strictly an advocacy for gender mainstreaming of the peacemaking processes in Africa, but rather a call on the men in power to be mindful of their actions, since poor governance and electoral injustice adversely affect women and their families. The overall message, therefore, is that achieving peace should not be gendered, but rather that both men and women should be able to pressurise and influence African leaders to embark on a regime of democratic good governance which promotes justice, and abhors politics and electoral situations that can precipitate and cause violent conflicts in the African region.

NOTES

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ABOUT THIS PAPER

Conflict management in Africa has some discernible weaknesses. Firstly, concentration on formal peace processes which undermine informal avenues constitutes a major challenge. Secondly, peace processes are gendered, as women are excluded from formal processes, which are perceived as asexual. Thirdly, electoral violence is endemic to transitional democracy in Africa. Many countries in the region are yet to embrace the culture of electoral integrity and transparent elections for effecting leadership change. This study examines and compares the role of traditional and enlightened women's movements in managing the protracted electoral crises in Nigeria and Kenya. Relying on randomly surveyed primary data, group discussions and critical content analysis, the study specifically interrogates and evaluates the potency, customary and orthodox implications, and the possibility of the regional applicability of traditionalism involving the display of half-naked bodies and bare breasts by elderly women and sex strikes in managing political conflicts and negotiating electoral justice in the two emerging democracies.

Key words arbitration, breast protest, conflict, democracy, electoral injustice, sex strike, taboo .

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