



ELECTIONS AND VIOLENT CONFLICT IN KENYA

MAKING PREVENTION STICK

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ABOUT THE REPORT

This report aims to complement existing postelection analysis by examining local experiences of Kenya's 2013 general elections, evaluating the various factors that worked to prevent widespread violent conflict and assessing the sustainability of the "relative calm" achieved during the electoral period. The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and its partners, the Constitutional Reform and Education Consortium (CRECO) and the Interparty Youth Forum (IPYF), convened citizen dialogues and conducted key informant interviews to evaluate preventive efforts around the March 2013 general elections in Kenya. Through qualitative research, USIP and its partners collected original data from November to mid-December 2013 in ten carefully selected counties across Kenya—Marsabit, Embu, Nyeri, Nakuru, Uasin Gishu, Bungoma, Kisumu, Nyamira, Mombasa, and Nairobi. The citizen views collected offer valuable insights into popular attitudes and the factors that influenced behavior during the electoral process. This report is part of USIP's broader commitment to peace in the Horn of Africa and thematic focus on preventing electoral violence.

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Cover photo: Nairobi, Kenya: Messages of peace by artist Solomon Muyundo (also known as Solo 7) mark the walls throughout Kibera, Kenya's largest slum. (Michelle Shephard/Toronto Star via Getty Images)

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors alone. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Institute of Peace.

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[Preventing mass violence does not mean that election-related violence was absent in Kenya, or that elections are peaceful. Failures to make these distinctions in analysis and evaluation risk distorting estimations of the potential for future violence, potential triggers, and underlying conflict drivers.]

Summary

- International election observers and diplomats celebrated the March 2013 Kenyan general elections as “peaceful” and “successful.” But Kenyans disagree. The local population described the electoral experience as one of “tense calm” or “unstable peace.” These contrasting—even contradictory—views raise questions about the legitimacy of the success narrative.
- The 2013 general elections proceeded without mass violence, a significant advance in light of the country’s recent electoral history. But Kenyan citizens were hesitant to credit peacebuilding efforts for this relative success and expressed concern about the high levels of ethnic tension, hate speech, voter bribery, and intimidation throughout the electoral period, both in areas previously hard hit by violence and in areas where electoral violence was unprecedented.
- Narratives of fear and memory were the dominant explanations for why the country averted mass violence. Kenyans still recall the devastating impact of previous episodes of conflict, particularly the 2007–08 postelection violence. Those memories reduced the appeal of violence and encouraged restraint during the 2013 elections.
- The notion of Kenya as a ticking time bomb is prevalent within the local population. There is a widespread expectation that violent conflict could erupt even before the 2017 elections as the long-standing grievances that fueled violence in 2007–08, and were merely suppressed during the 2013 general elections, have not been resolved. Mombasa, Marsabit, and Bungoma stand out among the counties where dialogues were conducted as facing a particularly high risk of imminent violent conflict.
- The withdrawal of international assistance further increases the risk of future violence, particularly when civil society is increasingly under threat and operating within a shrinking space.
- As related but distinct fields of peacebuilding practice, atrocity prevention, electoral violence prevention, and conflict prevention remain stovepiped and require further integration. Convening practitioners from these fields in joint conflict assessments and adjusting the annual funding cycles of international actors, including the U.S. government, to facilitate election programs that address root causes of violent political conflict are tangible first steps.
- Experienced peacebuilding organizations should offer technical assistance to election administrators and democracy practitioners, including best practices on mitigating triggers for election violence and addressing underlying drivers of widespread political violence.

Introduction

Following the announcement of presidential election results on December 30, 2007, Kenya experienced the worst electoral violence since the inception of multiparty politics in 1992, leaving more than 1,100 people dead, 650,000 displaced, and the country deeply divided.¹ Cost assessments of previous international engagements and the financial impact of widespread violent conflict demonstrate how the cost of preventing violence would have only been a fraction of what the 2007–08 violence cost the Kenyan economy.² The coalition government, formed under the leadership of Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga, with mediation by Kofi Annan, adopted a comprehensive reform agenda outlining immediate steps and long-term structural changes to prevent future violence—including the adoption of a new constitution, a new electoral commission, and a reformed judiciary—and the structures to initiate a national dialogue and reconciliation process. To avoid a return to violence around the 2013 general elections, the international community provided considerable logistical, financial, and political support to assist the Kenyan government in carrying out these reforms.

The Kenyan government, in collaboration with civil society and with support from the international community, set out an ambitious peace agenda including large investments in new technology, early warning systems, and capacity-building programs for the country's peace infrastructure. The National Steering Committee (NSC) on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management was mandated to coordinate conflict prevention efforts from international organizations, national agencies, and nongovernmental organizations. Working with a range of government institutions and nongovernmental actors, including the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC),³ district peace committees (DPCs), and local organizations, the NSC aimed to identify possible flashpoints for violence, anticipate and mitigate potential threats, and enhance the government's capacity to deal with moments of vulnerability through targeted responses and community-based approaches.

Despite this complex peace infrastructure, many key reforms remained incomplete in the lead-up to the March 2013 elections. The combination of unaddressed underlying conflict drivers—unemployment, horizontal inequality, and highly centralized ethnopolitics—and highly contested elections as a potential trigger presented significant risks for politically motivated violence. Analysts warned of mass violence and a repeat of 2007–08.

When widespread conflict did not erupt, international, regional, and domestic actors lauded the elections as successful. Some statements went a step further and characterized the elections as peaceful and credible.⁴ At the same time, Kenyan peace activists and civic leaders expressed a more qualified view about the elections and the overall situation in the country. These contrasting—even contradictory—views prompt the question: are the claims of success justified?

An impressive volume of expert analysis and project evaluations has been produced on the 2013 Kenyan general elections. However, the voices of ordinary Kenyans—including the potential victims and the mobilizers and perpetrators of violence—have been largely absent. This report presents the views of participants in citizen dialogues and interviews organized by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) in partnership with the Constitutional Reform and Education Consortium (CRECO) and the Interparty Youth Forum (IPYF). The organizations worked in partnership to convene youth-led, semistructured, participatory discussion fora from November to mid-December 2013 in ten counties across Kenya—Marsabit, Embu, Nyeri, Nakuru, Uasin Gishu, Bungoma, Kisumu, Nyamira, Mombasa, and Nairobi (see map 4).⁵

Map 1. Selected Counties (10) in Kenya for Data Collection

Participants included county-level opinion leaders and individuals affected by violence who are not commonly consulted for expert analysis.⁶ The dialogues were designed and facilitated to test the success narrative, understand how ordinary Kenyans experienced the elections, identify the factors that constrained behavior and prevented mass violence, and identify whether relevant lessons can be drawn for upcoming elections on the continent. The citizen views offer valuable insights into popular attitudes and the factors that influenced behavior during the electoral process. Although the methodology does not provide quantitative or empirically conclusive results, it does offer a complementary snapshot of views of local opinion leaders across ten counties, highlights opportunities for sustainable peace, and adds to an overall understanding of the conflict dynamics in Kenya.

Evaluating Kenya's Conflict Prevention Success

Challenging the Claims of Peace

International election observers and diplomats celebrated the March 2013 general elections as peaceful. But Kenyans disagree (see box 1). The common *wananchi* (citizens) did express relief—and some pride—that mass violence similar to 2007–08 had been prevented.⁷ However, across the ten counties, participants offered a more nuanced account of the presence of violence that was both localized and more frequent than previous reports on the elections suggest.⁸

To further explore the levels of tensions that participants perceived and the levels of politically motivated violence that participants experienced, the dialogue facilitators conducted an interactive graphing exercise. Participants were first asked to rate the level of tension—low, medium, or high—in their communities at each milestone of the electoral cycle. Participants were then asked to rate the level of politically motivated violence—low, medium, or high—that they experienced in their communities at each milestone of the electoral cycle.

Two types of maps resulted. A number of counties experienced consistently high levels of tension but low levels of politically motivated violence. These participants described the election

as “a suppressed war,” where certain factors had worked to effectively suppress high tensions from escalating into more widespread conflict. The other type of graph reveals consistently high levels of tensions coinciding with high levels of politically motivated violence. Participants from those counties describe the elections as “violent” or “deeply flawed.” In only a few cases did participants firmly contend that there was no violence.

The specific communal experiences illustrated in the graphs indicate that physical violence erupted sporadically throughout the elections—mainly, in multiethnic low-income areas in Nairobi, Kisumu, and Mombasa, where the race for governor and senator was particularly fierce. According to participants, the 2013 elections also saw heightened political competition at the local level, where violence became intracommunal and materialized between different subclans. Accounts during the dialogues indicate that political aspirants mobilized youth, particularly during campaign periods, to harass and intimidate oppositional aspirants and supporters. Some dialogue participants even contended that the 2013 elections were less peaceful than those in 2007 given the high levels of tension, fear, and anxiety—“it was only after the announcement that violence erupted in 2007, whereas in 2013, there was tension before, during, and after the elections.”⁹

Box 1. Manifestations of Electoral Violence in Kenya, 2013 (not conclusive)

- Political assassinations
- Attempted/threatened murder
- Physical harm
- Voter bribery
- Intimidation and psychological abuse
- Vandalism

Participants shared how less detectable, nonlethal manifestations of electoral violence—particularly in the form of hate speech and intimidation—were widespread compared to other elections in the region. People reported that leaflets were dispersed in their counties, and youth on *bodabodas* (motorbikes) made exclusionary and inciting statements.¹⁰ Social media also provided a new medium for expressing hate. Participants observed that violence had been forced into the private and virtual sphere. Rather than grouping in the streets, “people were plotting in their homes, hotels and on social media to cause havoc.”¹¹ Isolated incidents of violence or geographically limited outbreaks put a strain on the electoral process, and challenge the peace and success narratives constructed by officials in Washington, Brussels, and Addis Ababa.

In assessing whether the elections were peaceful, Kenyans seem to agree that the level of tension—and the potential for violence—should be considered as a key indicator. One participant poignantly challenged, “We cannot say that we had a peaceful election, unless we define violence as only the shedding of blood.”¹² Another observed that people were “willing to patiently wait and see how the elections unfolded, but were nonetheless prepared for violence.”¹³ Throughout the dialogues and key informant interviews, Kenyans described the electoral period as a “tense calm,” where “people were burning inside” and “everybody was shaking.” Some participants concluded that Kenya had, at best, achieved an “unstable peace.” For these Kenyans, widespread violence had been averted, but tensions were consistently high and underlying grievances had not been resolved—a description strikingly similar to Johan Galtung’s concept of negative peace.¹⁴

One participant poignantly challenged, “We cannot say that we had a peaceful election, unless we define violence as only the shedding of blood.”

According to participants, claims of rigging, botched party nominations, and numerous institutional failures, which contributed to overall heightened levels of fear and anxiety during the electoral period, left communities polarized.

Others surmised that peace of any sort had been elusive given the isolated incidents of violence, the high levels of tension, and widespread suspicions among parties and ethnic communities. In the words of one man, “When you transport your wife who is a voter and leave behind your two sons with weapons to fight, that is not peace.”¹⁵

Many participants further questioned how an election that left the nation deeply divided could be considered peaceful. Even eight months later, Kenyans held strong feelings of discontent, bitterness, and disappointment with the way elections had been conducted. According to participants, claims of rigging, botched party nominations, and numerous institutional failures, which contributed to overall heightened levels of fear and anxiety during the electoral period, left communities polarized. The Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD) supporters question the election’s validity and express frustration with what they saw as a stolen election¹⁶—where this time “the elections had been won technologically by the digital people,” and the “masterminds had been successful in their rigging.”¹⁷ On a more local level, participants talked about heightened tensions over the county election results, an unwillingness to voice one’s discontent, and a fear of violent conflict recurring in the near future.

All in all, Kenyans’ experiences with the elections have been multidimensional: the absence of mass violence but the presence of election violence—particularly in new spaces and forms, the high level of tension and uncertainty that the periodic stability would hold, and the persistence of conflict drivers underlying grievances and polarization. As one participant said, “There are too many fragments within the election narrative for anyone to say that the elections were peaceful.”¹⁸

Challenging the Claims of Success

A second objective of the dialogues was to test the narrative that the Kenya 2013 elections were a conflict prevention success. During each of the dialogues organized by USIP in carefully selected counties, the facilitators read out the following statement: “The 2013 election in Kenya was a success, where a clear threat was identified in advance, multiple resources brought to bear, and the results seem to have been positive.”¹⁹ Participants were then asked to state whether they agreed or disagreed, and to explain why. Follow-up questions explored the perceived impact of different actors, including the government and independent initiatives, many of which were supported by the international community.²⁰

Participants across the dialogues were familiar with the components of the government’s conflict prevention approach but hesitated to categorize conflict prevention efforts during the elections as a success. Instead, Kenyans highlighted numerous institutional failures and lapses. In their estimation, the “end result was once again the product of various compromises taken on the ground.”²¹ Some participants assessed that the elections were a conflict prevention success because widespread violence or mass atrocities had been averted. Others talked about success in terms of discrete milestones: the creation of an elected government, the effective deployment of security and police, or the court petition process. But, overall, participants cautioned against a narrow definition or low threshold of success based solely on the prevention of mass atrocities.

Participants unanimously agreed that institutional reforms were central to the government’s strategy for conflict prevention in anticipation of the 2013 general elections. The new constitution, a new electoral commission and laws, a reformed judiciary, and legislation to prohibit hate speech were all recognized as critical elements to avoiding a repeat of 2007–08. Mechanisms implemented to end impunity, decentralize executive power, and improve minority rights were seen as strategies that mitigated potential conflict drivers. And early warning systems, coordinated through the NSC, were well esteemed as strategies that anticipated hotspots and provided effective and timely responses.

Although Kenyans generally indicated that such institutional reforms enhanced the social contract between citizens and the state in the preelection period, deficits in the implementation of reforms drew into question the government's overall commitment to uphold its responsibility to protect. Participants raised concern about the limited implementation of security sector reforms ahead of the elections and the failure to implement a comprehensive civic and voter education program.²² Dialogue participants also highlighted the absence of mechanisms to initiate local reconciliation efforts and ensure local ownership of the electoral process.²³

Disappointment was expressed about institutions that proved largely unable to withstand the tests faced during the electoral process. For example, the new national electoral commission—reformed in 2011—instilled public confidence in the run-up to the vote, but confidence waned after reports of election rigging began to circulate. Participants recounted stories that presiding officers prevented certain political party agents from being present during tallying. Cases of ballot box stuffing, adding names to the register, insufficient updates and significant time delays in announcing results further detracted from the commission's luster. In a similar trajectory, the reformed judiciary bolstered Kenyans' trust in its ability to handle electoral disputes or malpractices in the lead-up to the elections. Yet, participants criticized the judiciary's "toothlessness." According to participants, little had been done to arrest and prosecute perpetrators of 2007–08, and no measures were taken to ensure that those who incited or spread hate speech were prosecuted. As one participant offered, "We wanted actions to be taken, we wanted to see high officials arrested for hate speech."²⁴

Despite their efforts in improving early warning systems and peace infrastructures, local opinion leaders expressed concern that the NSC and its affiliate groups were top-down, underfunded structures hampered by organizational inconsistencies and politics at the center.²⁵ For example, the appointment of District Peace Committee members without consultation or local community buy-in contributed to varying degrees of legitimacy across the counties where the dialogues were conducted and a sense that the DPCs were an extension of the government, not a mechanism for peace.²⁶ Participants also criticized how early warning and rapid response programs were not sufficiently flexible to effectively mitigate and respond to violence that erupted outside the immediate electoral period. These limitations were clearly felt in instances of violence in the preelection period—in places like Bungoma and Mombasa—or the postelection period—in places like Marsabit. Despite the isolated success of innovative approaches—including those to engage youth—local opinion leaders felt that national initiatives and local realities remained disconnected. As a result, training reached the "informed," but not the "uninformed," target audiences.

Fortunately, the Kenyan population did not witness a repeat of the widespread atrocities that erupted in 2007–08. However, many participants disagreed about classifying the 2013 Kenyan elections as a case of successful conflict prevention, where the government had taken the necessary precautions to uphold its responsibility and prevent a conflict relapse. Long-term structural approaches were largely seen as inadequate, secondary, or inconclusive factors in preventing violence.

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Contributing Factors to Preventing Widespread Violent Conflict

Measuring the utility and impact of policy instruments presents a recurring challenge for practitioners in the conflict prevention field. After the 2013 general elections, international and regional actors frequently attributed the relative calm to the new constitution and institutional reforms,²⁷ Kenyans' hopes in devolution, or the decentralization of power, resources, and representation to the local level, and widespread peace-messaging campaigns. Dialogue participants and key informants differed significantly about the key contributors to forestalling widespread violence during the election period.

Instead of describing actions motivated by confidence and trust in institutional reforms, participants discussed a “tense calm” driven by factors that temporarily suppressed conflict flashpoints and led to feelings of apathy and disillusionment. The role of fear and memory was considered the most critical factor in preventing widespread conflict during the elections. Voter frustration and decreased party loyalty following the botched candidate nomination process further reduced peoples’ willingness to participate in violence for their leaders. The all-pervasive peace messaging, media self-censorship, and practices of interethnic cooperation similarly contained violence. Although successful in managing the crisis, some of these policies may put a strain on Kenya’s democratic trajectory and raise concerns about the trade-offs between the prevention of episodic electoral violence and long-term aspirations for conflict prevention.

Deterrence Through Fear and Memory

As an emotion induced by real or perceived threats, fear frequently drives the attitude and behavior of potential mobilizers, perpetrators, and victims of mass violence. Kenya, where the experience of electoral violence, police brutality, and injustice are engraved in the collective memory of the population, is no exception. The fear of victimization or further marginalization in an all-or-nothing political game commonly induces citizens to support charismatic leaders who advocate ethnic conflict.²⁸ Across the citizen dialogues and key information interviews, three dimensions of fear and memory emerged as the dominant narrative to explain why mass violence had been averted during the 2013 elections: fear and memory of the 2007–08 postelection violence, fear evoked by the International Criminal Court (ICC), and fear related to the presence of security forces (see box 2).

The fear of victimization or further marginalization in an all-or-nothing political game commonly induces citizens to support charismatic leaders who advocate ethnic conflict.

Box 2. Deterrence Through Fear and Memory

- Memory of 2007–08 postelection violence and fear of repetition
- Fear of indictment by the International Criminal Court and the NCIC
- Fear of the high presence of police and memory of their role in 2007 and 2008

The 2007–08 postelection violence is still a painful and vivid memory for many Kenyans (see box 3). This collective trauma tempered the emotions of anger and frustration in 2013 and encouraged restraint, keeping a tight lid on the volatile situation experienced nationwide. As one participant suggested, “Had 2007 not happened, 2013 would have been very bad.”²⁹ In conflict prevention literature, a recent history of violent conflict serves as a broadly accepted risk indicator for future violence.³⁰ Elections in Kenya do not seem to follow this pattern consistently, because violent elections are commonly followed by relative stability, and vice versa. The fear and collective memory of 2007–08 significantly curbed the risk of violence in 2013, a contrast that mirrors the violence in 1997 followed by the “peaceful” elections of 2002. When the memory of mass killing was fresh, the cost of violent conflict is seen to be greater than the benefit that would be attained by participating or inciting divisive ethnic violence.

Box 3. Background on ICC Investigation in Kenya

In March 2010, the ICC initiated an investigation into the responsibility for the 2007–08 post-election violence in Kenya.

Prior to this, an agreement between President Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga had established the Commission of Inquiry into the Post-Election Violence. The commission, chaired by Judge Waki, prepared a report including a recommendation to establish a local tribunal to prosecute those responsible for the worst crimes.

While the idea of the local tribunal received initial support from Kibaki and Odinga, domestic political resistance quickly grew. In July 2009, following rejection of the local tribunal by the Kenyan National Assembly, Judge Waki gave a copy of his report and evidence directly to the ICC prosecutor.

In late 2009, the ICC prosecutor submitted a request to authorize an investigation. The Pre-Trial Chamber determined that there was a reasonable basis to proceed with the investigation and that the case appeared to fall within the jurisdiction of the court.

During the investigation period, the Office of the Prosecutor conducted seventy-one missions to fourteen counties across Kenya. In December 2010, the prosecutor announced that he was seeking summonses for six people. Charges were either withdrawn or dismissed in three cases. Trials or pretrial proceedings are ongoing for Uhuru Kenyatta, William Ruto, and Joseph Sang.

Participants in the dialogues recounted how the fear that systemic violence would recur—that the country would once again experience human and economic loss—caused people to remove themselves from potentially volatile situations. Some remained inside their homes, while others left potentially hostile environments and returned in large numbers to their ancestral homes, where they could vote without intimidation or fear. Participants also suggested that fear made people receptive to the pervasive peace messages. In 2007, “people did not expect violence, so peace campaigns did not resonate with the people, while this time around everyone expected violence, so peace campaigns made sense, people listened.”³¹

A second dimension of memory and fear—fear related to the ICC—emerged across the ten counties as one of the most significant factors that Kenyans believe prevented widespread violence. Discussion of the ICC and its impact was highly sensitive, especially in counties that had experienced significant violence in 2007–08 and where ICC investigations had taken place.³² Participants estimated that the ICC charges against Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto directly contributed to the formation of the Jubilee Alliance, which in turn moderated the potential for conflict between the Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities.³³ Fear of prosecution by the ICC also deterred national and local politicians from promulgating hate speech and inciting ethnic conflict. The NCIC acted as a domestic deterrent with its capacity to monitor hate speech and by demonstrating an early willingness to take action against individuals based on reports and evidence. As one participant said, “The issue of the Hague is what saved us. If there was no Hague, things would be different.”³⁴

The ICC indictments primarily affected members of the political elite, but pending cases also deterred the common wananchi from promulgating hate speech and inciting ethnic conflict, according to dialogue participants. The prosecution of Joshua arap Sang was cited as evidence that common people were equally vulnerable and that prosecution was a real possibility for those who chose to incite. According to local opinion leaders, the common wananchi also moderated their behavior in hopes that a calm election could influence the ICC decision on the cases against Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto: “We must remain calm and prove them wrong, and save our sons from the ICC.”³⁵ This sentiment was particularly evident among Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities.³⁶

In the participants' estimation, the calming effect of the ICC tempered the risk of violence not only between the Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities but also more generally among Kenyans regardless of political affiliation or ethnicity. Participants in strongholds for Raila Odinga talked about how the ongoing ICC process increased their trust in justice and encouraged them to wait patiently for the court's decision after Uhuru Kenyatta was announced winner of the presidential election. Despite disappointment in the court's decision to uphold Kenyatta as the winner, participants in counties like Kisumu, Mombasa, and Nyamira, where support for Odinga was strong, also described how the ICC left them with some hope that justice would finally be delivered for the 2007–08 violence.

The high presence and widespread fear of security forces also emerged from the dialogues as one of the primary factors that prevented widespread conflict. According to participants, General Service Units (GSU) and reservists patrolled hotspot areas in unparalleled numbers both in peripheral counties—like Bungoma and Marsabit, where such a heavy deployment of security personnel was unprecedented—and in areas that had experienced widespread police brutality in 2007–08—like Kisumu, Nakuru, and Uasin Gishu. While Kenyans came out to vote in historically high numbers, with a voter turnout of 86 percent,³⁷ participants talked about staying off the streets and in their homes after voting and while waiting for both results and the court ruling.

For many Kenyans, the largely reactive response of heightened security was deemed a necessary deterrent and even “one of the only things the government did well during the elections.”³⁸ But other participants described it as a “militarization of peace,” where stability was guaranteed by the rapid deployment of security personnel rather than “by the order and restraint of the population.”³⁹ Participants, especially in those areas that had experienced police brutality in 2007–08, shared recollections of excessive police force in 2007. More broadly, the security response, including a widespread ban on peaceful demonstrations and public gatherings, prevented people from voicing their concern or discontent. The perceived inadequacy of police reforms ahead of the elections only exacerbated the fear of a possible repeat, especially after the police failed to curb insecurity in Tana River, Moyale, Turkana, and Samburu counties during the preelection period.⁴⁰ A similar narrative also emerged in low-income areas like Kibera and Muthare (Nairobi), Kondele (Kisumu), and Bangladesh (Mombasa).

Voter Frustration

Voters recalled their high hopes in the anticipated reforms that came to fruition on election day. The initial expectations about the devolution process were particularly noteworthy, and likely account for the impressive 2013 voter turnout.⁴¹ However, having lost faith in political leaders and lost hope in the credibility of the electoral process, many Kenyans voiced their unwillingness to fight about the results. In other countries, electoral violence is commonly triggered by incumbents who act against rising challengers before the election to cling to power.⁴² According to participants, widespread voter frustrations about undemocratic practices in 2013 reduced the appeal of electoral violence as a vehicle for change and kept sporadic incidents from spreading.

The highly nepotistic candidate nomination process in both Jubilee and CORD areas was particularly disillusioning, according to participants and key informants. Nomination irregularities and undemocratic practices involved granting nomination certificates to the highest bidder and removing other names with the highest number of votes from the nomination lists. Kenyans recounted how party officials participated in widespread bribery, and backdoor deals truncated a true electoral competition. Stories of nomination malpractices were particularly common in Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) strongholds, like Kisumu and Nyanza, where participants expressed frustration about ODM's “lack of internal democracy.”⁴³ In their estimation, the

nominations resulted in “widespread party disenfranchisement” that ultimately affected ODM supporters’ attitudes and voting patterns and significantly diminished Raila’s appeal.⁴⁴

In light of these frustrations, Raila’s defeat did not result in widespread anger or spontaneous violence within the losing camp. Participants in Kisumu suggested that—by the announcement of results and petition period—supporters did not have the same party loyalties they had in 2007 and thus had little incentive to fight for their leaders.⁴⁵ The experiences of widespread technological failures and other electoral malpractices further exacerbated the sense of apathy.

Short-Term Crisis Management

In participants’ estimation, local and international peace campaigns eased tensions in the lead-up to the election by spreading messages of peace and tolerance. While necessary, both local and international peacebuilding initiatives prioritized the short-term prevention of mass violence. The bulk of initiatives ignored lingering grievances, like persistent land disputes, corruption, and accountability for past crimes. Voices of discontent were discouraged by the all-pervasive peace messaging in urban centers, while rural areas were largely overlooked, and the flow of information through mainstream media was severely curtailed by government officials. Participants suggested that the relative calm during the elections was achieved “under duress” —where people did not willingly “choose not to fight,” but were instead deterred through fear and the memory of 2007–08.⁴⁶

The Uneven Reach and Impact of Peace Messaging

As the countdown to election day proceeded, electoral peace campaigns became more frequent and diverse. Local peace activists and international organizations gathered in Nairobi and other urban centers of Kenya to push the pause button on violence. According to dialogue participants, everyone preached peace—from politicians to churches and civil society organizations, including USIP.⁴⁷ These commendable efforts took the shape of a “peace industry”⁴⁸ as trains and houses in Kibera were painted with slogans of tolerance, internationals offered media and basic mediation training, and politicians and citizens engaged in peace rallies across the country.

According to dialogue participants, the previous experience of postelection violence had enhanced civil society’s understanding of conflict dynamics and informed strategies to prevent election violence. Peace initiatives in Nairobi targeted specific at-risk groups—especially the youth—with messages tailored to emphasize the cost of violence and intolerance. In participants’ estimation, the peace movement eased tensions in the lead-up to the election and empowered groups to feel less threatened by each other.

However, reviews of the peace industry were not exclusively positive, as the campaigns resulted in unintended social dynamics, including the suppression of dissenting opinions. Particularly in urban centers, the omnipresence of peace initiatives pressured people to withhold criticism. Kenyans feared voicing dissenting opinions, discussing contentious issues, or reporting electoral malpractices; there was “a suppression of opinion, whatever they saw that was not pleasing, they suppressed.”⁴⁹ The general feeling was “even if you see abuses, do not say it, or we are likely to burn again; allow them to steal, if you say otherwise you will burn.”⁵⁰ Participants described a fear of talking about grievances related to governance, justice, and equity. As one participant pointed out, everyone was “preaching peace while the root causes were boiling over.”⁵¹ Others contended that “the peace that exists is not owned by the community but communicated by the leadership and the international community.”⁵²

Particularly in urban centers, the omnipresence of peace initiatives pressured people to withhold criticism. Kenyans feared voicing dissenting opinions, discussing contentious issues, or reporting electoral malpractices.

Peace campaigns also failed to reach potential victims or perpetrators of electoral violence in rural areas. The largely Nairobi-centric approach hindered the impact of various initiatives.⁵³ Some participants highlighted a general fatigue with a peace curriculum that was outdated, taught in nice urban hotels, and disconnected from the reality in most communities. Too often, trainings were targeting the “informed” rather than the “uninformed,” which resulted in limited trickle-down effects for the community and the repetition of trainings. In Embu, Nyamira, and Nyeri, Kenyans expressed frustration that their areas had not seen internationally supported peace initiatives in the preelection period and that they were left vulnerable to sporadic violence in the postelection period.⁵⁴ Suitable for photographic coverage in reporting documents, peace-messaging campaigns are rarely subjected to impact assessments or outcome evaluations.

The lack of sustained engagement and sufficient funding also raised concern among the participants and key informants. Although peacebuilding efforts surged in the months preceding the Kenyan elections, they largely disappeared after election day, even though divisions among communities remain deep and new triggers of conflict have emerged.⁵⁵

Although peacebuilding efforts surged in the months preceding the Kenyan elections, they largely disappeared after election day, even though divisions among communities remain deep and new triggers of conflict have emerged.

Media Self-Censorship

The role of the media in influencing the level of calm or peace has been the subject of debate among Kenyans and analysts and evoked contrasting responses during the citizen dialogues and key informant interviews. On the one hand, the media became a direct mobilizer for peace. TV news anchors preached peace, communicated public service announcements, and reinforced harmony and ethnic cohesion, advising people to respect each other’s opinions. This was the first election in Kenya where all presidential candidates participated in a public debate that was aired on national television. Given the media’s role in precipitating violence in 2007–08, many participants praised it for promoting peace and credited it for refraining from sensationalizing violence—without which, one participant argued, “the whole country would have been on fire.”⁵⁶

On the other hand, other participants strongly criticized the media self-censorship, suggesting that such filtering had suppressed debate necessary for democracy and indicated a peace “under duress.” Participants observed that potentially incendiary issues—like land and resource allocation—were purposefully kept out of the public discourse. The media avoided broadcasting live press conferences on election day and coverage of protests and demonstrations that erupted after the announcement of results. Without any debate or differing views on core issues and the election outcome, the media was seen to give the message that people should accept the results and move on.

Some participants argued that the calming effect of peace messaging and self-censorship in media was only effective for the illiterate who had access to TV and radio. For literate Kenyans, particularly the urban youth, the discrepancy between the up-to-date coverage of local events on social media and the “silence” of TV and radio broadcasting actually increased the level of tension. For example, many participants talked about receiving immediate coverage of incidents of violence through Twitter and Facebook, contrasted with a complete absence of reporting on TV and radio.

The lack of self-censorship in social media went beyond reporting on incidents of violence. While Twitter and Facebook served as platforms for peace-messaging campaigns, participants reported that hate speech was rampant and largely unmonitored. One participant argued that had “social media gone to the illiterate, people would have fought because it was so abusive.”⁵⁷ Some even suggested that the 2013 general elections experienced a transfer of violence from the physical to the virtual world, where social media became an avenue to ventilate tensions that had been suppressed in the physical realm.

Interethnic Political Alliances and Collaboration

The creation of political alliances has been a common feature in Kenyan politics, at both the local and the national level. Strong personalities within the dominant political parties, organized along ethno-regional rather than ideological lines, have sparked violent conflict in the past. The creation of interethnic alliances produced a welcome, though short-term, relief on ethnic tensions during the 2013 general elections. However, dialogue participants and key informants questioned the impact of interethnic collaboration in the medium to long term.

The most significant interethnic political collaboration, according to the participants, was the Jubilee alliance. The national coalition brought together Uhuru Kenyatta (and his National Alliance Party) with William Ruto (and his United Republican Party) as candidates for president and vice president. More importantly, it brought together the Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities, between which postelection violence in 2007–08 had been devastating, particularly in the Rift Valley. Dialogue participants expressed a strong conviction that allying those perceived to be the main financiers, inciters, and perpetrators of violence in the same political camp automatically reduced the likelihood of violence erupting.

While the coalition enhanced the confidence of conflicting ethnic groups during the election period, participants did question its sustainability and the coalition's more widespread impact on easing ethnic tensions. Participants remarked that though political leaders had agreed to the alliance, there had been little reconciliation or confidence building to bring the communities together at the local level. Deeply rooted historical grievances remain unresolved, and the alliance has served mainly as a bandage to decades-old wounds.⁵⁸ One participant described how people are still fighting, “not physically, but under the radar.”⁵⁹ The ongoing conflict manifests itself in the marketplace, for example, where participants observed that residents from the Kalenjin community refuse to buy staples from Kikuyu shops. If relative calm is to prevail, participants contended that Jubilee must deliver on its election promises and reform agenda to improve the lives of Kenyans in both communities.⁶⁰

In the lead-up to the elections, local community and religious organizations proposed (with the approval of Kenyatta and Ruto) that the National Alliance (TNA) and the United Republican Party (URP) would field candidates only in Kikuyu or Kalenjin-stronghold counties, respectively. Kenyans who questioned the sustainability and reach of the national-level pact between the political elite agreed that this practice, known as “political zoning,” offered an important explanation for the absence of large-scale violence. The goal of dividing up the counties between the parties before elections was explicitly to avoid the potential for violent political contestation.⁶¹ According to the participants, the elections were calm because people chose to stay in certain areas and “sing the song which was sung there.” Those who did not want to vote accordingly left.⁶²

Although it was effective in the short term, Kenyans still expressed concern that political zoning did not offer a sustainable solution to ethnic conflict. Dialogue participants in Eldoret and Nakuru discussed how such practices merely prevented the eruption of violence by limiting encounters between different ethnic communities. Participants observed that—since the elections—such policies have extended into voluntary practices of ethnic segregation, where different groups choose not to mix in business and social practices, and land acquisition. Ultimately, political zoning, particularly pronounced in multiethnic informal settlements, risks undermining the ongoing need to build social cohesion. Absent local reconciliation, the uncertainty regarding the sustainability of the alliance, the ICC verdict, and fears of potential political betrayal by either party have further heightened suspicions and tensions within communities. As a result, Kenyans talked about experiencing higher levels of ethnic mistrust than during the electoral period.

In addition to the national alliances and preelection allocation of electoral constituencies between parties, local political leaders forged interethnic alliances to ensure that minorities would not get locked out of the new county system. Key informants highlighted the importance of locally constructed arrangements of “forced ethnic inclusion”⁶³—in places like Bungoma and Marsabit—in diffusing ethnic tensions in the preelection period. This was especially evident during the candidate nominations, during which the perceived levels of tension and experienced levels of politically motivated violence were significantly lower than in other counties.

While these agreements alleviated tensions in the short term, the medium-term limitations were already apparent in the postelection period. In ethnically charged political environments with no history of collaborative politics, sustaining alliances requires a strong commitment from elites who have the power to rally communities behind them. The agreements also have to yield results and address historical grievances, such as those involving intercommunal rivalries over pastoralist land. In Bungoma county, the Saboats have voiced increasing dissatisfaction with the one seat that was agreed in the preelection negotiation.⁶⁴ Marsabit county has also experienced consistent conflict since the elections because the coalition among the minority groups only minimally represented the majority Borana tribe. That arrangement virtually overturned the traditional social structure and failed to secure sufficient buy-in from community leaders, resulting in a violent undercurrent of discontent. In the participants’ estimation, while alliances provide incentives for cooperation in the short term, the long-term solution to peace in these areas will require a more inclusive process that includes all ethnic groups and traditional authorities—and in some cases groups that remain outside the political process.

Looking Forward: Unresolved Grievances and Conflict Triggers

Despite the electoral stability surrounding the 2013 elections, future peaceful elections or sustainable peace in Kenya are not guaranteed. While the relatively calm general elections increased confidence that Kenya can manage moments of high tension and conflict triggers, participants cautioned that the risk of renewed violent conflict during, if not before, the 2017 elections is significant. Ominously, the notion of Kenya as a “ticking time bomb” was repeated throughout the dialogues. In the dialogue participants’ estimation, Kenya’s political system will remain highly centralized and based on ethnopolitics. Even with devolution, the presidency will remain the ultimate political prize, a win-or-die affair, and new ethnopolitical tensions will arise at the county level.⁶⁵ At the same time, the relative calm achieved during the 2013 general elections has increased complacency about the risk of political violence in Kenya—particularly among international actors.⁶⁶ The fear that drove people’s vigilance, restraint, and withdrawal from potential trigger situations in 2013 is likely to dissipate, as the 2007–08 postelection violence becomes a more distant memory.

The dialogue participants and key informants disagreed with the optimistic evaluation of preventive efforts during the 2013 elections, and cautioned that mitigating the risk of violent political conflict in Kenya will require full implementation of the constitution and reform agenda, including land reform. As one participant said, we cannot talk of peace when “we still have issues that no one is talking about; what we have is fragile, any single mistake could erupt into violence.”⁶⁷ Unrealized expectations of devolution, persistent land disputes, and uncertainty related to accountability and justice—in part at the ICC—emerged as the country’s most serious vulnerabilities. For many participants, it remains to be seen whether the government is willing or able to fulfill its promises and uphold its responsibility to protect its citizens, particularly in the face of multiple threats, including domestic terrorism, and persisting conflict triggers.

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In the coming years, Kenya faces numerous threats to its peace and stability. Many of the underlying risk factors that fueled violence in 2007–08 remain intact, including the persistent land disputes and ill-performing government institutions. Worryingly, new flashpoints for violence and new conflict actors emerged, such as al-Shabaab, a militant Islamist movement that is increasingly active in Kenya.

Disappointment in Devolution

As the county governments approach their one-year anniversary, Kenyans express discontent that corruption, tribalism, and inequality have worsened with devolution. Despite the initial hope invested by the Kenyan people in the devolution processes, many county governments have proven themselves incapable of addressing local concerns and historical grievances. Participants expressed their hope that devolution would enhance government responsiveness to their needs and accountability for resources spent. Kenyans also generally agreed that devolution served to diffuse the all-or-nothing character of Kenyan politics—a direct cause of electoral violence in Kenya in the past—as it offered those who lost the presidential election consolation with county wins.⁶⁸ However, participants described the county governments as disorganized, corrupt, and largely crippled by the national government. Frustrations were particularly high with recent corruption scandals at the local level. At the time of our inquiry, Kenyans purported to have more faith in the national government than county government.

Kenyans discussed their hope that devolution would reduce the highly centralized and personalized form of governance, but expressed concern that the initial steps toward decentralization are further entrenching tribal politics. Instead of increased minority inclusion, participants pointed to persistent ethnic patronage in counties where power has been devolved into the hands of a select few, who often come from the ethnopolitical majority. The redrawing of electoral boundaries under the 2010 constitution, which altered the ethnic makeup of certain wards, constituencies, and counties, was also described as a factor that exacerbated power and ethnic imbalances. The ongoing wrangling between county and national governments was understood—at least in part—as a reflection of ethnic tensions between tribes that governed at the local level and tribes that governed nationally.

Kenyans also expressed concern about devolution's failure to address the inequality between identity groups. In the lead-up to the elections, devolution was seen as a solution to the regional and communal socioeconomic imbalances. But the dialogues reflected a narrative that some counties—and, by extension, ethnic groups—are not only receiving less than their share of the resources but also worse off than before. The impact of a tax increase on the price of basic goods such as milk, local transportation, and cooking gas meant that participants were facing greater challenges to make ends meet. Urban poverty and high rates of unemployment, especially among youth, provide fertile ground not only for extremism but also for organized crime and ethnopolitical mobilization. Compounded by the perception that high levels of unemployment and poverty impact different ethnic groups disproportionately, the economic situation is only further fueling the perception of communal disparity and polarization.

Persistent Land Disputes

In Kenya, the highly politicized and emotive issue of land remains a significant risk factor for violent conflict and a critical hindrance to peace efforts across the country. While the new constitution and devolved system provide an opportunity to solve land tenure, ownership, and boundary disputes,

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recent steps by the new, understaffed, and inadequately funded national land commission have been less than encouraging, according to the dialogue participants. Corrupt and discriminatory practices of public land allocation have left many disillusioned, and the issuing of illegal titles has resulted in mass land grabbing, squatting, and evictions. Key informants and dialogue participants expressed concern that ongoing government evictions across the country, especially in forestland and at the coast, are executed in an arbitrary and forceful manner. While the judiciary is resolving some of the disputes, violence is still erupting along the coast in response to such evictions.

The need to deal with the hundreds of thousands of people displaced by the 2007–08 post-election violence further complicates the land disputes. Participants confirmed the findings of a previous USIP report; the effective resettlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) will be essential for successful peacebuilding.⁶⁹ At the time of the citizen dialogues, the majority of IDPs from 2007–08 and previous violent elections had yet to be resettled. The government did initiate a resettlement scheme in June 2013, but in the estimation of many Kenyans, this approach is aggravating existing ethnic and intercommunal tensions, particularly in the Rift Valley and Central Province, where IDP numbers remain high.⁷⁰ For some participants, the immediate concern is that the compensation package is benefiting only the Kikuyu ethnic community. As one participant said, “I have nothing against Kikuyus, but in this matter of compensation, it seems like it is only one tribe that was affected by the violence in 2007.”⁷¹ Other participants expressed concern that the resettlement plan leaves the status of historical land claims and accountability for evictions during the postelection violence unresolved. Both of these perceptions, even if based as much on rumor as on fact, could provide fertile ground for further ethnic polarization or ignite future violence.⁷² Local opinion leaders called on the international community to support a vetting process of all IDP families to identify genuine claims and full implementation of the IDP Act of 2012. At the very least, support to a monitoring system for the resettlement and compensation programs could help increase transparency and dispel rumors.

Uncertainty Related to the ICC and Accountability

Fear related to the ICC deterred widespread conflict during the electoral period. However, Kenyans caution that it would be shortsighted to conclude that this shared motivation for cooperation and restraint will remain a constant force for peace.

In the immediate postelection period, participants observed that the ICC investigation had increased tensions between the Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities. The perception that the witnesses against Joshua arap Sang and William Ruto, the two indictees from the Kalenjin community, were predominantly Kikuyu created a sense that “these Kikuyus are still not with us.”⁷³ For many, these developments provided further evidence that the Jubilee alliance had done little to forge trust and ethnic cohesion among the common wananchi. Some participants even estimated that the ICC’s deterring impact depended on a first-round win for the Jubilee party. These Kenyans shared a belief that the ICC would likely not have withstood a second-round runoff where a Jubilee win was less sure: In the event that “the Supreme Court overturned the Jubilee win, or determined that there was going to be a rerun, there could have been violence.”⁷⁴

Kenyans also fear that the outcome of the top-level cases and the growing public discourse against the ICC may undermine progress of domestic justice mechanisms. According to dialogue participants and key informants, the identification, investigation, and prosecution of other perpetrators—beyond the few who are indicted by the ICC—has achieved little traction. Kenyans fear that there is little commitment to move forward. There is also a perception that witnesses and victims are hesitant to come forward. Local opinion leaders in some counties regretted that civil

society ceased its advocacy for a special tribunal to deal with low- to mid-level perpetrators when ICC cases commenced. Many also questioned whether civil society would have the clout to push this process forward in the near future, particularly after its association with the shortcomings of the ICC's witness protection program and evidence-gathering processes.

The dialogues indicate that the ICC's ability to foster restraint and deter violence is unlikely to be sustained until the next election. At the foundation, the credibility of the court to deliver justice has been severely undermined. Despite consistent pledges by Kenyatta and Ruto to cooperate with the ICC, serious concerns have been raised over the sincerity of this commitment. Both indictees have been accused of manipulating witnesses and interfering with the collection of evidence. Meanwhile, pleas have been made for a postponement in the interest of national security and a withdrawal from the Rome Statute. The ICC was dealt a further blow when the inadequate and underfunded witness protection program resulted in the death of seven potential witnesses and the withdrawal of testimonies by numerous others. If the ICC cases collapse and prosecution of other perpetrators is not pursued through domestic courts, many Kenyans may be further disillusioned and susceptible to mobilization. These developments further reduce the perceived cost of mobilization, incitement, or behavior and put Kenyans' relative calm at risk.

Potential Future Triggers of Violence

While historical precedent shows that violent conflicts track the election cycle in Kenya, some participants cautioned that violence could erupt ahead of 2017. Many participants cautioned that the outcome of the ICC trials might be the trigger. According to participants, the acquittal of both Kenyatta and Ruto is the best-case scenario to prevent violent conflict. Sporadic violence might also erupt given the opposition's high hopes for justice and accountability, but the general perception is that CORD supporters would be unlikely to precipitate violence. If both cases are dismissed, local opinion leaders fear that the incentive for the Uhuru-Ruto cooperation might dissipate, and the Jubilee alliance might fall apart. If both Kenyatta and Ruto are convicted or if only one is convicted, Kenyans almost unanimously foresee a high likelihood of violent conflict. Some described that scenario as catastrophic. As one participant observed, "We have built our peace on quicksand, it is built on Uhuru and Ruto. If they are no longer together, we are finished."

Ongoing evictions at the coast and in the forestland, dangerous perceptions regarding the discriminatory nature of the IDP resettlement scheme, heavy-handed counterterrorism efforts, and corruption scandals at the county level might also spark more localized inter- or intracommunal conflict. The increased proliferation of small arms since the 2007–08 postelection violence, especially among pastoral communities in the northeastern provinces—but also in the west, the coast, and the Rift Valley—and the consecutive failures of government-initiated voluntary disarmament programs in these areas, point to increased opportunities for violence and wider insecurity.

Regions at Particular Risk

Among the ten counties where the citizen dialogues and key informant interviews were convened, Mombasa, Marsabit, and Bungoma stand out as facing a particularly high risk of violent conflict even before the 2017 general elections.

In Mombasa county, failure to address persistent land issues, to engage with moderate local leaders, and to establish the county government as a legitimate authority could fuel interreligious tensions, extremism, and violent conflict. Dialogue participants warned that the common wananchi on the coast is losing patience with persistent land grabbing, evictions, and squatting. At the same time, the county government has failed to deliver on the promises of devolution or gain the

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trust of the people. In fact, participants suggested that the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC), a group that emerged in 2008 to advocate for separation of the coast to resolve marginalization and land issues, had more support than the county government at the time of the dialogues. Local opinion leaders appealed to the county government to respond to MRC offers and engage with their moderate elements to work collaboratively to rectify historic grievances and bring development to the coast.

Appeals to engage with the MRC were based in part on the perception that the threat of violence from the group is minimal, which is consistent with the relatively low profile that the group maintained in the later part of the election period. But Kenyans along the coast did express significant fear of the antiterrorism police unit and the impact of campaigns being conducted in their county. Local opinion leaders recounted stories of Mosque raids, mass arrests, and deaths of religious leaders, and appealed for assistance to protect their communities. According to them, the only way to root out extremism will be to rectify the historical and persistent grievances related to land and marginalization. The current trajectory, they feared, would only increase interreligious tensions, exacerbate polarization, and, contrary to the government's goals, increase the risk of violent extremism.

More peripheral counties, like Bungoma and Marsabit, also emerged from the dialogues as facing a particularly high risk of renewed violence. While the counties have distinct ethnic, geographic, historical, and economic dynamics, intercommunal competition over access to resources, including land and cattle rustling, has been persistently fierce in both places. But the conflict dynamics appear to be in flux. Local opinion leaders talked about the increased recruitment of "militias for hire" and the use of sophisticated weapons. They also suggested that control over resources and arable land is increasingly politicized and linked to local power dynamics. Foreign and domestic investment projects in these more marginalized areas, especially concerning oil exploration and regional integration projects, risk further exacerbating intercommunal conflict over land and upsetting pastoralist livelihoods.⁷⁵

Lessons Learned and Conclusions

The recent general elections in Kenya are often considered a successful model for other democratic transitions in distress. Contrary to the dominant narrative of peace and success that has been largely promulgated by the international community, local opinion leaders offer more nuanced lessons learned for future electoral violence and conflict prevention efforts in Kenya and beyond.

While widespread violence was averted in 2013, the risk of future violence remains high. The 2013 electoral stability was largely achieved by factors that suppressed rather than addressed conflict drivers and potential triggers. Many of the factors that prevented widespread violent conflict are no longer present or supported in the postelection period, including early warning systems, peace messaging, media self-censorship, and a high police presence. Other factors are proving unsustainable as the memory of the 2007–08 postelection violence and the fear of prosecution by the ICC slowly fades. At the same time, hope is dwindling in the newly devolved system of governance, local and national reconciliation, land reforms, and a fair system for IDP resettlement. High levels of intercommunal violence and ethnic mistrust since the elections raise concerns about the ability of strategies for election violence prevention to minimize the risk of a conflict relapse. New frontiers for conflict at the county and subclan level pose additional challenges for a political system that remains highly centralized and driven by ethnic identity.

The constitution and reform agenda remain an opportunity to move beyond short-term crisis management and resolve underlying grievances and potential drivers of future conflict. But the common

New frontiers for conflict at the county and subclan level pose additional challenges for a political system that remains highly centralized and driven by ethnic identity.

wananchi's hopes in the new constitution are tempered by fear that the government and international actors will prioritize short-term considerations, such as domestic security concerns, over a long-term vision to resolve land disputes or corruption. The heavy-handed counterterrorism efforts at the coast and the military deployment to border areas indicate that government priorities lie elsewhere. More broadly, without political commitment, there is a risk that the status quo will persist, characterized by little meaningful progress on core grievances—including reconciliation and justice for postelection violence victims, the increasingly politicized land challenges and resettlement of IDPs, slow progress on security sector reform, the proliferation of small arms, and high levels of unemployment, particularly among the youth.⁷⁶

The Kenyan security sector must regain citizen trust. By improving community-police relations, the dominant narrative of fear and apathy can be transformed into more sustainable citizen confidence and engagement. Fear of a high police presence may have staved off widespread violence in 2013 but is unlikely to remain a constant preventive force. Kenyans need to trust that past abuses perpetrated by the security forces will not be repeated but prosecuted instead. Supporting and expanding community policing and deepening security efforts at local levels provide one opportunity. Initiatives that enhance community oversight over security provision at the local level are an opening to build trust.

Civil society should prioritize—and be supported to prioritize—bottom-up reconciliation programming between ethnic communities. At the time of the dialogues and key informant interviews, the outcome of the ICC trials appears more likely to polarize communities than to fulfill a desire for justice. Top-down reconciliation initiatives, like the TJRC, lacked the necessary local ownership and political support to deliver on their objectives. Signals from political elite indicate that there is little support to establish a special tribunal or implement a genuine reconciliation program. But local and community-based organizations demonstrate resilience and are initiating informal reconciliation processes, which should be supported and expanded.⁷⁷ Processes that are inclusive, like PeaceNet's program aimed to engage the Mombasa Republic Council, have a better chance of community buy-in and commitment than top-down initiatives, according to dialogue participants. Increased engagement with informal and formal networks of local people, tribal leaders and elders, IDP networks, and neutral spaces, such as schools and colleges, could enhance youth ownership of the peace process.⁷⁸ Kenyans agree that some form of restorative justice needs to be included in the reconciliation processes. Overall, civic leaders are demonstrating creative ways to address the apparent dilemma between justice and reconciliation—and should take the lead with support from international partners.

Government and political leaders must create opportunity and guarantee space for active citizen engagement. Active citizen engagement needs to be reenergized in long-term peace and reconciliation efforts, day-to-day governance, and future elections. While the period following the adoption of the new constitution and the early phases of the electoral process were characterized by a strengthening of the social contract between citizens and government, confidence quickly turned to disillusionment and frustration. The failure of the biometric voter registration equipment and electronic voter identification devices presented a huge blow to democratic fervor. Any use of technology in the future will require adequate testing in advance, technical training, and intensive civic education and confidence-building measures.⁷⁹ The perception of botched candidate nominations undermined citizen confidence in political parties and leaders. Transparent processes and avoiding interference by party leadership—real or perceived—will be needed to rebuild trust ahead of the next elections. Continued support to election administration, including training for local presiding and returning officers and the implementation of a transparent vetting system, will be crucial to

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enhance electoral legitimacy. In all of this, civil society will need space to carry out its oversight and advocacy roles, and continued support to deepen relationships with community-based and local initiatives. International partners will need to strengthen coordination to avoid overlap during the electoral period and gaps in the postelection period.

Sustainable mechanisms must be found to increase the perceived cost of violence. Without efforts to increase the real and perceived cost of inciting and perpetrating violence, reconciliation initiatives at the local level will remain fragile. The ICC temporarily shifted the incentive system for politicians and the common wananchi through a fear of prosecution. But the deterrence value of the ICC is likely to wane toward the next elections. Extending the mandate of the National Cohesion and Integration Commission will be necessary to ensure consistent monitoring of hate speech and potential incitement. Mechanisms must be established and enforced to investigate and penalize those responsible for inciting or perpetrating electoral offenses and ethnic crimes at all levels. Vigilance from the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission and other commissions established in the constitution is needed to enhance Kenya's domestic capacity to counter election-related and general corruption.

Preventing electoral violence requires sustained international support. Decreased attention from the international community and a decrease in funding for peace and reconciliation efforts risks derailing progress and exposing Kenya to future conflict. The peacebuilding community concerned with election violence needs to redefine its prevention role and develop strategies that effectively integrate short-term concerns related to episodic violence and the structural drivers of political violence. Quick-fix solutions that deal with the symptom of electoral violence rather than the underlying causes of the political conflict have once again pushed the pause button on violence, leaving the country and Kenyans vulnerable to renewed conflict. Prevention planning should not be dictated by the electoral process. International actors, including the U.S. government, need to realign the short-term funding cycles for electoral support and concerns over episodic violence, with the structural needs of fragile counties facing recurrent electoral violence. Ongoing investments and commitment to conflict mitigation and early warning systems from the African Union and other regional partners are also needed.

Trade-offs between short-term prevention of mass atrocities and long-term conflict prevention merit further evaluation and learning. The Kenya 2013 general elections highlight some general lessons learned for conflict prevention. Labeling an election a success risks masking unresolved conflict dynamics. Preventing mass violence does not mean that election-related violence was absent in Kenya, or that elections are peaceful. Failures to make these distinctions in analysis and evaluation risk distorting estimations of the potential for future violence, potential triggers, and underlying conflict drivers. It also risks diverting assistance away from conflict-prevention efforts at a time when tensions remain high.

Kenya's experience demonstrates that short-term policies and assistance programs aimed to prevent mass violence may result in a trade-off for longer-term conflict prevention efforts. In some circumstances, this dilemma may be unavoidable. However, future interventions and evaluations should explore whether certain approaches result in fewer trade-offs—or whether there is a funding mechanism or sustainable approach that will avoid gaps between electoral events. In order to bridge the existing divides in terminology and approaches, practitioners dealing with election administration support, democracy and governance, and peacebuilding should jointly engage in preventive efforts that are thoroughly evaluated through impact assessments or validated through empirical research. Convening practitioners experienced in local atrocity prevention, conflict prevention, and electoral violence prevention to participate in joint risk assessments presents a tangible first step forward.

Notes

1. Konrad Adenauer Foundation, “Kriegler and Waki Reports on 2007 Elections,” http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_16094-1522-2-30.pdf, 53, 56.
2. The 2007–08 postelection violence cost the Kenyan economy nearly \$3.6 billion. “A New Road for Preventive Action: Report from the First Global Conference on Preventive Action,” East West Institute, June 14, 2011, www.ewi.info/idea/new-road-preventive-action.
3. In September 2009 the government established the National Cohesion and Integration Commission under the National Cohesion and Integration Act to “facilitate and promote equality of opportunity, good relations, harmony and peaceful coexistence between persons of different ethnic and racial backgrounds.” National Cohesion and Integration Commission, “Commission Mandate,” www.cohesion.or.ke/index.php/about-us/mandate.
4. On March 11, 2013, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, chairperson of the African Union Commission, said, “The African Union Commission salutes the people of Kenya for the successful and peaceful conclusions of the elections.” African Union, press release, March 11, 2013, <http://cpauc.au.int/en/content/statement-dr-nkosazana-dlamini-zuma-chairperson-african-union-commission-announcement-result>. On March 30, 2013, White House Press Secretary Jay Carney said, “We also congratulate the people of Kenya on the peaceful conduct of the election.” “W.H. Urges Peaceful Acceptance of Kenya Election Results,” Politico, March 30, 2013, www.politico.com/politico44/2013/03/wh-urges-peaceful-acceptance-of-kenyan-election-results-160541.html. In a U.S. Senate Resolution on April 23, 2013, Senator Christopher Coons attested that “the generally peaceful and credible elections last month are a testament to the progress Kenya has made implementing democratic and institutional reforms necessary to ensure its long term stability and economic development.” “U.S. Senate Congratulates Kenya on Completion of Peaceful Elections,” news release, April 23, 2013, www.coons.senate.gov/newsroom/releases/release/us-senate-congratulates-kenya-on-completion-of-peaceful-elections. On March 13, 2013, Russian ambassador Alexandr Makarenko said, “In Moscow, we greet with satisfaction the successful conduct of elections in Kenya, noting the democratic nature.” “Russia Welcomes Uhuru’s Poll Victory,” *Daily Nation*, March 13, 2013, www.nation.co.ke/News/politics/Russia-welcomes-Uhurus-poll-victory/-/1064/1719116/-/5228f9/-/index.html.
5. The counties were chosen to be representative of ethnogeographic and histo-political diversity. While counties like Uasin Gishu, Kisumu, Nakuru, Mombasa, and Nairobi have a history of election violence and were highlighted as hotspots ahead of the elections, other counties—namely, Marsabit, Embu, Nyeri, and Bungoma—do not have a history of electoral violence. Marsabit and Bungoma have both experienced protracted conflict—namely, border conflicts, intercommunal violence, and organized crime—while Embu and Nyeri have not experienced widespread violence since the independence period. Each dialogue was facilitated by two IPYF members, with two acting as assistants and note takers.
6. CRECO partner organizations convened each dialogue by identifying and inviting sixteen participants with the aim of capturing nontraditional voices (those affected but often not reached). IPYF identified and mobilized four participants to represent youth from majority and minority parties in each county. The aim was to incorporate local voices (victims of 2007–08 postelection violence and those worst affected by previous conflicts) into the postelection discourse. The target group was a cross section of society—representative of age, gender, political association, tribal affiliation, and geographic diversity—that included members of the community, local opinion leaders, elected leaders, leaders of community-based organizations, religious leaders, and peace activists. In all areas, gender parity was emphasized. In order to ensure that the discussion reflected the county-specific attitudes of communities during the preelection, election, and postelection period, it was decided that each participant be a resident of the county for at least a year prior to the elections and that he or she be a registered voter in the county. Each local CRECO-affiliated mobilizer organized key informant interviews that drew from community leaders, local government/traditional leaders, and residents. They provided observations from the dialogue and a deeper understanding of community dynamics and issues particularly sensitive to the community.
7. Wananchi is a Swahili word directly translated as “citizens.” It was often used by Kenyans in the dialogue to refer to themselves, the “common wananchi” or “common people.” When the report mentions Kenyans or common wananchi, it refers to those who participated in the dialogues.
8. A comprehensive facilitation handbook guided the dialogue along different thematic areas—the electoral process; grievances in the community; security and violence; incentives and mobilization; and issues of hope, fear, and memory. The security and violence section included an interactive graph (which was prepared ahead of each dialogue) that rated participants’ perceptions regarding the levels of tension and experienced politically motivated violence at different milestones during the electoral process—voter registration, candidate nominations, the campaign period, voting day, period waiting for results, the announcement of results, Supreme Court gap, Supreme Court ruling, and the period after the Supreme Court ruling. Participants were asked to rate these levels as low, moderate, or high at different milestones of the election process. Two intersecting lines were produced for each graph, one indicating the levels of tensions, the other politically motivated violence.
9. Dialogue participants, Nakuru, Mombasa, Kisumu, Marsabit, November 2013.
10. Youth made statements such as “hii kiti tushachukua na wakale wametusaidia sana, sasa kazi yao imeisha, waende wauze maziwa, kazi ni kwetu” (this seat is ours now and the Kalenjins have helped us so much, their

- work here is over, they should go and sell milk and let us do the work). Dialogue participant, Nakuru, November 2013.
11. Participants also reported difficulty in distinguishing escalations in criminal violence from politically motivated violence. In comparison with 2007–08, the motivations for violence were less clear during the March 2013 elections.
 12. Dialogue participants, Nakuru and Marsabit, November 2013.
 13. Dialogue participant, Nakuru, November 2013.
 14. Johan Galtung, “Theories of Peace: A Synthetic Approach to Peace Thinking,” International Peace Research Institute (Oslo), September 1967; Michael S. Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflict* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1996), 37.
 15. Dialogue participants, Nakuru and Nyeri, November 2013.
 16. For the 2013 elections, CORD was a coalition of multiple political parties in the opposition, built around the triumvirate of Raila Odinga, Kalonzo Musyoka, and Moses Wetangula. The coalition included the Orange Democratic Movement, Wiper Democratic Movement, FORD-Kenya, and numerous others.
 17. Dialogue participant, Kisumu, November 2013.
 18. Dialogue participant, Nakuru, November 2013.
 19. Interview by the Stanley Foundation with Alex Bellamy on applying an atrocity prevention lens when dealing with crisis, www.stanleyfoundation.org/resources.cfm?id=770&article=1.
 20. Each dialogue was facilitated by two IPYF members, with two acting as assistants and note takers. The dialogues themselves were interactive and semistructured. Before each dialogue, the facilitators were briefed on the sociopolitical dynamics of each county, and care was taken to use conflict sensitive language.
 21. Dialogue participant, Nakuru, November 2013.
 22. The security sector’s response to intercommunal violence in Tana River, Moyale, Turkana, and Samburu counties in the lead-up to the elections raised serious questions about its ability to rapidly respond to mass atrocities should they recur.
 23. When, just months before the elections, the government finally delegated the responsibility of voter education to civil society, civil society struggled with financial limitations. International actors showed themselves unable to respond to these challenges and to assist in a timely fashion.
 24. Dialogue participant, Marsabit, November 2013.
 25. Even the Uwiano Platform, responsible for coordination through the National Conflict Early Warning and Early Response System and the placement of peace monitors to liaise with DPCs and civil society organizations (CSOs), was only mentioned during the Nairobi and Marsabit dialogues.
 26. DPCs were often viewed as an extension of the government and its lack of local ownership. Committee appointments were made without consultation and local community buy-in.
 27. For the purposes of this report, relative calm is used to describe the elections in accordance with the feelings and perceptions of Kenyans. In the first section of the facilitation guideline, the participants were provided with a list of words—peaceful, calm, tense, flawed, credible, and other—and were asked “which of these words best describes the election, and why?” Relative calm was the most frequent combination. The consensus was that majority of Kenyans assumed a wait-and-see attitude, patiently awaiting different milestones, but tensions were still exceedingly high across the country throughout the electoral process.
 28. Rui J. P. de Figueiredo, Jr., and Barry R Weingast, “The Rationality of Fear: Political Opportunism and Ethnic Conflict” in *Civil Wars, Insecurity, and Intervention*, ed. Barbara F. Walter and Jack Snyder (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 261–302.
 29. Devolution helped diminish a group’s sense of vulnerability by decentralizing political power and ownership to the local level.
 30. Jeffrey Dixon, “What Causes Civil Wars? Integrating Quantitative Research Findings,” *International Studies Review* 11 (2009): 707–35.
 31. Dialogue participant, Nakuru, November 2013.
 32. There was particular reluctance to share what were considered “our secrets,” especially among the Kalenjin community.
 33. In *Kenya’s Post-Election Agenda* (Nairobi: International Commission of Jurists-Kenya Section, 2014). As Gabrielle Lynch points out, it is actually, to a large extent, “the lack of trust and widespread desire to avoid further violence (with some areas having experienced violence in every multi-party election to date) that led many Kalenjin and Kikuyu in the Rift Valley to support this seemingly unlikely political alliance.” Gabrielle Lynch, “Electing the ‘Alliance of the Accused’: The Success of the Jubilee Alliance in Kenya’s Rift Valley”, *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 8, no. 1 (November 2013): 100.
 34. Dialogue participant, Kisumu, November 2013.
 35. Dialogue participant, Eldoret, November 2013.
 36. Interview, chairman of civil society organization, Nairobi, October 2013.

37. Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, “Voter Turnout Data for Kenya,” www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?CountryCode=KE. Kenyan participation in 2013 far exceeded the levels of 2007–08, when 69 percent of Kenyans came out to vote.
38. Dialogue participant, clan elder, Marsabit, November 2013. This sentiment was reiterated in other dialogues, including Nakuru.
39. “The Kenya Election and the Militarisation of ‘Peace,’” *East African*, March 9, 2013.
40. See International Crisis Group, “Kenya’s 2013 Elections,” January 17, 2013; “Police Reform in Kenya: ‘A Drop in the Ocean,’” Amnesty International, January 30, 2013. In the months leading up to the elections, the newly elected inspector general of police, David Mwole Kimaiyo, had yet to reveal a clear plan for policing the elections and preventing violence.
41. Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, “Voter Turnout Data for Kenya.”
42. Scott Strauss and Charlie Taylor, “Democratization and Electoral Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1990–2008,” 32–34, in *Voting in Fear*, ed Dorina A. Bekoe (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2012).
43. The Orange Democratic Party, led by former prime minister Raila Odinga, was one of the two parties under the CORD alliance.
44. Dialogue participant, Kisumu, November 2013.
45. Yet, some argued that loyalties still run high, especially in certain slum areas—such as Kondele in Kisumu—where idolatry and hero worship of leaders—such as Raila—is still high; a few people were beaten up for criticizing the party during the elections. In these areas Raila is still “kingmaker”—“Raila holds the key, thus when he said not to fight, they didn’t.” Raila’s concession speech, to a certain extent, redeemed his image from the nomination irregularities and encouraged restraint among those who still felt strong loyalties, especially in low-income areas in Kisumu. Dialogue participant, Kisumu, November 2013. Raila made it very clear that he was not calling for mass action, and that he wanted his supporters to respect the rule of law and await the court’s decision.
46. Some contended that “people decided not to fight because the politicians decided not to fight.” Dialogue participant, Kisumu, November 2013.
47. All the presidential aspirants were brought together to sign a memorandum of peace that stated they would accept the results of the elections and take any disagreements to court. Beyond government-led initiatives for conflict prevention, national initiatives like PeaceNet–Kenya and the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission were acknowledged at almost every dialogue as organizations able to reach vulnerable areas and contribute to preventing violent conflict. The U.S. Agency for International Development, the United Nations Development Program, and the International Organization for Migration were mentioned as key international supporters of peace efforts, intercommunal dialogue, and youth projects.
48. Applied to the Kenyan context by a Kenyan political analyst, Mutahi Ngunyi, who was very critical of what he saw as a counterproductive and oversaturated “peace industry.”
49. Interviews and dialogue participants, Mombasa, Nairobi, Nakuru, Kisumu, Eldoret, November 2013.
50. Dialogue participant, Nakuru, November 2013. Similar sentiments were documented in Eldoret.
51. Dialogue participant, Kisumu, November 2013.
52. Dialogue Participant, Nakuru, November 2013.
53. Certain innovative initiatives like Sisi Ni Amani and “Yes Youth Can” were not discussed widely outside Nairobi; only participants in Nairobi mentioned these initiatives as having contributed to the level of calm during the electoral period.
54. Interview, local female activist, Embu, November 2013. Since the elections, Nyamira and Embu have both appeared on the top of a list for country corruption. Some suggested that Embu’s peacefulness is entirely dependent on the Embians’ ability to successfully lock out its minorities—namely the Kamba, Kikuyu, and Tharaka.
55. The participants argued that messages of “Kenya moja, nchi moja” (One Kenya, one country) are no longer aired on the media, because “nobody is paying radios and TVs to play such peace messages anymore.” Dialogue participant, Kisumu, November 2013.
56. Dialogue participant, Nakuru, November 2013.
57. Dialogue participant, Eldoret, November 2013. People were divided over the role of phones; unlike in 2007, lines were registered, which provided a natural deterrent, as incendiary texting was no longer anonymous. Some argued that phones played a positive role in comparison to 2007–08 and were used to preach peace; while others argued that there was little difference in how phones were used in 2013 and 2007.
58. Reconciliation will require creative approaches. For example, many participants suggested restitution (the returning of stolen property) as a component of justice for the victims of postelection violence and reconciliation among communities. However, one dialogue participant warned that public and visible restitution could further polarize communities. A more indirect method is needed to save face. According to the participant’s story, a man from the Kalenjin ethnic group is currently “keeping” the cattle of a Kikuyu. The Kalenjin man feels he cannot simply return the cattle because doing so would acknowledge that he had acquired the cattle by means other than a legitimate purchase and result in social stigmatization and

- alienation. But the cattle could be slaughtered and arrangements made in advance for the victim to buy the cattle from the farms. Dialogue participant, Eldoret, November 2013.
59. Dialogue participant, Eldoret, November 2013.
 60. The sustainability of coalition agreements depends on the government's actions to bolster the credibility of reforms; otherwise, the short-term peace obtained through power sharing will be short lived. in *Voting in Fear*, ed Dorina A. Bekoe (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2012), 248.
 61. Lynch, "Trust, Reconciliation, and Sustainable Peace." William Ruto's URP fielded candidates in parts of Rift Valley while TNA enjoyed the same in Central/Mt. Kenya region. TNA dominated Nairobi and had the leverage of fielding candidates in most of the seventeen constituencies in the city.
 62. In some cases, the political zoning practice also affected the presence of political party agents and raised concerns of potential rigging. Where areas had been clearly delineated between parties, political party agents from the other party members of the coalition were not present even though their presence was required by the Elections Act to ensure transparency of the tallying process. Dialogue participant, Nakuru, November 2013.
 63. Key informant interview, NSC monitor, Marsabit, November 2013.
 64. Interview, NSC peace monitor, Bungoma, November 2013. It was decided that a Saboat would get the governorship in Bungoma and the senatorship in Transzoia.
 65. Ibid. Some fear that the country might become balkanized and that the county governments will become ethnic fiefdoms where a sense of unwelcomeness will be reinforced among minority groups.
 66. There is a perception in the postelection period that Kenya has been abandoned (or perhaps, given that Ruto and Kenyatta won elections, that international support has decreased as part of an "essential contact" policy). Mathews Ndanyi, "Kenya: Aid Focus Shifts Away from Peace Efforts," Institute for War and Peace Reporting, ACR Issue 349, June 4, 2013. Interview, journalist, Eldoret, November 2013. Interview, civil society member, Nakuru, December 2013. Discord has recently increased between national and local organizations. Local organizations voice their concern about becoming "foot soldiers" for national organizations. They trek around the country, gather the data, and organize participants for interviews and dialogues, but receive neither credit nor compensation. The intent of such a pullout is for national and local government to take over such roles with the aim to increase local ownership. However, high ethnic tensions in certain areas and the varied legitimacy of certain institutions suggested to spearhead such efforts—namely, the DPCs and elders—have raised significant concerns among Kenyans.
 67. Dialogue participant, Nairobi, November 2013.
 68. This was particularly important for ODM, which had secured numerous governorships.
 69. Jacqueline M. Klopp, Patrick Githinji, and Keffa Karuoya, "Internal Displacement and Local Peacebuilding in Kenya: Challenges and Innovations," Special Report no. 251 (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, September 2010), 13.
 70. Interview, land activists, Nakuru, December 2013.
 71. Dialogue participant, Kisumu, November 2013.
 72. Dialogue participant, Nyeri, November 2013. "If the government gives people land or money to settle elsewhere, what then happens to their land. ...isn't the government confirming the myth that the people were settled in those lands illegally? In my opinion the government should give us the answers to these questions: who evicted those people? Why are we compensating those that were evicted—and hence encouraging theft, plunder, and violence? Why not just help then reconstruct their homes?"
 73. Interview, civil society activist, Eldoret, November 2013.
 74. Dialogue participants, Nairobi, Kisumu, Nyeri, November 2013.
 75. Such tension is already arising over the Lamu Port and Southern Sudan–Ethiopia Transport Corridor, which will go through the country's most impoverished areas to the north.
 76. Various Kenyan and international entities have conducted extensive consultations and developed recommendations for relevant reforms. See "Final Report of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission of Kenya," May 2013; Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation, "Statement of Principles on Long-Term issues and Solutions"; International Crisis Group, "Kenya After the Elections," Africa Briefing no. 94, May 15, 2013; Abdullahi Boru Halakhe, "R2P in Practice: Ethnic Violence, Elections and Atrocity Prevention in Kenya," Occasional Paper Series no. 4, Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect, December 2013.
 77. Dialogue participant, Eldoret, November 2013.
 78. Some local civil society initiatives have discussed implementing a comprehensive "peace club" program that would enhance cross-ethnic understanding and empathy, but little progress has thus far been made. Such a program would expand upon certain initiatives currently in place—for instance, CJPC's "peace ambassador" program (where youth from one community go and teach peace in another perceived enemy community).
 79. Joel Barkan, "Kenya's 2013 Elections: Technology Is Not Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 3 (July 2013): 156–65.



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The United States Institute of Peace is an independent, nonpartisan institution established and funded by Congress. Its goals are to help prevent and resolve violent conflicts, promote postconflict peacebuilding, and increase conflict-management tools, capacity, and intellectual capital worldwide. The Institute does this by empowering others with knowledge, skills, and resources, as well as by its direct involvement in conflict zones around the globe.

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To prevent a recurrence of the widespread violence that left 1,100 dead and 650,000 displaced in the aftermath of the December 2007 Kenyan elections, Kenya and the broader international community initiated a multifaceted peacebuilding effort in the lead-up to the country's March 2013 elections. When election day passed without widespread violence, international and regional actors lauded the electoral process as "peaceful" and "successful." But the Kenyan population express a more qualified view about the elections and point to palpable tension, fear, and anxiety felt throughout the country to explain the perceived stability at the surface. To test the international success narrative, this report draws on a series of dialogues conducted across ten counties in Kenya. The dialogues were designed to understand how ordinary Kenyans experienced the elections, identify the factors that constrained behavior and prevented mass violence, and determine whether relevant lessons can be drawn not just for Kenya's 2017 elections but also for upcoming elections around the world.

Related Links

- *Voting in Fear: Electoral Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa* edited by Dorina A. Bekoe (2012)
- *Conflict Analysis: Understanding Causes, Unlocking Solutions* by Matthew Levinger (2013)
- *Midterm Challenges in Nigeria: Elections, Parties, and Regional Conflict* by John Paden (Special Report, May 2013)
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